



## The Shield of Faith

"On the left side of the soldier's body was his trusty shield (*scutum*). Measuring approximately 4' high and 2' wide, it was semi-circular as opposed to flat. The shield was built out of several layers of wood bound in iron or bronze around the edges and often covered in leather which could be dipped in water."

"Its shape was designed so that any missiles thrown at the soldier would be deflected to one side. This would mean less effort by the soldier would be needed to defend himself. If the *scutum* was flat, a rock hitting the *scutum* would make a direct impact, which meant the soldier's arms would have to absorb the power generated by the missile. Being curved, the *scutum* would send the missile off to one side, so there would be less effort needed to deflect the energy transmitted to the soldier's body. The wetted surface would extinguish the darts if they had been dipped in pitch and lit on fire."

"The *scutum* was not only a defensive tool, it was a weapon in its own right. The central raised portion in the middle (*umbo*) was forged from one piece iron or bronze and was not only used as protection for the left hand, but also as a weapon. The raised boss would be thrust into the enemy's face or chest, causing severe injury and disabling them."



Up to 500 soldiers would be deployed in a line, shoulder to shoulder facing the enemy. The shield (*scutum*) is held slightly away from the body so the soldier can move it up and down to block incoming missiles



They would wait for the enemy to come close, then as one they would take a step forward and thrust their scuta into the bodies of faces of the enemy, causing them to lose balance and so render them vulnerable.



The *scutum* is then withdrawn and the sword (*gladius*) is thrust into the body of the opponent. Note the way in which the *gladius* is deployed horizontally to pass between the enemy's ribs into his vital organs.



A number of shield formations were used by the Roman army including the tortoise (modern day armored division - left) and the phalanx. The phalanx was a line of soldiers with interlocked shields, which moved as one and could stretch up to a mile in length.



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### Function of the Shield for the Roman Soldier:

- 1) Both **offensive** and **defensive**.
- 2) Vital for the protection of the **individual** and the **group**.
- 3) Protected the soldier from **various types** of assaults and hurled objects.

**Faith is only as secure as its object.**

### Three Elements of Biblical Faith (Spurgeon's labels)

- (1) **Knowledge**: The truth of God, man's sinfulness, and the gospel.
- (2) **Belief**: Spirit regenerated man can lay hold of those revealed truths. (James 2:23)
  - Faith is the **gift** of God required for our salvation. (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 12:2)
  - Faith is the **evidence** of our salvation. (Heb. 11:1)
- (3) **Trust**: God calls us to a life of radical discipleship. (Luke 9:23-24; James 2:14-26)
  - The believer **lives** and **walks** by faith. (Rom. 1:17; II Cor. 5:7)

Faith (Greek - *pistis*) "In general, it implies such a knowledge of, assent to, and confidence in certain divine truths, especially those of the gospel, as produces good works." (Zodhiates; NT Word Study)

### Faith as a Shield for the Believer

- 1) As a defensive weapon, it protects us from the devil's **temptations**.

"It now remains to pour into the heart itself what the mind has absorbed. For the Word of God is not received by faith if it flits about the top of the brain, but when it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defense to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation." (Calvin's Institutes)

- 2) As an offensive weapon, it brings us to **victory**. (I John 5:4)
- 3) Believers "wield" their faith by what they **do** with it. (James 2:14-26)
- 4) Our faith must have a positive effect on our Christian brethren. (Eph. 4:11-16)

**Application:** How do we as 21st century Christians "wield" the shield?

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