

Chapter 10

Shielded by FAITH

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

—Ephesians 6:16

Just as with the helmet, the people in St. Paul's day understood the enormous need for a strong, dependable shield. Possessing a strong shield often meant the difference between life and death. From what we gather from history, the shield was not a small insignificant thing; it was a huge important tool. In biblical times, opposing armies often used catapults. Large fireballs would be loaded onto the catapults, and when released, would rain blazing coals down on the enemy, catching their clothes on fire. These huge shields were used as protection from these fire storms, among other perils presented during battle.

The Bible indicates that it is a paramount part of our Christian life and duty to employ the shield of faith. It resembles perhaps the most essential ingredient in our walk with God. Is it hard to please God outside of faith? Even more than just hard - the Bible says it's impossible! And there is a difference between hard and impossible. You see faith is like the glue that holds together all that we Christian believe. We need a measure of

faith to trust the Lord for salvation, to walk in His righteousness, to speak His truth, and faith to be His witnesses—even if it means rejection by others.

Faith or Folly?

In the modern New Age movement, visualization and a positive mental attitude have replaced faith. These mystic teachings have made their way into the government school system and are being utilized widely. Children are taught to look inside themselves to find wisdom, enlightenment and power. We should point out that any system that teaches us to look inside of ourselves for these things is worldly at best and satanic at the core. Employing these practices is the next step for teachers who've been "enlightened" to New Age philosophy in colleges and universities across the land. Having been conditioned to accept mysticism in a Western package and its bankrupt moral value system, it is no wonder that now our children have picked up the mantra of "self." Today our kids are taught that if they can think it, they can do it. It's said, "Believe it, you can achieve it." This modern replay of some very old deception is actually a remnant of the once popular "mind over matter" teaching and is connected to dependence on self, not God. In an effort to improve sales, productivity and profits, corporate officials have bought into many such ideas as well, paying enormous sums for what amounts to receiving the services of familiar spirits.

Part of the legion of modern New Age gurus teach nothing more than a hybrid form of mental gymnastics, but some resort to blatant occultism such as the voodoo practice of firewalking. Nearly every sphere of public life has been inundated by the New Age. From the military to the government and from technology to the school room, it doesn't take long to see these techniques surface. Guided imagery, relaxation techniques and spirit guides have replaced reliance on Scripture for the formula for life. Though often unbeknownst to the user, all such New Age ideas repre-

sent Satan's flimsy substitute for real biblical faith.

Remember the classic 1930 children's story, "The Little Engine That Could"? There's just one thing about that little train in the story—it isn't going anywhere without tracks! Faith is the track that Christianity operates on. We can think good thoughts and focus on positive imagery until we pass out, but any results we get without God's intervention through faith will fall short of the mark and could actually *hurt* our spiritual life. Continually we become aware of motivational teachers who offer the hope of higher human potential through the techniques they sell. Many of them—some even claiming to be Christians—have borrowed their ideas straight from the pit of Hell! So be careful in embracing any mental technique or practice just because it claims testimonials of success. There is an underlying principle taught in New Age circles that we often warn audiences to stay clear of. Many New Age techniques offer changed personalities, increased capacity for memorization or learning, elevated self-esteem and even improved financial status for those who'll participate. Based on teaching that revolves around moral relativism and unscriptural thinking, these New Age platitudes offer little more than a satanic substitute for biblical faith. Often, people justify these techniques based only on the results, while never considering the ethical, moral or spiritual implications. For the Christian we should understand that if we employ teaching or techniques based solely on the fact that they might work, it places us in a compromised spiritual position at very least. The hippies use to say, "If it feels good, do it." Now the New Agers say, "If it works, use it." The truth is that just because something works, doesn't make it *right!* Atomic bombs work—does that make them the right choice to use? Of course not, but today a lot of people are using techniques for self-enlightenment that are as spiritually deadly as an atomic weapon, and doing so just because they work!

The End and the Means

For the Christian, the end *never* justifies the means. God's standard is diametrically opposed to the world's system. It's the difference between the gospel of faith in God and the gospel of faith in self. Let's depart from worldly and often occultic ideas and rely on pure faith in God. Stick with the Scripture and God's perfect system, which allows Him to shower our lives with His blessings as we display true faith.

True faith allows us to do anything that God instructs us to do including what man deems impossible, because nothing is impossible with God.

God is likely not going to tell you to defy nature, but He requires us to believe that He is the master of our lives and the master of nature. It would be easier to walk through a wall, fly around the room, or walk on water than to think you can please God outside of faith; because without faith it is impossible to please God—not hard, impossible. The answers to life are not based in what you think you can do or what any occultic substitute or New Age teacher may convince someone they can do. Rather they are found in what God says He can do through you. This is why the apostle Paul was able to so confidently assert, "I CAN DO ALL THINGS through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). This is what the shield of faith is all about. Stay behind it. If we do, we'll be protected from the "fiery darts of the wicked one", but once we inch away from the center point of faith, we become susceptible to Satan's deceptions.

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