

The Gifts of Grace – Faith

“...to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by that one Spirit,”

1 Corinthians 12:9

“Faith” is a word with which every Christian is familiar. We contend for our faith, we share our faith, we are saved by grace through faith, and we all have faith in Jesus Christ. Some non-Christians would accuse us of having “blind” faith, but only because they have been blinded by their own ignorance of the truth. So why is the **gift of faith** (mentioned in verse 9) any different from, or more special than the faith we exercise in any of the contexts mentioned above? Is faith the same in all these contexts? Can we really understand this passage? Of course we can! We have the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us into all truth.

The Greek word used for faith here is ‘pistis’ which is primarily, “firm persuasion” (a conviction based upon hearing), and is used in the NT always of “faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual.” Looking at some of the other areas of the New Testament in which **faith** is mentioned, we find that ‘pistis’ is used in various other contexts as well. This is not particularly helpful when trying to determine how the **gift of faith** differs from other forms of faith. How then, do we know there’s a difference? The answer is that in verse 9, faith is mentioned as one of the spiritual gifts, or *charismata*. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we see *charisma* faith. Therefore, while the Greek does not illuminate the nature of, or the difference, it does indicate a distinction, based on its ‘charismatic’ status. All of us exercised faith when we accepted Jesus as our personal Lord and saviour. We recognised that we are saved by grace through faith, and we used that **faith** by entrusting our lives to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we all share a common faith in our Saviour, and in His promises to deliver us from eternal punishment. I believe that (as with all 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit) the **gift of faith** is something quite unique.

Many of you often struggle with faith. I don’t mean faith in your salvation through Christ. But you struggle with releasing your faith, or putting your faith completely in God. You get impatient with God’s timing. When God’s timing doesn’t match up with yours, and it rarely does, you misdirect your faith into your own ability to get things done. “Waiting upon the Lord” is not your forte. The truth is, whenever you choose to pull your faith back and internalize it, you will demonstrate a lack of truth faith. So, when faced with this struggle, you should build your faith by looking to some examples of uncommon faith, and there are many in the Bible.

Abraham was an old man when God promised him a son, and Sarah was no spring chicken either. When Isaac was finally born, it was nothing less than a miracle. God then decided to test Abraham’s faith, by telling him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham displayed uncommon faith by following God’s orders. He knew that God had a purpose for everything, and there must be some good reason behind this command. When God saw Abraham’s special kind of faith, Isaac was given a reprieve at the last moment. How many of us (in the natural) would have been able to do what Abraham did? Probably none! However, with the **gift of faith** in operation things would be different. Job was a man of unique faith – of uncommon faith. This man lost everything near and dear to him, was afflicted with sores, yet he resisted the promptings to curse God. Job, who is the poster child for “*Why bad things happen to good people,*” maintained his faith in God. Considering the circumstances, his faith was decidedly special. Noah was approached on a warm, sunny day, and told to build a big boat to sustain life on a planet that would soon be destroyed by a great flood. I keep wondering how I would react in this situation - “You want it how many cubits long?!” So he sets about building a huge ship. Without a cloud in the sky, all Noah’s neighbours really got a chuckle out of what they must have determined to be some sort of mania. Yet in the face of ridicule and a high pressure weather system, Noah persevered. Definitely not common faith!

This uncommon/unique faith is not restrained or effected by doubt or unbelief. Doubt and unbelief crops up when we allow human thoughts and weaknesses to diminish the divine power of God. In **Mark 11:23-24**, Jesus said, “***I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.***” Genuine faith - not doubt and unbelief. James said of doubts, “***But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind***” (**James 1:6**). Having genuine faith is one thing but having a special kind of faith is totally different. I encourage each of you to search the scriptures on the nature of the “gift of faith”. Try to discern when people are exercising strong human faith, and when it is uncommon faith - **the gift of faith**. I recommend reading **Hebrews 11**. This passage is too long to quote today, but it definitely teaches us about the **power of faith** – a special kind of faith. I believe it is this uncommon faith that is the “charisma” - the *spiritual gift*. And it always involves a total surrender of one’s own will and selfish desires. Special faith is supernaturally able to place all trust in God, rather than anything else. It has resolve, is unwavering, and unquestioning. It’s this special and unique faith that opens us up to miraculous deeds of power and profound healings. Surely this

is what we should all desire and be zealous for!

But what exactly is uncommon faith - the **gift of faith**? Let's first look at what it is NOT:

1. IT IS NOT SIMPLY CONFIDENCE

It is not natural courage or confidence. It is not ambition or natural human ability. These are very important and they keep people going, but they should not be confused with the **gift of faith**. Even those who deny the Spirit of God may possess courage and confidence. There are many things that a person can do in the natural to build one's confidence, but the gift of faith is not built up by natural means. It is a manifestation of the Spirit of God (**1Corinthians12:7**).

2. IT IS NOT SAVING FAITH

It is not saving faith, which every Christian must have in order to truly be a Christian.

The **gift of faith** is a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit to equip someone who is already a Christian.

3. IT IS NOT SIMPLY HOPING SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN

The **gift of faith** is not simply trying to have faith. It doesn't come from gesturing, screaming, yelling, jumping, or supposing. And it is not guess-work, predicting, or positive confession. Simply hoping something will happen may keep a person working towards a goal, but it is not a manifestation of the Spirit of God. A person doesn't necessarily need the Holy Spirit to hope something good will happen.

4. IT IS NOT ONE'S THEOLOGY

It is not a doctrine, a theory, a dogma, a theological principle, a disciplined prayer life, a conviction, a creed, or any man-made policy. It is a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

But this is what it IS:

1. IT IS SUPERNATURAL CONFIDENCE

The Spiritual **gift of faith** is the supernatural manifestation of the Spirit of God that miraculously drops a supernatural confidence (concerning the answer to prayer) into your heart, even before you see it come to pass with your natural eyes.

It is believing you already have it when you pray (**Mark 11:24**) - but even more! It is knowing the roots are cursed before you see the tree die. It is stepping out without a safety net. And it is often very risky! But note, it ceases to be **faith** the minute you have seen it come to pass.

2. IT IS COMPLETE ASSURANCE

By the **gift of faith** Jesus rested his head on the pillow during the storm. He already had the assurance they were going over to the other side (**Mark 4:35**). Ananias had the assurance, even before he went to see Paul, that Paul would receive the Holy Ghost (**Acts 9**).

3. IT IS BOLDNESS BEYOND BELIEF

When the **gift of faith** has manifest it will be accompanied by supernatural boldness. A boldness that's beyond belief! Paul knew by a divine revelation that no man would do him harm and he acted accordingly (faith is a bold act - *faith without works is dead*). Such boldness involves complete trust in God. It is a faith you cannot walk out on - or deny.

4. IT IS SEEING WHAT DOESN'T EXIST

It was the **gift of faith** that caused Abraham to claim that God had given him a son even before he saw any natural evidence. He understood that God **"...calls those things which be not as though they were."** Through the gift of faith, the children of Israel marched around the city of Jericho claiming that God had given them the city (past tense) before the walls ever fell. Elijah had the assurance that there would be no rain for three and a half years. By the **gift of faith**, he had assurance that it would rain when he asked for rain, even though he couldn't see the rain. By the **gift of faith**, Elisha had the assurance that the victory would be won in the camp the day before their natural eyes saw it come to pass. No wonder he could tell the men this (**2 Kings 7:1**). He had already won the victory for them! He had seen it in his spirit!