

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 6
THE GIFT OF FAITH

Over the past several weeks we have been looking at the gifts of the Spirit in our series, Foundation of Faith. And these gifts are supernatural abilities that God gives to us to edify the body of Christ, to minister to the lost, to bring glory to God. These are not talents or abilities that you may have, even though God can use those in a supernatural way. These are supernatural gifts given to us by God as He sees fit in the situations we are in.

This morning we are going to be looking at the gift of faith and what that is all about. We hear a lot about faith today and we all have faith in something, we all have faith in someone, but what does the Bible say regarding faith? We are going to look at that because, before we look at this gift of faith, we need to understand what faith is all about.

First of all, faith is a vital part of our life. In fact, we exercise it every day of our life. It takes faith to sit in a chair, believing it will support you. It takes faith to fly in a plane, believing it will get off the ground and then land once again. It takes faith to allow someone to put you to sleep and then do surgery on you, believing that when you wake up you will be better than you were when you went to sleep. It even takes faith just to walk, believing that your legs will support you. But what is faith, and more importantly, what is true biblical faith?

Once again we don't have to guess what faith is because the Bible tells us; in fact, we are given a definition of this word. Paul, in Hebrews 11:1-3 tells us, "**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.**"

First of all this word "**faith**" comes from the Greek word PISTIS, and this word speaks of a moral conviction of religious truth or the truthfulness of God. It speaks of an assurance that we have. This is not a blind faith but a faith that is based upon the Word of God, what God has promised us and thus, if God is faithful, and He is, then our faith is not blind but it is active. It is a faith that has legs to walk because we trust in the Lord!

The next word in that first verse of Hebrews chapter 11 that I want to look at is that word, "**substance**", HUPOTASSO in the Greek. And this word speaks of a "confidence or confident expectation." Thus, faith is the confidence of what we are hoping for, which is eternal life with Jesus. We have not seen Jesus and yet, by faith, we believe in all His promises that He has given to us in His Word.

The next word that I would like to look at is the word, "**evidence**" which comes from the Greek word, ELEGCHOS, (el'-eng-khos) and it speaks of proof or conviction. What Paul is implying or telling us is that this is an outward manifestation of the inward assurance. The person of faith lives his belief. His life is committed to what his mind and his spirit is convinced is true.

So faith supports those things we know to be true, the promises of God even though we might not see them with our physical eyes, but through the eyes of faith we believe. And that belief is the evidence or the confidence we need to live what we believe. You see, faith truly begins when all other possibilities end, it is out of our hands and in the hands of God. I like the way George Muller put it, he says, “Difficulties are found for faith to feed on.” Morris puts it like this, “Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses, and the author is saying that it has its reasons. Its tests are not those of the senses, which yield uncertainty.” And Bruce tells us regarding faith, “Physical eyesight produces a conviction or evidence of visible things; faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order.” You see, we grow by trusting in Him, not a blind leap of faith but a trust in His Word, in His promises, that what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass.

Now some may argue that you can not prove with 100% accuracy that God does exist. And that is very true. But in saying that we must also remember that a person can not prove with 100% accuracy that God doesn't exist! So who is right and who is wrong? How do we know what to believe?

That is a great question and the thing we must do, whatever we believe, is look at the evidence that is out there and then come to a conclusion. You see, faith in God is not just a blind faith. You don't have to turn off your brain or commit intellectual suicide to believe in God. In fact, God has told us the beginning from the end, prophecy speaks loud and clear that there is a God.

Remember what we are told in Isaiah 44:6-8, **“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people. And the things that are coming and shall come, let them show these to them. Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.’”**

And so, when you look at the prophecies just of Christ’s first coming, there are over 333 of them and yet, they have come to pass with 100% accuracy. Now, as you look at that evidence alone you must realize that no man could ever speak forth these things with 100% accuracy, only God can and He has!

And we have not even talked about the over 500 prophecies related to Christ’s second coming, the re-birth of the nation of Israel, the forming of a one world government, the forming of a one world religion, and-so-on. God has given us this information to point us to Him. God has done this to show us that He does exist!

And not only through prophecy does God show us Himself, but also creation points back to Him. When you look at the vast design that is built into nature, you realize you can’t have that kind of design without a designer, without God! As Psalm 19:1 says **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.”**

Creation points to a creator, it points to God.

Now here's the thing. We know God created the heavens and the earth by faith, we didn't see it happen but God has told us and we believe it by faith! We look at the evidence and come to our conclusion!

Now, I may not be able to reproduce creation or something out of nothing but as I look at this world I see that there must be a Creator, there must be a Designer, it couldn't have happened by random chance occurrences. You see, my faith is in God and as I look at the evidence, it shows that my faith in creation is real. Now, for the evolutionist, his faith is blind, it is based on hope and a hope that is without substance, it is without support! He believes everything came out of nothing, simple life forms to complex life forms happened by random chance happenings and all this evolved from nothing! That is faith, blind faith but faith!

You see, Darwin was well aware that his theory of gradual evolution by natural selection carried a heavy burden. He said:

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.

- Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (1872), p. 154

Guess what, it broke down! Michael J. Behe in his book, *Darwin's Black Box*, speaks of irreducible complexity. He defines this term as follows: “. . . a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning. . . . Since natural selection can only choose systems that are already working, then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act on.” (Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, P. 39).

To give us an example of irreducible complexity he uses a simple mousetrap. The function of a mousetrap is of course, to immobilize a mouse so it cannot do destructive things in the house. It is captured. Now for a mousetrap it has only 5 working parts to it: the platform or the base; the spring that presses against the platform and hammer when the trap is charged; the hammer, which crushes the mouse; the catch, which releases when slight pressure is applied; and the holding bar that holds the hammer back until it is released.

Now all these parts are needed for the mousetrap to function and any part that would be missing would cause the mousetrap to cease functioning. Now, Darwinian evolution is stating that not only did all these parts not exist to begin with but gradually, over time, these parts came into being and then they not only became a mousetrap but a skateboard, toy wagon, car and-so-on, they continued to evolve, gaining more information over time, becoming more complex over time. Now take that which is mechanical and go to living things, which are far more complex and when you do you see that that kind of faith is empty. In other words, just for one example, the eye, unless it is fully formed it is non-functioning and thus, it could not evolve and that is only one example. Just this simple concept of irreducible complexity makes Darwinian evolution false and those who believe in it have an empty faith, it is not of any substance, there is no real hope in it!

I like the way that T. L. Moore, physics professor at the University of Cincinnati put it. He said, "To talk of the evolution of thought from sea slime to amoeba, from amoeba to a self-conscious thinking man, means nothing. It is the easy solution of a thoughtless brain." For the evolutionists, for the person who rejects God, his faith is empty. But for us as Christians our faith is not in empty things, it is in God and thus, because of the object of our faith, all things are possible!

And so as you look at the evidence that there is a God it is easy to place your faith in Him. All you have to do is look at the evidence and then come to the conclusion that there is a God and He has spoken to us through His Word. It is not a blind faith but really an intelligent faith. In fact, Peter admonishes us to “**... sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.**” I Peter 3:15.

The word that Peter uses for “**defense**” is where we get our word “apologetics” from. And it doesn’t mean to “apologize” for your faith, as some faith teachers try to tell us. But this word means to defend your faith by the evidence or facts, not by feelings or a blind faith.

Now the atheist, for example, looks at all the evidence that is out there. He looks at creation, he may even look at what God has said in His Word, and then he takes a 180 degree turn in the opposite direction and says there is no God. That is blind faith. That is a person who has committed intellectual suicide, believing what he knows not to be true. Believing what is totally contrary to the evidence that is out there.

Paul put it like this in Romans 1:18-19, “**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.**” God has clearly given us the evidence to point out that He exists and the only way to go against that is to suppress the truth, ignore the truth. And so whose faith is really blind, the Christian’s or the atheists? I think the evidence speaks for itself!

Let me give you this example because this whole idea of spontaneous generation or life from non-life is just plain foolish. Listen to this statement by Dr. Wald, the foremost biologist in this country. He says, “Spontaneous generation was totally disproved 100 years ago by Louis Pasteur . . . that leaves us only one possible conclusion. That life arose as a super natural creative work of God. I cannot accept that philosophically, because I don't want to believe in God. I choose to believe that which I know is scientifically impossible, spontaneous generation arising to evolution.”

If it is “scientifically impossible” then why are we holding on to it? It is as Dr. Wald has said, because they want to deny the existence of God and because of that, they have moved away from science and towards their own religious belief called evolution. That is their faith! That is why Paul says they are without excuse, they know there is a Creator God, a Designer God, creation testifies of that fact, but they deny the truth to believe a lie, the lie of evolution!

Now as God shows us that He is real, that He does exist, it gives us the confidence to believe in what we can't see by faith, knowing that what God has promised He is able to do.

Before we deal with the gift of faith, I want to take a few minutes and look at several different types of faith that are mentioned in the Scriptures. I think it is important for us to understand what faith is all about before we look at the gift of faith given to us by God, this supernatural gift!

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SCRIPTURAL FAITH

1. SAVING FAITH - EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-9 speaks of this saving faith. He wrote, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

Obviously this is speaking of our salvation and he tells us that we are saved by grace. That is important because many feel that they are being saved and that is not what Paul said. You are saved; it is a done deal if you have received Jesus as Your Lord and Savior! It is all about grace, unmerited favor, you don't deserve this gift, you will never deserve it but God has graciously extended His hand with this gift in it, He has given to us Jesus!

Now the agent of this is faith. You see, faith reaches out to the gift that God has in His hand. Faith reaches out to Jesus. This is the faith that God has given to us to believe Jesus Christ is our Savior; He paid the penalty for our sins. And the bottom line is this. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If you add anything to your salvation it is no longer grace, works have been added and Paul said that it is not of works because if it were, you would just boast about it!

Ironside I think had a great story illustrating this, a true story. He wrote,

Old John Nelson, one of Wesley's preachers, was a poor, godless, blaspheming blacksmith until God saved him, and after that he became one of the early Methodist preachers, and proclaimed in power the gospel of the grace of God and won many to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One day he was talking to a very self-righteous man who said, “I don’t need your Saviour; my life is all I need. I can present my own life to God, and I am satisfied He won’t be hard on me. If anybody gets into heaven I shall, because of the good I have done, because of the way I have lived.”

“Look here,” said John Nelson; “if you got into heaven, you would bring discord there. All in heaven will be saved sinners, and we are going to sing, ‘Glory to the Lamb that was slain and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood.’ You couldn’t sing that, and so you would bring discord. You would be singing, ‘Glory to me because by my own good life and consistent living, my charity and good behavior, I fitted myself for heaven.’ If the angels caught you doing that, they would take you by the nape of your neck and throw you over the wall.”

- H. A. Ironside, Galatians & Ephesians, pp. 114-115

Maybe a little crude but it does drive home the point. It is grace or it is works and it can’t be both and it can’t be works because works don’t save you. You can’t be good enough to get into heaven; your righteousness is like filthy rags before a holy and righteous God. The only way to get in is by having the righteousness of Christ imputed into your life by faith!

In fact, when Paul speaks of this being a gift of God, the way it is written in the Greek it is speaking of the whole experience of salvation. Remember that salvation is a gift to be received by faith; it is not a reward for something we have done! And keep in mind that this saving faith comes, as Paul tells us, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**” Romans 10:17! This saving faith reaches out to God to take the gift of Jesus into their life!

2. DEAD FAITH - JAMES 2:14-18, 20-26

We need to understand that just because works don't save us doesn't mean we don't work. You see, good works are the evidence for our faith and yet, there are those that don't do anything and James tells us that those who say they are saved and yet do not do good works, their faith is dead. And please understand this, it seems obvious and yet many miss it. If your faith is dead then it is not living, and if your faith is dead then you are not saved.

James makes that point very clear beginning in verse 14 of James chapter 2, where we read, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. . . . But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”** James 2:14-18, 20-26.

You see, these people may say that they have faith, but it is not manifested in their lives, they don't act upon what they believe. Abraham's faith was not dead but living and manifested in his actions as he went to offer his son as a sacrifice believing that if God wanted him to do this, then God would have to find a way to raise Isaac from the dead to fulfill the promises that He made to Abraham. That through His seed the Messiah would come. Abraham believed what God had said, and his faith was manifested in his life.

Think of it this way, if you were sitting in a movie theater, and someone yelled “Fire,” and you saw the smoke and flames, you believed there was a fire there, but you remained in your seat, you made no effort to move away from the danger, your faith is empty, it is dead, and you will also be dead! Dead faith does not act, it is empty!

3. TEMPORARY FAITH - MATTHEW 13:20-21

The next faith we are going to look at is temporary faith and once again, this person is not saved as we will see. Remember the parable of the soils found in Matthew chapter 13. The soils represented different hearts and how they received the Word of God, the seed that was sown upon these soils. And in verses 20-21 of Matthew chapter 13 we read, **“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.”**

Here is a person who hears the Word of God, he is excited, he may have even come forward, and there is great joy for a time. But his faith is not real, only temporary faith, it is a “for the moment type of faith.” You see, when difficult times came, when persecution arose, he walked away from that which he once believed. He was never saved because true faith abides. He never had a conversion experience; it was an emotional experience which changed as the outward circumstances changed.

It is like a sports fan that will go with a team when they are winning and when things get tough, when they have not won a championship for 100 years, they give up. They will come back when things are going better. That is not true faith but that is a temporary faith. You see, true faith remains and temporary faith falls away!

4. INTELLECTUAL FAITH - JOHN 20:25

The next type of faith we are going to talk about is intellectual faith. This type of faith is important in that we grow as we read and study the Scriptures. But it does have its down side and that is when it is all in our mind and it can't be expressed in a practical, day-by-day experience. It never reaches our heart you might say.

And example of this is seen with Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus. In John chapter 20 Jesus appears to His disciples, but Thomas isn't there. And in verse 25 we read, "**The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'**" Thomas refused to believe unless he could actually put his finger into the wounds in Jesus' hands or his fist in the wound in Jesus' side.

Thomas heard what they had said, but he refused to allow that intellectual faith to be manifested into practical faith, where we see it exercised in day-by-day living. We need to know the truths of God found in the Word of God but it must not end there. We must then take those truths, that intellectual faith, and apply it to our lives, to let our faith walk!

5. PRACTICAL FAITH - ROMANS 12:3

Now we are going to see what practical faith is all about. You see, this practical faith is exercised on a daily basis, and as it is, it grows like a muscle that is being exercised. Paul put it this way in Romans 12:3, **“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”**

God has given each one of us a measure of faith, and like a seed that is planted, as it is watered and nurtured, it will grow and blossom. The same is true with practical faith. As you study the Scriptures and apply them to your daily life you will draw closer to God. Then, as we see God answer our hearts cry, as we see God work, our faith will be strengthened.

And remember, Paul is not referring to saving faith here; he is speaking to believers, admonishing them to live out their faith! To exercise their faith! He is speaking of faithful stewardship, the kind and quantity of faith required to exercise our own particular gift.

And the key here is that this all must be done in humility because our spiritual usefulness is a purely sovereign work of God, none of which can be attributed to man. Our spiritual usefulness is in spite of and in contrast to our unworthiness and uselessness in the flesh, in which nothing dwells that is good or is capable of glorifying God.

And we talked about his before but Paul says that our faith grows as we read and then apply God's Word to our lives. In Romans 10:17 Paul wrote, "**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**So faith comes by hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself).**"

That is where we must begin after we are saved, and as the Word of God is applied to our life, our faith will grow, we will trust in the Lord more and more. An example of this is seen in the life of George Mueller, a 19th century Christian who lived in England. His ministry was caring for orphans and in his sixty years of ministry he housed, clothed, fed, and nurtured over 10,000! In saying that, George Mueller never asked for food, money or clothing from anyone but God, and God supplied his needs abundantly above all he could ask or think.

One day the pantry was bare, nothing to eat, and he had the children set the table and he prayed for the food that God was going to provide for them. Just as he finished there was a knock on the door, and the baker came by. He said the Lord had him up all night baking and the Lord told him to give the food to George Mueller's orphanage. So they had bread to eat. Just as he left, the milk wagon driver knocked on the door, and he told George Mueller that his milk wagon broke down in front of the orphanage and the milk was going to go bad before he could get it in town. And he wondered if they could use it. God continually provided for him throughout his life in this way.

That is practical faith, a faith that is exercised and thus, as you hear the Word of God, as you are taught the Word of God, step out in faith and see what the Lord will do in the situation you are in. As you do, you will see your faith grow as you learn to trust in the Lord more and more. That is practical faith!

6. MISGUIDED FAITH - MARK 11:23-24

Now I don't want to spend a lot of time on this issue, but I do think it is important to look at. In Mark 11:23-24 we are told, **“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”**

This passage of Scripture is one of the fundamental passages for faith teachers. The teaching goes like this: faith is a force, it is a power, and it functions under certain laws. Some faith teachers believe that even the unsaved can tap into this faith force and make God respond! Thus, if we could find a way to tap into it, “We can use it to get things from God”, as one faith teacher put it. And the basic idea is we can use this force by directing it towards God and He is then duty bound to give whatever we ask.

Marilyn Hickey teaches: “Say to your body, ‘You’re whole, body! Why, you just function so beautifully and so well. Why, body, you never have any problems. You’re strong, healthy body.’ Or speak to your leg, or speak at your foot, or speak to your neck, or speak to your back; and once you have spoken and believe that you have received, and don’t go back on it. Speak to your wife, speak to your husband, speak to your circumstances; and speak faith to them to create in them and God will create what you are speaking.” “Joe, you are six feet tall!” It doesn’t work!

Kenneth Copeland claims that, “God cannot do anything for you apart or separate from faith” because “Faith is God’s source of power.” So we have taken the power from God and now we place it upon faith, our faith and God must respond! That is wrong!

Having faith in our faith is a perverted message and is not at all what Jesus is speaking of in Mark chapter 11. And the reason I say that it is a perverted message is because it makes man the master and God His slave, duty bound to act upon this faith force. God is not subservient to man; it is the other way around. These faith teachers are teaching the same lie that Satan gave to Eve back in the garden, “**You can be like God!**”

First of all faith is not a force and it is totally meaningless unless the object of your faith is able to respond. If the faith teachers would just go back one verse they will see it is not having faith in our faith, but as Jesus said, “**Have faith in God.**” Mark 11:22. That is not just a big difference; it is all the difference in the world!

And so, we need to remember that God is the object of our faith and the power does not rest within us, but in God. Remember when the man brought his demon possessed son to Jesus after the disciples could not help him. In Matthew 17:20 we read, **“So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’”** The mustard seed was very tiny and I think the point that Jesus is making is the power doesn’t come from our faith, but from God. You can have the tiniest faith and that mountain can be removed because it is not you, its God! God is the issue, He is sovereign!

Now some like to go back to Mark 11:24 and say that this verse is telling us that whatever we ask, whatever we want, all we have to do is believe it by faith, and God will give it to us. ***WRONG! WRONG! WRONG!*** Context is everything!

Who is Jesus speaking to? Not the multitudes, but His disciples. Therefore, we read in Matthew 16:24 **“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”** What is the mark of a disciple of Jesus? Denying self, death to the self life, and following after Jesus. He is not talking about health, wealth and prosperity here. ***CONTEXT! CONTEXT! CONTEXT!***

Thus, your focus in prayer will not be to build up your earthly kingdom, but the kingdom of God. You will pray according to His will, not yours. We are to have the mind of Christ - and as John said in I John 5:14-15, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”** The key - ask according to His will!

Now the big question out of all this is this. “Does God move mountains today?” You bet He does and many times it is done very naturally in a supernatural way! Let me explain. Back in 1973 a church in New Jersey bought 8 acres of land to build a new sanctuary on. The only problem was part of the land had a small mountain on it at the back of the parking lot. As the sanctuary was completed they prepared to move in, but the city had one problem for them to correct before they could move in. They needed a bigger parking lot for the size sanctuary they had.

That was a huge problem, a giant problem, a big problem because there was no place to make more parking spaces because of this mountain that took up the rest of the land. Thus, they couldn't move into the new sanctuary until the problem was rectified. So that Sunday the pastor said to his congregation, “The Scriptures say that if we have the faith of a mustard seed that mountains can be moved. If you believe what the Scriptures say, come out to a prayer meeting on Wednesday and let's see what God can do!” Only a few people showed up for the prayer meeting that night.

The next morning the telephone company called the pastor and said that they had purchased some land that they wanted to build upon, the only problem was that there was a swamp on the land. Their solution was to get some land fill to fill it in so they could build. And he explained to the pastor that they have done some investigation and they found that the mountain at the back of the churches parking lot contained just the right mixture of rock, dirt and clay to use as land fill. And he asked the pastor if they could haul that dirt away, and of course he said yes. They took 40,000 cubic yards of earth, leveled it off and then gave the church a check for \$5,000! Yes, God still moves mountains! May we not have misguided faith but a faith that is placed upon God!

7. GIFT OF FAITH

Now we will look at this gift of faith. This is what Paul is speaking of back in I Corinthians chapter 12 where he wrote, **“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for one is given. . . . faith by the same Spirit . . .”**

I Corinthians 12:7a, 9a. This is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit, not some kind of learned behavior. And this gift of faith, this sudden surge gives you the confidence that God is going to work a miracle, perform a healing, provide for a need, protect you from impending danger.

Donald Gee put it this way in regards to the gift of faith. He said: “It would seem to come upon certain of God’s servants in times of special crises or opportunity in such a mighty power that they are lifted right out of the realm of even natural and ordinary faith in God - and have a divine certainty put within their souls that triumphs over everything.” And it seems that when the gift of faith is in operation it is working in conjunction with other gifts, such as the gift of healings or the gift of miracles. As God gives us this supernatural faith it acts as a channel for Him to work through, as we are going to see.

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE GIFT OF FAITH

A. ELIJAH - I KINGS 17 & 18

James 5:17 tells us that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and yet, we are told in I Kings that he is given the faith to go before king Ahab and tell him that it isn’t going to rain for 3 years. Then after that time, Elijah is sitting on the top of Mount Carmel and he tells his servant to go look towards the sea, and he sees nothing, 6 times he did this. And on the seventh, his servant came back and said, “**. . . ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’ Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. . . .**” I Kings 18:44-45. God gave him the faith to speak those words and it opened a door for God to work a miracle through him.

B. FAITH OF DANIELS THREE FRIENDS - DANIEL 3

In Daniel chapter 3 we read of Daniel's three friends who refuse to bow down and worship the golden image. And this makes the king, Nebuchadnezzar furious. And before he tosses these three Hebrew young men into the fiery furnace he gives them one more chance to change their minds and have their lives spared. And this is their reply to the king of Babylon, from Daniel chapter 3, beginning in verse 16, **“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.’”** Daniel 3:16-18.

Notice the faith they had in their God. No fear, which is the opposite of faith, but just trusting that God could spare them if He wanted to, and even if He didn't, He would spare them from this king! They knew God and thus they were able to walk by faith and trust in Him. What a great lesson for us!

NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE GIFT OF FAITH

A. FAITH OF THE CENTURION - MATTHEW 8:5-13

Interestingly enough, some of the greatest examples of faith in the New Testament are seen outside of Israel. And here in Matthew chapter 8 we see a Roman centurion come to Jesus because his servant is very sick, ready to die!

Jesus, in hearing his request says that He will come and heal this man's servant. Now the response by the centurion is interesting. He said beginning in verse 8,

“... ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.’ When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!’” Matthew 8:8-10.

You see, God gave the centurion the gift of faith to believe in the healing power of Jesus, and God used that to work a miracle, his servant was healed that very hour!

B. GIFT OF FAITH IN PETER - ACTS 3:1-11

In Acts chapter 3 Peter and John are going to the Temple to pray, and there at the gate beautiful was a lame man who had been sitting at this gate for many years, just begging for money to help him. He was there even during the time of Jesus. And as Peter and John go by, Peter says to him, “Look at us.”

Now naturally this man thought he was going to get some money, but Peter instead said, “**. . . ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.**”
Acts 3:6-9.

Please understand this. Peter did not just go around lifting people up who were paralyzed. But here God gave him the faith to do that and as the gift of faith was exercised the gift of healing came forth. The faith to do this came from the Lord, it was supernatural faith!

C. GIFT OF FAITH IN PETER - ACTS 9:36-43

Peter, who is in Lydda, gets word that Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas, was sick and she died. So Peter went to Joppa and we read beginning in verse 39 of Acts chapter 9, “**Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.**” Acts 9:39-42.

No human being has the faith to raise the dead, but when God wants to do a work, He gives that person the gift of faith so that He can work a miracle. And that is exactly what we see here as Peter lifts this dead, lifeless body up, and she is alive!

AN EXAMPLE OF THE GIFT OF FAITH IN THE CHURCH TODAY

Do we see this gift of faith being exercised in the church today? You bet we do. Pastor Chuck tells of a story that took place. This is what he wrote,

Many years ago after a Sunday morning service, some young people wheeled their grandfather up the aisle to where I was standing. They asked me to pray for him. Since he was in a wheelchair, I assumed they wanted him healed so he could walk. So I prayed, “Lord, you are a great God – you can do anything. It’s nothing for you to help, whether we are weak or strong. Help us, Lord. We ask now that You would touch this man and that you would heal him. I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the name above all names.” While I was praying I had a very strong urge to lift the man up out of his wheelchair and to command him to walk.

Now, I admit that I had an argument with the Lord, I thought, *Lord, is that you telling me to do this? Is it really you?* And I hesitated; I was uncertain. I don’t normally go around lifting people out of wheelchairs. Yet it was such a strong impression I finally did it. The Lord gave me the faith to ask that the man be healed and then command him to walk.

When I said, “Amen,” I lifted the man to his feet and said, “Now, in the name of Jesus, walk.” And the man began to walk (much to my great relief!). He walked up the aisle and then trotted back. His grandkids got so excited they were almost doing handstands. They exclaimed, “Oh! He had a cold! We wanted you to pray that God would heal his cold! He hasn’t walked in over five years!” I was glad they hadn’t told me that before and I thought, *Why weren’t you more specific?*

Later that same week, on a Wednesday night, I was in Tucson, Arizona, speaking in a church that I pastured years ago. After the service a man came up to the front, pushing his wife in a wheelchair. She had suffered a stroke and he wanted me to pray that God would heal her so she could walk again. Of course, I immediately thought of the previous Sunday morning. I laid hands on her and prayed that God would heal her. I tried to pray the same prayer I had prayed on Sunday. I wracked my brain, thinking *Now, what did I say?* When I was through I pattered her on the shoulder, encouraged her to continue to trust the Lord, and watched her husband wheel her out of the church. My son, Chuck, Jr., who had been with me the previous Sunday morning, asked, “Dad, why didn’t you lift her out of the chair like you did the guy last Sunday morning?” And I replied, “Son, the Lord didn’t give me the faith to do it.”

If the Lord doesn’t give you the faith to do it, I strongly recommend that you don’t do it. The healing on Sunday was a gift of faith for that moment and for that situation. Such faith doesn’t always come; it isn’t there in every situation. And that is why you are able to recognize it is a gift of God.

Please understand that we can't conjure up this kind of faith on our own. It is a supernatural gift that the Holy Spirit gives to us as He wills, just as with the other spiritual gifts. Don't listen to those faith teachers that tell you the reason you are not healed is because you lack the faith to be healed. Hogwash! We must never forget that God is in control, He is sovereign, and He will give to us those things we need in our life as He sees fit.

Remember what Job said, "**Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. . .**" Job 13:15. That is real faith, practical faith, faith that is exercised on a daily basis. It is a faith that accepts the sovereignty of God in any situation. This life is not to be focused upon getting what we want, but it needs to be focused on God's will being done in our lives! And during those times when you need much more than human faith to do something, God will give you that gift of faith; trusting God beyond the limits of what we think is normally possible. It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 12:11, "**But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**"

The gift of faith, remember that it is used to give you the confidence that God is going to work a miracle, perform a healing, provide for a need, protect you from impending danger. It is a supernatural gift, the gift of faith!