

The Gift of Faith

by Chuck Smith

The gift of faith is a manifestation of the Spirit that enables believers to trust in God's promises and Word, leading to salvation, healing, and miracles.

Scripture: Luke 17:6, John 1:12-13, John 3:16, Acts 3:16, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 12:2, Jude 1:20

Topics: "Trusting God's Promises", "The Gift of Faith"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the significance of the gift of faith as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:9, distinguishing between saving faith and the faith that trusts in God's promises. He explains that saving faith is a gift from God that leads to salvation, while the faith that grows through experience allows believers to trust in God's Word and His promises. Smith illustrates various types of faith, including healing faith, and encourages believers to remain open to the manifestations of God's power in their lives. He reminds the congregation that faith can grow through experiences and that God can still perform miracles today, urging them to commit their lives to Him.

Transcript

Paul is talking about the diversities of the gifts of the Spirit and the various manifestations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:9, as he declares,

To another faith by the same Spirit.

This is the gift or the manifestation of faith.

Now there are different kinds of faith. We talk about saving faith. In Ephesians 2, Paul said,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

And we call that saving faith. That faith that believes the promises of God that if we believe on Jesus Christ, we will be forgiven and cleansed of whatever sins we may have committed. This is the faith that brings us salvation. As John said in the opening of his Gospel,

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of

God. (John 1:12-13)

In the third chapter John spoke about Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness,

Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

And then that Scripture that we all memorized in Sunday school,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

And we call that saving faith. It is that faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. It is believing that He paid the price for our sins. It is believing that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed as a sacrifice accepted by God--the sacrifice for our sins. As a substitute Jesus took our sins upon Himself, and died in our place that by our believing in Him we would not perish but have eternal life.

Paul says in Romans 3:23-26,

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say at this time, his righteousness: that He might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

And then that passage familiar again to all of us,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

This is saving faith.

When Paul was writing to the church in Romans 12, he said,

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

So there is that gift of faith as God has dealt to every man--that measure of faith. We believe Paul's reference to that measure of faith was the saving faith that God has dealt to every man. If a man will exercise that saving faith that God has given to him, he will be saved from his sins. And he will have the gift of God which is eternal life.

In Hebrews 12, where it declares that Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith, this also seems to be related to that saving faith. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. And referring to that saving faith, we find that it comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, according to Romans 10:17. Faith comes by hearing--hearing by the Word of God--that would be the saving faith. "For how can they believe on Him whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14). So God has given to each one of us, a measure of saving faith. If we exercise it we will be saved from the guilt of our sin.

There is another kind of faith and that is the faith that trusts in the Word and in the promises of God. This is the faith that God's people have in God, in the Word of God that causes us to commit ourselves to the promises of God. We are believing the promises of God, being assured by the promises of God and rejoicing in the promises of God. This kind of faith in the believer in the Word of God and the promises of God is hallmarked for us in Hebrews 11, as it recalls the various things that people did who believed in God and who believed the promises of God. It lists the exploits of those men of faith and those women of faith.

This is the kind of faith that is many times lacking in the followers of Jesus. You remember Mark's Gospel tells us in 16:14, that after Christ's resurrection,

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

They did not believe the witness of the women who said, "We have seen the Lord. We touched Him. We held Him by the feet." But the disciples did not believe and so Jesus was rebuking and upbraiding them because of the hardness of their hearts to believe what He promised He would do and what the women declared He had done.

When Christ was walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He said to them,

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. (Luke 24:25)

"Here is God's Word," He says. "You have not believed or trusted the Word of God." And so this is the childlike faith in the children of God to just simply trust the promises.

This is the kind of faith, I believe, that can be increased and does grow. Jude told the believers to "build themselves up in the most holy faith" (Jude 1:20). In Thessalonians Paul talks about their increasing in faith. And I think that this kind of faith grows by experience through the years, as we experience the faithfulness of God in our own lives.

It is one thing to read about what God did for those in the Bible, but oftentimes we think of them as a special class and surely we do not qualify with them. We are forgetting that Elijah was a man of like passions, as we are. (cf. James 5:17) And he prayed and it did not rain for the space of three years, and he prayed again and it rained. But the Bible says he is just like us.

But I think that through the years, as we experience the faithfulness of God, that this kind of faith in the promises of God and this kind of faith in the Word of God grows. I think that it just grows as we experience God's faithfulness. Through the years we have seen God and the faithfulness of God to take care, to provide, and to guide us. And so, you come to where you just have that faith. It has increased to the extent that things do not disturb you any more because you know it is all in God's hands. God is going to take care of it.

Then I think there is what could be termed "healing faith." In Luke 8:42-48, remember the story of Jesus on His way to the house of Jairus whose daughter had died. As the crowd was pushing Him along, following Him, shoving, and trying to get close, suddenly Jesus stopped and He said, "Who touched Me?"

And you remember Peter's response was, "Lord, You have to be kidding. Everybody is pushing and shoving You and then You say, 'Who touched Me?' Everybody within ten yards has touched You."

Jesus said, "No, I felt virtue go forth out of Me."

And so you remember the woman came and knelt before Him trembling and confessed that for the space of twelve years she had been hemorrhaging. And she believed that if she could just touch the hem of His garment this would stop. She had spent all of her money on doctors and was no better. And she felt if she could just but touch the hem of His garment, this would stop. And so, she made her way through the crowd until she got close enough to touch the hem of His garment. And immediately her hemorrhaging ceased. She was healed. And you remember Jesus said, "Daughter be of good comfort because your faith has made you whole." And that could be classified as healing faith--faith to be healed.

In Matthew 15:28, there was the woman from the area of Tyre who came to Jesus concerning her daughter, who she said was grievously vexed by the devil. When the disciples came and said, "Lord do something. She is troubling us." To them He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

And so, she then came directly to Jesus. "Lord, help me."

And He said, "It is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the little puppies."

"True, Lord, but the little puppies," she said, "eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table."

And Jesus said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as you will." And her daughter was made whole that very hour. "Woman, great is thy faith. Be it done unto you as you will." That healing faith is faith that brought healing to her little daughter.

Mark 10 tells us,

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee." And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The blind man said unto him, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

This is healing faith. Immediately he received his sight.

I think that healing faith is more apt to be related to and associated with what we read here in 1 Corinthians 12 as the gift of faith. For it would seem that this gift of faith is related, many times, to healing or to miracles. In fact, in the listing of the manifestations of the Spirit, I do not think that it is just accidental that the gift of faith is right next to the gifts of healing. Because I believe that many times there is a very close relationship between the gift of faith and the gifts of healing.

Now I found something quite interesting, although it has been there all the time and I am glad that I am still learning. I found out as I was studying for this lesson, that the word "faith" is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament. It is mentioned 247 times in the New, but only twice in the Old Testament and once was in

a very negative way.

In Deuteronomy 32:20, God is complaining about the lack of faith among His people. The other reference, of course, is in the Book of Habakkuk which is a great book of faith. When Habakkuk went into the tower to just wait and see what God was going to do because he was confused, he cried unto the Lord by the reason of the corruption that was going on and the Lord told him basically, "You have not seen anything yet. It is going to get worse. But, "God said, "I am working." And Habakkuk's complaint was, "God, things are going down the tube and You are doing nothing to stop it."

I think he sort of felt like we feel today. We look at the nation and we see a downward plunge. We say, "God, You are not doing anything!" But God says, "I am doing something and if I should tell you what I am doing, your ears would tingle."

So the Lord revealed to Habakkuk the fact that He was going to bring the Babylonians and they would be God's instrument of judgment against these people who had turned their backs on God. And Habakkuk complained. He said, "Lord, I do not understand that. Why would You use a nation that is even worse than we are to punish us? Yeah, we need punishment. I admit that. But why would You use a nation that is even worse than us." And then he said, "I will just go in the tower and I will wait to see what God is going to do."

And while he was in the tower, God gave him the word that he would need to sustain him in the dark hours that were coming upon the nation. And these were the words that God gave to Habakkuk: "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). God is saying, "Habakkuk, you are just going to have to trust Me."

And so those are the only two mentions of faith in the Old Testament. One is in the negative and the other is in sort of a positive way.

In Acts 3 Peter was going into the temple with John at the hour of prayer at about three o'clock in the afternoon. There was a man about forty years old who had never walked in his entire life, who was begging alms from the people going in to worship God. And Peter said to the man, "Look over here." And the man turned, expecting to receive some money. And Peter responded,

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: 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. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. (Acts 3:6-9)

And the people in the temple said, "Is that the lame man who has been begging all these years out at the gate? It sure looks like him. What happened? How is it that he is walking?" "I do not know. Let us find out." And they followed him out to Solomon's porch and there they saw him grab hold of Peter and begin to hug Peter and sort of dance up and down. And they suddenly related the fact that the man was talking to Peter in some mystical way that they could not understand.

And when Peter saw these people suddenly all staring at him with this kind of awe and adoration, he said,

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? (Acts 3:12)

And he went on to preach to them concerning Jesus. But then, as he explained the miracle in Acts 3:16, he said, "And His name, that is Jesus, through faith in His name hath made this man strong whom you see and you know." It was through the name of Jesus and faith in the name of Jesus that this man was now standing there healed of that infirmity of over forty years.

But then he went on to say, "Yea, the faith which is by Him." In other words, Peter is not saying it is my great faith, but he is acknowledging that it was the faith that was given by Jesus. In other words, it was the gift of faith that was operating. It was the gift of faith that was given to Peter to say to the man, "What I have I give unto you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!" The faith that was given to Peter at that time, Peter is saying, it is the faith that is by Him--recognizing this was the gift of faith in operation that brought to pass this healing and miracle upon this lame man.

So you might say that you have three gifts in operation: the gift of faith, the gift of healing, and the gift of the working of miracles--all three in the healing of this lame man.

We read concerning Stephen in Acts 6:8,

"And Stephen full of faith and power did great wonders and miracles among the people."

The miracles and wonders were attributed to the fact that he was filled with faith, the gift of faith.

Barnabas who accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, was described as a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith and many people were added to the Lord through his ministry. So again, Barnabas was a man of faith. Here faith is related to being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 14, when Paul was in Lystra preaching, there was again a lame man about forty years old who had never walked and Paul perceived that this man had the faith to be healed. The man was probably very intent in listening to what Paul was saying and this perception was probably the gift of discernment. Paul perceived that the man had faith to be healed.

And so he said to him, "Brother, Jesus Christ of Nazareth makes you whole. Stand up and walk!" And the man stood up and began to walk. And the people were amazed. They said, "The gods have come down!" And they ran down to the temple of Jupiter and they said, "Hey, Jupiter is down the street. Your god has come down to earth! He brought Mercury with him." Because Paul was shorter they thought he was Mercury and Barnabas was Jupiter. And the priests of Jupiter came dragging an ox up the street to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. And they were scarcely able to dissuade them from sacrificing. But again, this is the gift of faith--declaring to this man the word of faith--"Jesus of Nazareth, maketh thee whole."

When Paul was writing to the Galatians, he said, "He who is ministering to you the Spirit and is working miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" And so, those who were working miracles among them had to acknowledge that they were doing it by the word of faith.

Jesus was talking to His disciples one day concerning forgiveness and the importance of forgiveness. They began to catch a little insight on forgiveness and how important and necessary it was in the whole scheme of God that they were to forgive others. And they finally began to catch the extent of the forgiveness they were to have for those who wronged them. They said, "Lord, increase our faith." In other words, they recognized that they could not forgive as Jesus was commanding them to forgive. It was not natural. The natural bent is to get even or to have revenge. But the Lord was saying they were to forgive and they recognized they did not have that capacity. And so their prayer was, "Lord, increase our faith, so

that we can be obedient and forgive even as You tell us we are to forgive."

And this seemed to open the door for Jesus to talk to them about this special gift of faith, when they said, "Lord, increase our faith." For Jesus responded,

If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, "Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (Luke 17:6)

Now that is pretty awesome. If they had faith as a grain of mustard seed--imagine what could you do if you had faith like an avocado seed?

And thus, Jesus seemed to talk to them about this gift of faith. It cannot be worked up. Although I have observed many attempts of people trying to work up faith, it is not something where you work yourself into a state of believing--like a frenzy or whatever. It just comes as a gift. It is just there. Suddenly you have the faith to do it. Many times you just wonder, "What am I doing?" But the Lord just seems to give you the faith to go ahead and do it.

Many years ago when we were still in the little chapel over on the next corner, after a Sunday morning service these young people came wheeling their grandfather up the aisle where I was standing in the front of the church. And they asked me if I would pray for their grandfather. He was in a wheelchair, so I naturally assumed that they wanted him healed so he could walk. So I prayed, "Lord, You are a great God. You can do anything. And it is nothing to You to help whether we are weak or strong. Help us, Lord. And we ask that You would touch this man and that You would heal him. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the name above all names."

And while I was praying I had this very strong urge and feeling to lift the man up out of his wheelchair and to command him to walk. And so when I said, "Amen"--and again, well, I did not think of what I was doing or I would not have done it. But I lifted the man to his feet. And I said, "Now, in the name of Jesus, walk!" And the man began to walk, much to my great relief! And he walked up the aisle and then he sort of trotted back. And the grandkids were almost doing handstands, they were so excited. They said, "He has not been able to walk for over five years! But he had a cold and we wanted you to pray that God would heal his cold." And I thought, Why were you not more specific? Now I cannot explain to you why I did that, except that I just had this strong urge and impulse to do it and that the Lord would honor it if I did it.

The following Wednesday night was the night before Thanksgiving and we were down in Tucson, Arizona to be with our family for the holiday. And they had asked me to speak there in the church while I was in Tucson. And after the service a man came up with his wife in a wheelchair. He said, "My wife has had a stroke and I want you to pray, Pastor, that God will heal her so she can walk." And of course I immediately thought of the previous Sunday morning. And I laid hands on her and I prayed that God would heal. And I tried to pray the same prayer that I had prayed before, trying to remember, Now, what did I say?

And I patted her on the shoulder and I said, "God bless you, sister. We will continue to pray for you. God can do anything" And the husband wheeled her out the door. My son was with me and he turned and he said, "Dad, how come you did not lift her out of the wheelchair like you did that guy last Sunday morning?" And I said, "Because the Lord did not give me the faith to do it."

You see, I do not think, in the Bible days, that the apostles had this faith all the time for every situation; otherwise, we could go to the hospital and empty the place. I think that it came on special occasions,

according to God's sovereign grace and God's sovereign work. I do not believe that the apostles healed all of the people who were sick that they encountered. In fact, Paul the Apostle seemed to have special faith and the gift of faith, as well as the gift of miracles, and there were many miracles wrought by the hands of Paul. And when he testified to the church in Jerusalem he testified of the miracles that God had wrought among the Gentiles.

And we remember that in Ephesus they would even take Paul's sweatbands (or handkerchiefs) and lay them on sick people and they were healed. Although Paul had the gift of faith and the gift of working of miracles, we read of him telling Timothy to take a little wine as a medicinal remedy for his stomach problem. And we read of him speaking of Epaphroditus being sick almost unto death. We read of him leaving Trophimus at Miletum because he was sick. And we read even of Paul's own thorn in the flesh for which he asked the Lord three times to remove, yet it was not removed; but instead, Paul did receive God's abounding and all-sufficient grace.

So it is not just faith that remains--"these gifts remain, the Holy Spirit dividing to each man severally as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). And it is not that I have suddenly become a gifted man with the gifts of healing and I can go around and heal everybody; or with the gift of miracles and I can go around and perform miracles for every situation. It is just that at special times and in circumstances that are all in God's control, He will manifest the power of the Holy Spirit through our lives. And it can be with a word of wisdom. It can be with a word of knowledge. It can be by special faith. It can be through the healing of a person. It can be through the working of miracles. It can be manifested in many different ways, according to the situations that you might be facing at certain times.

We read in Acts 12 that Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and he had James put to death. And when he saw that pleased the Jews, he put Peter in prison intending to bring him forth the next day and no doubt execute him. The church was in a faithless prayer meeting, so it does not seem that their faith is the thing that sprung Peter from jail. But an angel of the Lord came and commanded Peter to put on his sandals and follow him. And the doors opened of their own accord. When Peter got out in the street, the angel disappeared and suddenly he realized, "I am not dreaming! I am actually out of prison!" He thought it was a dream.

And so he went to the house where the disciples were praying, knocked on the door and a little girl came to the door and said, "Who is it?" He said, "It is Peter. Let me in!" She was so excited she ran back to those who were in the prayer meeting and said, "Peter's outside." They said, "Ah, you are crazy. It must be a ghost. It cannot be Peter. He is in jail." But Peter continued to knock until they came and opened the door.

So James was beheaded and Peter was delivered by a miracle with an angel coming. You see, it is not that James had less faith. Peter ultimately was crucified upside down. And so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not going to forever keep you from any kind of difficulty or any sickness or problem.

Paul spoke of his infirmities to the Galatians, hinting that he had a real eye problem. He spoke of their great love for him. "I testify that if you could, you would have taken your own eyes and given them to me" (Galatians 4:15). But God, according to His sovereign purposes and His sovereign will, can and does, at various times, just manifest His power, His glory, and His ability. And those times of manifestation are always thrilling and exciting.

Let us always be open that God might manifest Himself however He desires. Let us not be closed in our minds. Let us not relegate God's ability to intervene to some period of past history. But let us realize that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. And that He can still sovereignly manifest His power and the miracles of healing or faith. Let us just be open and let us rejoice when He does, but not question when He does not manifest His power. This requires our just committing it all to Him as the sovereign Lord who knows best. And Peter said,

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1Peter 4:19)

He says, "God, You are faithful. You have a purpose in this. You are working out a purpose in this. So I just commit myself, Lord, to You. The purposes that You are seeking to work out through these experiences I commit to You."

Shall we pray?

Father, we thank You for the power of Your Holy Spirit. And You know, Lord, how our hearts long to see the power of Your Spirit manifested. And how thankful we are, Lord, that You have manifested and do manifest Your power in our midst. Lord, how thankful we are for the way that You have been working and for the miracles and the healings that we have seen--the faith, Lord, and the gift of faith that has been at work. That kind of faith that just commits the keeping of our souls unto the faithful Creator and to Your wisdom. The faith that sees mountains moved and lives transformed. Lord, we look around and we see so many manifestations of Your love and of the power of Your Spirit. And for this, we give thanks. And now Lord, help us, as a church to move forward in faith. And Lord, when we are faced with obstacles that are too great for us to deal with, grant to us that faith that will believe and trust You to work and to remove those obstacles that Your work might go forward. Thank You, Lord, for the faith that can move sycamore trees and move mountains. May we experience that kind of faith in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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