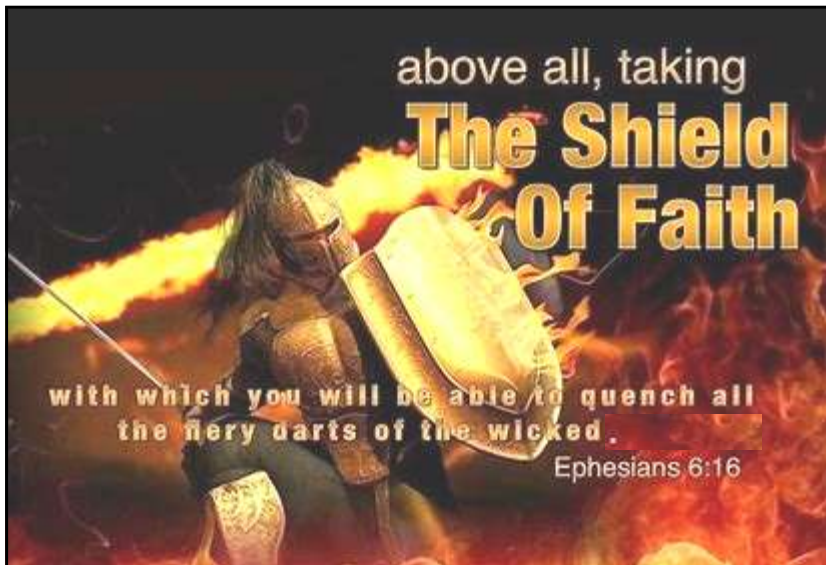


"Above All, Take the Shield of Faith"

by Elder Bill Jones

The recent monthly themes have been taken from the idea of putting on the whole armor of God. We have been discussing the various pieces of the armor as described by Paul and the attributes attached to each one. This month's theme has to do with "Above All, Take the Shield of Faith." The verse in its entirety from which it was taken reads: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The word **QUENCH** means to extinguish by drowning in water. In Paul's day the Roman soldiers soaked their shields in water before going into battle because it was common practice for the enemy to shoot fiery darts at them, which were arrows whose tips were wrapped in fabric that had been soaked in some type of flammable liquid and lit. The arrows themselves were hollow and filled with flammable liquid that exploded into flame on impact. The shields soaked in water could quench the flames.



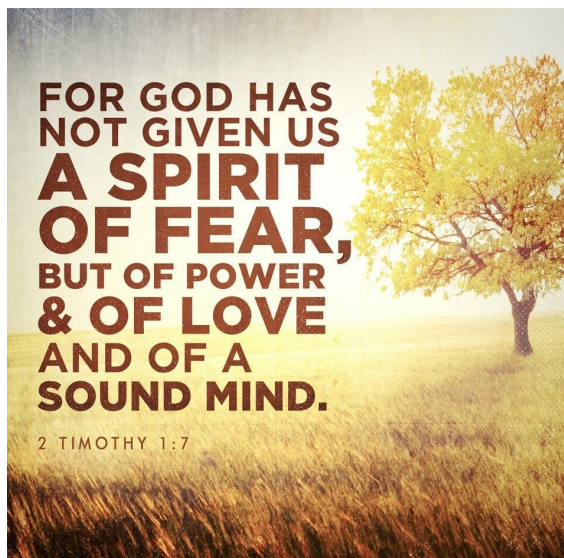
Just like the shield saturated with water to quench the fiery darts of the enemy, the **SHIELD OF FAITH** can be fortified with the **WORD OF GOD** to repel the darts of the adversary. I refer to 1 Nephi 4:38-41, which speaks of the strength to be found in God's word. These were the words Nephi said to his brothers: "And they said unto me, what meaneth the rod of iron which our Father saw, that led to the tree? And I said unto them, that it was the **WORD OF GOD**; and whoso would hearken unto the Word of God and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish. Neither could the temptations and the **FIERY DARTS** of the adversary, **OVERPOWER THEM UNTO BLINDNESS**, to lead them away to destruction. Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the Word of the Lord."



From this passage in 1 Nephi comes a metaphor concerning the tactics that could be used by Satan even today in his attacks against the faithful and the success he would be able to have against those who failed to hold tight to the rod of iron. The fact that Nephi used a similar example as Paul about Satan's use of the fiery darts or arrows, should direct our attention to the inference that Satan is able to launch his attacks from afar, as could be done with arrows, catching us unaware; and in the confusion and distraction lead those away to destruction who fail to hold tight to the Word of God. What do the fiery darts represent? Pride, deception, rejection, loneliness, fear, despair, just to name a few things that are able to confuse and blind the people.

Like Nephi, who counseled the people to hold tight to the Word of God, Paul exhorted Timothy to hold tight to the form and truth of the doctrine which he had learned. (See 2 Timothy 1:6, 7, 13, 14) These are Paul's words to Timothy: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind. . . . Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

Far too often, we do as Satan wants us to do and focus on our fears and insecurities. Then we become distracted from the truths of God and the need to follow after His Words. Satan looses his fiery darts at us with the intent to plant the seeds of doubt and thus lead us away from the things God intends for us to have and to do.



Satan clouds our vision, confuses our minds and then the doubts he creates lead to fearfulness. In such times, we must remember that what God has called us to do, He will see us successfully through to its culmination. If our actions reveal our faith in God, it means we are willing to believe that **HE IS** and that we are willing to rely on Him. It is said that the Greek word for **FAITH**, as used by Paul, has to do with **CONVICTION**, **COMMITMENT** and **FAITHFULNESS** (being full of faith).

PUT YOUR FAITH



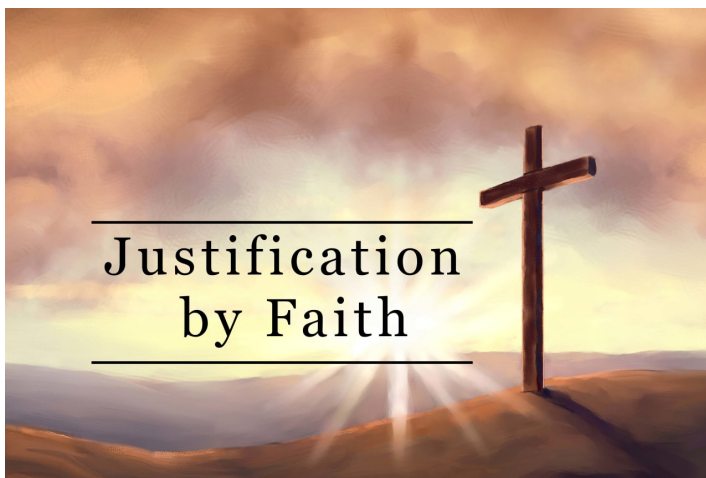
INTO ACTION

Paul's analogy of the shield of faith is indicative that **FAITH** is one of the strongest implements of defense. It is capable of protecting the rest of the armor of God of which Paul speaks. It can also be used to protect not only one's own self, but others as well if they choose to work together. The shield of faith can be used in a purposeful way with strategy and awareness of its attributes. Faith is not only defensive, it is also aggressive in regards to what can be gained from its application. An example is when the people of the church unite their faith together for protection, unity and strength for the work that needs to be done. Faith can be defensive or aggressive but **NEVER PASSIVE**. It always requires some type of action.

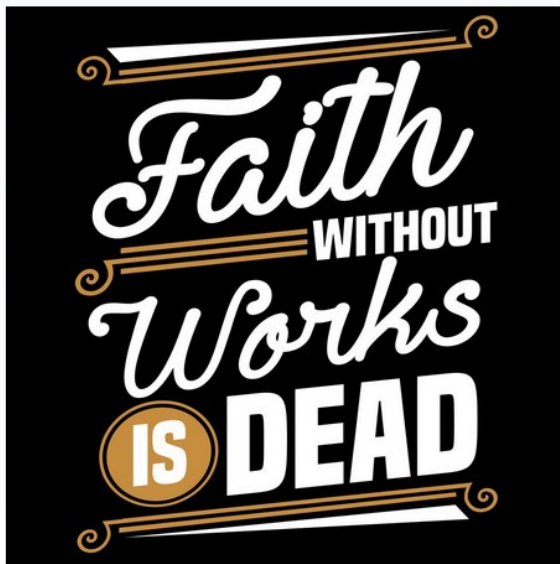
Faith
is the moving
cause of all action.

- Joseph Smith

Evan Fry in his book, The Restoration Faith, says faith is one of the principles of life which moves men and women to great achievement, to the conquest of evil, to a better way of living. Faith is the reliance we have on God. Trust, confidence and hope are what we have in God. Faith, with its accompanying actions, is the key that unlocks and makes available to us all the rich treasures of salvation. Faith saves those who will exercise their faith unto salvation, but it will not and cannot save those who do not use it. The 11th chapter of Hebrews confirms this fact. “Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” By faith we are **JUSTIFIED**, or forgiven and accounted righteous in spite of our previous life of sin.



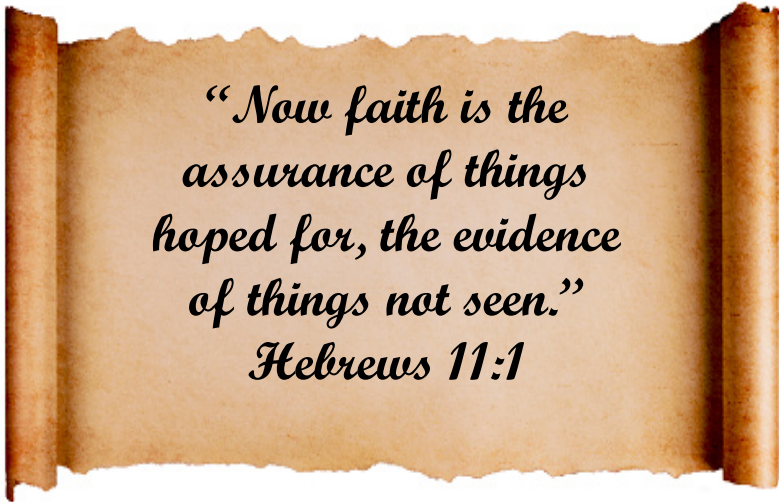
According to Evan Fry, **JUSTIFICATION** is a change of status from a wrong to a right relationship with God, not because of our own works, or our own righteousness, but because we are **JUSTIFIED** by our faith in Christ and in the power of His atonement. We are justified by our faith because it is a principle of life whose **REQUIRED ACTIONS**, if we keep them, bind us to God; and the value or credibility of our faith are determined by our good works. Justification takes place because of the actions of our faith which are expressed in good works.



Without good works there is no justification (See James 2:14). The question is asked, “What profit is it, my brethren, for a man to say he hath faith, and hath not works? **CAN FAITH SAVE HIM?**” James 2:16 gives an example: “For if a brother or sister be naked and destitute, and one of you say, depart in peace, be warmed and filled; not withstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body; **WHAT PROFIT IS YOUR FAITH UNTO SUCH?**” In verse 17, the conclusion is given: “Even so faith, if it have not works is dead, being alone. **BEING ALONE**, means there is no activity or action to support the professed faith. It is nothing more than empty words. (See James 2:18, 19) James says, “Therefore wilt thou know; O vain man, that faith without works is dead and cannot save you? Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble; thou has made thyself like unto them, **NOT BEING JUSTIFIED.**” In other words if we do nothing by our works to profess and support our faith, then we are not justified and are no better in our beliefs than the forces of evil who also believe in God. (See Titus 1:16) “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient.”

When we stand to defend the faith or advance the Word of God, let us remember we should take the shield of faith, knowing it is strengthened with the Word of God; knowing it will work according to the faith and diligence and heed we give to its ability to defend against the fiery darts of despair, confusion, fear, deception, etc. We should remember the words of Nephi, which say to hold tight to the Word of God; or the words of Paul giving counsel to Timothy to hold tight to the form and truth of the doctrine which he had learned; or the words of James encouraging us to ask God for help, nothing wavering.

The world may appear to be falling apart; there may be social unrest, pandemics, famines, wars or a variety of disasters; the air may be filled with the fiery darts of the adversary and the clouds and mists of adversity that he generates; yet we have no need to doubt or fear if we employ our shields of faith. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (See Hebrews 11:1).



*“Now faith is the
assurance of things
hoped for, the evidence
of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1*

