

Faith as a Gift



Part 1/2
Faith
By Derek Prince

Faith, as depicted in the New Testament in its various aspects, always agrees with the definition given in Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (nasb1995). Yet the essential nature of faith expresses itself in distinct but related forms:

1. Faith to live by.
2. Faith as a gift.
3. Faith as a fruit.

In this teaching, we will examine the second category—the nature of faith as a gift.

The Nature of Spiritual Gifts

In 1 Corinthians 12 (nasb1995) on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul opens the chapter with: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware". Then in verses 7–11 he lists nine distinct gifts:

> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. (nasb1995)

The key word for the distinctive nature of these gifts is manifestation. The Holy Spirit Himself, dwelling in a believer, is invisible. But when these gifts operate through a believer, the presence of the Holy Spirit is made manifest to human senses—and the results can be seen, heard or felt.

Since these gifts are manifestations, not of the believer's personality but of the Person of the Holy Spirit within the believer, all of them are supernatural in character. In every

© 2007 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

case, the results they produce are on a higher level than we believers could ever achieve solely by our own ability, possible only through direct, supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. By these gifts, and through the believer, the Holy Spirit emerges from the invisible spiritual realm to make direct impact upon the physical world of space and time.

Paul establishes two important practical points concerning these gifts. First, they are distributed solely at the discretion of the Holy Spirit, according to His sovereign purpose for each believer. Human will or achievement are not the basis for receiving these spiritual gifts. Secondly, they are given "to each one ... for the common good"—for a useful, practical purpose. As Bob Mumford has said, the gifts of the Spirit are tools, not toys.

It has often been pointed out that these nine gifts fall naturally into three groups of three:

Three gifts of utterance

Gifts that operate through the believer's vocal organs: prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

Three gifts of revelation

Gifts that impart spiritual illumination: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and distinguishing of spirits.

Three gifts of power

Gifts that demonstrate God's supernatural power in the physical realm: faith, the gifts of healing, and the effecting of miracles.

Have God's Faith

The gift of faith is the first of the three gifts of power. It is distinguished from the other forms of faith by the fact that it is a sovereign, supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit working through the believer.

In Matthew 21 and Mark 11 we read how Jesus, on His way into Jerusalem with His disciples, came to a fig tree by the wayside. Jesus was seeking fruit. When He found that the tree contained no fruit, He pronounced a curse upon it, saying, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again!" (Mark 11:14). Next day, passing the same tree, the disciples were astonished to see that, within 24 hours, it had withered. "Rabbi, look!" Peter said, "The fig tree which You cursed has withered away" (Mark 11:21), to which Jesus replied, "Have faith in God" (v. 22). This is the normal English translation. However, what Jesus said, in its most literal form, was, "Have God's faith." The special kind of faith we are speaking of here is faith that is a gift. It has its origin in God, not in man—it is an aspect of God's own eternal nature. Through the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit imparts a portion of God's faith directly and supernaturally to the believer. This is faith on a divine level, as high above mere human faith as heaven is above earth.

In saying, "Have God's faith," Jesus challenged His disciples to receive and exercise this kind of faith, just as He Himself had done. He went on to tell them that with faith of this kind they would be able to accomplish much:

> Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," it will be done." (Matthew 21:21)

In Mark 11:23, Jesus speaks of this faith not merely to the disciples then present, but by using the word whoever, He extends His promise to all believers:

> For assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be taken up and cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.

Jesus sets no limit to the scope of this kind of faith. The phrases He uses are all-inclusive: "Whoever says ... what he says ... shall be granted him." There is no restriction as to the person who speaks or the words spoken. All that matters is the nature of the faith: it must be God's own faith.

In Luke 8:22–25 as Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee in a boat, they were suddenly overtaken by an unnaturally violent storm. The disciples awakened Jesus, who was asleep in the stern, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" (v. 24). The record continues, "Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and there was a calm."

Obviously, the faith Jesus exercised here was not on the human level. Normally the winds and the waters are not under man's control. But at the moment of need Jesus received a special impartation of God's own faith. Then, by a word spoken with that faith, He accomplished what otherwise only God alone could have done—the instantaneous calming of the storm.

Afterward, Jesus asked His disciples, "Where is your faith?" In other words, "Why couldn't you have done that instead of Me?" Wouldn't it have been just as easy for the disciples to calm the storm as it was for Him—if they had exercised the right kind of faith? But in the moment of crisis, the storm aroused fear in the disciples' hearts, thus excluding faith. Jesus, on the other hand, opened His heart to the Father and received from Him the supernatural gift of faith needed to deal with the storm.

Quality, Not Quantity

Soon after, Jesus confronted a storm of a different kind—a boy in full epileptic seizure. Jesus dealt with this storm as He had the one on the Sea of Galilee. He spoke an authoritative word of faith that drove the evil spirit out of the boy. When His disciples asked why they had failed, Jesus told them plainly, "Because of the littleness of your faith" (nasb1995). Then He went on to say, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

Jesus here uses a mustard seed as a measure of quantity. Matthew 13:32 tells us a mustard seed is "smaller than all other seeds" (nasb1995). Jesus is reminding us it is not the quantity of faith that matters, but the quality. A mustard seed of this kind of faith is sufficient to move a mountain!

Near the climax of His earthly ministry, outside the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus once more demonstrated the power of words spoken with this kind of faith. He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). This brief command, energized by supernatural faith, caused a man who was both dead and buried to come walking out of his tomb, alive and well.

This kind of faith is found in the act of creation itself:

> By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath [literally, Spirit] of His mouth all their host ... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. (Psalm 33:6, 9, nasb1995)

God's spoken word, energized by His Spirit, was the effective agent in all creation.

When the gift of faith is in operation, a man becomes, for a time, the channel of God's own faith. The person who speaks is not of primary importanc—the faith is! If it is God's own faith at work, it is equally effective whether the words are spoken through directly by God or uttered by the power of the Spirit through the mouth of a human believer. When a believer operates with this divine faith, his words are just as effective as if God Himself had spoken them.

In all these examples, supernatural faith was expressed through a spoken word. By a spoken word Jesus caused the fig tree to wither, calmed the storm, cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic boy and called Lazarus out of the tomb. In Mark 11:23 He extended this promise to any word spoken in faith when He said, "Whoever says ... what he says ... will be granted to him" (nasb).

Sometimes a word spoken in prayer becomes the channel for the gift of faith. In James 5:15 we are told that "the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick" (nasb). Is there any doubt as to the effect of the prayer described here? Its results are guaranteed. Prayer with this kind of God given faith is irresistible. Neither sickness nor any other condition contrary to God's will can stand against it.

As an example of "the prayer of faith" James refers to Elijah, who by his prayer first withheld all rain for three and a half years, and then caused rain to fall again (James 5:17–18). Scripture is clear that the giving and withholding of rain is a divine prerogative, exercised by God Himself (see Deuteronomy 11:13–17; Jeremiah 5:24; 14:22). Yet for three and a half years Elijah exercised this prerogative on God's behalf. James emphasizes that Elijah was "a man with a nature like ours" (nasb)—a human being just like the rest of us. But so long as he prayed with God's faith, the word he uttered were as effective as God's own decrees.

Faith of this kind need not operate only through a spoken word. It was this kind of supernatural faith that enabled Jesus to walk on the stormy Sea of Galilee (see Matthew 14:25–33). He did not need to speak; He merely walked out over the water. When Peter followed the example of Jesus and exercised the same kind of faith, he was able to do exactly what Jesus was doing—that is, until he looked away from Jesus to the waves—and his faith deserted him and he began to sink!

Jesus' reproof is very illuminating. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Jesus did not reprove Peter for wanting to walk on the water, but for losing faith halfway. Don Basham has pointed out that there is a divine urge implanted in every human heart to step out in supernatural faith and walk on a plane above the level of our own ability. Since God Himself placed this urge in man, He does not reprove us for it. On the contrary, He is willing to give us the faith that will enable us to do it. He is only

disappointed when we do not hold long enough to this kind of faith.

God Retains the Initiative

When supernatural faith is given in a specific situation to meet a specific need, it remains under God's direct control, for it is God's own faith. He gives it or withholds it at His discretion. Faith is like all other supernatural gifts, concerning which Paul says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). That key phrase at the end—"just as He wills"—means God Himself determines when and to whom He will impart each of these gifts. The initiative is with God, not with man.

This was true even in the ministry of Jesus Himself. He did not curse every fruitless fig tree, nor still every tempest, nor call every dead man out of His tomb, nor always walk on the water. Jesus was careful to leave the initiative in the hands of His Father. In John 5:19 He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way" (nasb) (see also John 14:10). The initiative was always with the Father.

We must learn to be as reverent and as careful in our relationship to the Father as Jesus was. The gift of faith is not ours to command, nor is it intended to satisfy our personal whims or ambitions. It is made available at God's discretion to accomplish ends that originate in God's own eternal purposes. We cannot, and must not, wrest the initiative from God.

Pictured as a "mustard seed," the gift of faith is similar to two of the revelation gifts—the word of wisdom and word of knowledge. Wisdom is directive; knowledge is informative. Fortunately for us, God, who has all wisdom and all knowledge does not burden us with all of it. But in a situation where we need direction, He supernaturally provides a "word" of wisdom—just one little "mustard seed" out of His total store of wisdom. Or when we need information, He provides a "word" of knowledge—a little "mustard seed" out of His total store of knowledge. So it is with the gift of faith. God has all faith, but He does not impart it all to us. In given situations, where we need faith on a higher level than our own, God provides a "mustard seed" out of His own total store.

Equipment for Evangelism

From another point of view, as we have seen earlier, the gift of faith is associated with the other two gifts of power: the gifts of healing and the effecting of miracles. In practice, the gift of faith often serves as a catalyst to bring the other two gifts into operation. We see this in the ministry of Philip in Acts 8:5–7 (nasb1977):

> And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

In the first phase of ministry, Philip cast out evil spirits. As with Jesus in Matthew 17:17–20 and elsewhere, he did so by the spoken word through the exercise of the gift of faith. In the second phase of Philip's ministry the two associated gifts of healings and miracles came into operation. As a result, miracles were performed and the paralyzed and the lame were healed.

Summary

In summary, we see that the gift of faith is one of nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7–11), each a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in a believer and operating through him. In the gift of faith, the Holy Spirit temporarily imparts to us a portion of God's own faith—faith on a divine level, far above the human. Rather than the quantity, the quality matters, wherein a "mustard seed" of this kind of faith is sufficient to move a mountain.

The gift of faith often operates through a spoken word (sometimes spoken in prayer) by which Jesus caused a fig tree to wither, calmed a storm, drove out evil spirits, and called Lazarus to life.

It was this kind of faith that enabled Jesus—and Peter—to walk on the stormy waves. God has implanted in man an urge to exercise this kind of faith and He does not reprove us for doing so. As Jesus demonstrated, the initiative must always be left with God. May we always be obedient to Jesus' challenge in Mark 11:22, "Have faith in God," and wisely and effectively utilize the gift of faith.

© 2007 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.

Teaching Letter

Transcript: TL-L059-100-ENG
Last Updated: 28 Oct 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources



© 2007 - Derek Prince Ministries, International, Inc.