

The Gift of Faith

1 Corin 12:4-11

Have you ever noticed that just about everyone has faith? Even atheists have faith... We often hear of people saying things like, *"I have faith that we will get it done by tomorrow"*. *Others people say things like, "hey don't be discouraged I have faith in you", or how about "hey don't worry about it have faith"*. I have to ask you though "what do we mean when we say that"? Because I sure don't know what I mean when I said that.

While we say these things to encourage others, even if we don't really understand what we mean, we say it with good and great intentions; what makes it all the more interesting is that in the midst of these encouraging words there are many individuals out there who have a different opinion about faith. Opinions about what it is and what is not. What it can be and what it should be; Opinions about appropriate faith an inappropriate faith. There are Opinions about how faith should be expressed, when it should be expressed and when faith should be kept to oneself. There are also opinions about the futility of faith and the false security that it gives. All of these opinions about faith generate a great level of confusion, causing us to use it in ways that lack the ability to reflect what it is, but most importantly where faith comes from.

It is no wonder the apostle Paul summarized faith as *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"*. (*Hebrews*) Now isn't this a great summation of faith? This passage makes it clear that faith is not a matter of opinion or word of encouragement; it makes it clear that faith is so much more. It is more than a word with good or great intentions. In fact Faith is a word of action that refers to absolute assurance and not wishful thinking. Faith is a word of action that refers to absolute certainty, not good will or great intentions.

Faith is the instrument that God uses to bring individuals into a saving relationship with Himself. That is not to say that faith is the basis of our salvation; rather, it is the channel which God uses for salvation. Robert Jamieson says this, *"Saving faith does not save by its intrinsic merit, but by the merits of Him who is the object of it."* In other words, Faith does not save of its

own merit, rather by the merits of Him who is the source of it. Ephesians says it like this, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* Ephesians 2:8

So what does that mean? It means that Faith comes to the individual as a gift from God. How do we know this? We know this because scripture says it in Romans 10:17, *“Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**”* It is not something that individuals are capable of mustering up on their own. So you see there is a significant difference between universal faith, and the gift of faith. Universal faith is what is exercised when we say “I have faith in you, I have faith that we will finish tomorrow; etc” Universal faith is the equivalent to wishful thinking or desire. Or better yet, universal faith reflects current circumstances. It is based on the longing to see change happen in an area of life’s difficulty.

William Barclay says this, *“When Paul mentions the Gift of faith; Paul means more than what we might call ordinary faith. It is the faith which really produces results. It is not just the intellectual conviction that a thing is true; it is the passionate belief in a thing which makes a man spend all that he is and has on it...It is the faith which turns the vision into deeds.”* So unlike universal faith, the gift of faith produces in us the will to do and to act according to God’s desire and will, so that others may see Him at work through us, in us, but for them.

You see, we often limit faith to simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, when in fact there is yet a greater gift of faith for the follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I want you to notice that I did not say for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather for those who follow, for those who are in Christ. Now let me expand on this a little bit so that we may see the difference. The faith that we have in Jesus is refer to Saving faith. This is the faith that opens our eyes, mind, and heart to the truth claims of the gospel, which in turn brings us to the feet of Jesus. Scripture says it like this, Romans 10:8 *“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: 9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be*

saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” This is what faith in Jesus does. Ok great, but what about this gift of faith that Paul is talking about?

The gift of faith that Paul is talking about as stated earlier goes far beyond saving faith. The faith that Paul is talking about in Corinthians refers to a faith that is unyielding to the rules of this world and to principalities and powers. This gift of faith strengthens and empowers the believer to a state of unyielding their trust in God. This gift of faith is the same faith that brought Abraham to be called the father of Faith. Let us for a moment stop and think about how Abraham was promised a son at his old age, and how through that son he would become the father of many nations. Having been promised this, Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son. The very son in whom the promised rests and yet he does not question and surrenders to God’s request. Scripture goes on to say, “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness”. You see the gift of faith is what brings us into the place where we believe and trust God beyond the shadow of a doubt.

You want a more challenging situation? Take Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego. Here are three guys who followed God, who were in positions of authority if you will and are presented with the option of bowing down and worship an image of gold or they be thrown into a furnace. Their reaction, *“King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* Daniel 3:16-18

Worship team could come up.

Not good enough you say! Ok, Ok, well how about Jesus? In as much as he was God in the flesh, Jesus was still dependent upon the Father. In as much as Jesus is the full representation of the gift and power of God, Jesus needed to be immovable. We see the work and power of the

gift of faith by the spirit manifest in Jesus life, ministry and crucifixion. How so? We see in that everything Jesus did in His ministry came from absolute assurance in the Father and absolute certainty in the Father. Now remember how earlier I said that *“the gift of faith produces in us the will to do and to act according to God’s desire and will, so that others may see Him at work through us, in us but for them.”* Jesus did exactly that all throughout His ministry. He demonstrated all of what one can achieve through faith. When we surrender all of who we are to God, this faith of Jesus is the faith that is immovable. The faith of Jesus is the gift of the spirit for those who surrender all of who they are to God. Do you want the gift of faith? Surrender to God and let him reign in your life so that others may see Him at work in the world, at work in you, at work in the church to the glory of God.

Benediction:

The gift of faith enables us to see past the obvious into the miraculous. The gift of faith is what enables us to have the absolute certainty that God is able and ultimately, that if God is for us, then who can be against us. What can man do to me?