

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 this Elijah is sitting on the top of Mount Carmel and he tells his servant to go look towards the sea. He sees nothing. Six times he repeated this. 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. This makes the king, Nebuchadnezzar, furious. 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.

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. 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.

God gave the centurion the gift of faith to believe in the healing power of Jesus. 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. 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. 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. Here God gave him the faith to do that. 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. 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. That is exactly what we see here as Peter lifts this dead, lifeless body up, and she is alive!

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. He will give to us those things we need in our life as He sees fit.

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, or protect you from impending danger. It is a supernatural gift; the gift of faith!



What the Bible says about . . . Gifts of the Spirit Part 4

3. GIFT OF FAITH

Another gift of the Spirit that is found in I Corinthians chapter 12 is the gift of faith. 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. 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. 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.

Next we will look at is the word, "**evidence**" which comes from the Greek word, ELEGCHOS, (el'-eng-khos) and 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. 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. It is 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.

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, a 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. 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. Paul said that it is not of works because if it were, you would just boast about it!

In fact, when Paul speaks of this being a gift of God, it is written in the Greek so as to speak 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! Also keep in mind how 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. Good works are the evidence for our faith and yet there are those that don't do anything. James tells us that those who say they are saved and yet do not do good works, have faith that 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 in James chapter 2!

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. 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 and you believed there was a fire there, but you remained in your seat, making no effort to move away from the danger, and did not try to help others get out of that burning movie theater, 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

Then there 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. 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. 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." 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 be for a team when they are winning but when things get tough, when they have not won a championship for 100 years, they give up. They will also come back when things are going better. That is not true faith, but is a temporary faith. You see, true faith remains and temporary faith fails away!

4. INTELLECTUAL FAITH - JOHN 20:25

Another type of faith 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.

An 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

Then there is practical faith. 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. 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.

That is practical faith, a faith that is exercised. As you hear the Word of God, as you are taught the Word of God, you 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. GIFT OF FAITH

Now we will look at the 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. 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."

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.