

# The Gift of Faith

1 Corinthians 12:9

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. They are printed and given "as is." all Scripture quotes are from the New International Version unless noted.

Take your Bibles and open them to **1 Corinthians 12:7**. God's Word tells us, "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (8) To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, (9) to another faith by the same Spirit" (NIV).

Charles Blondin, a famous French aerialist, walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope in 1859. He walked across several times. Once he walked across blindfolded. Another time on stilts. He also walked across it pushing a wheelbarrow. It's said that before Blondin crossed Niagara Falls with the wheelbarrow he asked, "Do you believe that I can push this wheelbarrow across?" the crowd, having witnessed his other feats shouted, "Yes!" he then inquired, "Who wants to ride?" No one volunteered.

Real faith believes the impossible. Real faith is always accompanied with action. Today I want us to talk about the "gift of faith." We are told in 1 Corinthians 12:9 that one of the spiritual gifts is the "gift of faith." I want us to try to answer three questions: What is the gift of faith? How do I know if I have this gift? If I don't have this gift how can I grow in personal faith?

## 1. What is the Gift of Faith?

Let's begin with the question, "What is the gift of faith?" **The gift of faith is the God-given spiritual ability to believe and trust in God's power and purpose in an extraordinary way.**

- John MacArthur defines it as "the ability to trust God in the face overwhelming obstacles and human impossibilities."
- Chuck Swindoll defined it as the "unique ability to trust God even in the midst of overwhelming circumstances."

Those with the gift of faith have the ability to intensely trust God in difficult and demanding ways. The gift of faith is trusting God to do that which is beyond His normal provision.

Every believer has *general faith*, but not all believers have the *gift of faith*. What is the difference between general faith and the gift of faith?

### ***General Faith***

General faith is the ability to trust God's power and purpose.

General faith is given for a personal relationship that will enhance individual growth.

General faith is applied and practiced daily.

All believers have general faith.

Moment by moment faith.

### ***Gift of Faith***

The gift of faith is the ability to trust God's power and purpose in an extraordinary way.

The gift of faith is given for a particular project that seems impossible in the eyes of other believers that when answered, enhances the growth of many.

The gift of faith is applied and practiced on specific occasions.

Some believers have the gift of faith.

Miracle faith.

The Scripture seems to allude to degrees of faith. Jesus said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed" then you can move mountains (Matt. 17:20). Jesus also mentions some of His disciples having "little faith" (Matt. 8:26; 17:20). Paul also alludes to this when he says, "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). His phrase "all faith" seems to indicate degrees of faith. "All faith" in comparison to "some faith" in comparison to "no faith."

Those with the gift of faith seem to live at the highest level of faith. They can believe that God can and will do something when other believers doubt.

- **Moses** standing before the Red Sea believing God had an answer, while thousands of others grumbled and complained and doubted both Moses and God.
- **Joshua and Caleb** believing they could conquer the land and the giants within the land while the other ten spies shriveled up in fear.
- **David**, full of faith, facing the giant Goliath while other strong warriors of God watched in disbelief.
- **Noah** building an ark for 120 years for a flood that was to come.

Those with the gift of faith are those that stand up in front of impossibilities and say, "It is possible." They have a tenacious faith. As a matter of fact, their faith can make some folks uncomfortable.

## **You may have the gift of faith if...**

- You are confident of God's endeavor when others are doubtful.
- You depend upon God's resources and guidance to an unusual degree.
- You easily trust in the presence and power of God for the apparently impossible.
- You have a strong belief that God will keep His promises in spite of circumstances.
- You are very confident of achieving great things for the glory of God.
- Others around you sense your faith and have theirs increased.
- Others come and ask questions about your faith in a positive way.

Every believer has a degree of faith. Every Christian has some faith. But some believers have this gift of faith. Every church needs these faith people in their midst.

## **2. How to Grow in Personal Faith**

I don't have the gift of faith, I have general faith. If you are like me, your faith could be enlarged or strengthened in some areas and I want to grow in faith.

But does the Bible have anything to say about growing and developing a stronger and healthier faith? Yes it does.

**First of all, our faith is developed through the *Word of God*.** We are told in **Romans 10:17** that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (NKJV). If you want to build your faith, then you need to spend time in the Word of God. The Word of God is the gymnasium where our faith is strengthened and becomes stronger.

**Secondly, our faith is developed through *prayer*.** The early disciples realized they needed more faith.

- In Luke 17:5 the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith.
- On another occasion in Mark 9:24 a father asked Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief.

Ask the Lord, who is the author and perfecter of your faith, to increase your faith. Be honest with God about the weakness of your faith in a particular situation or circumstance and ask Him to strengthen your faith in that area.

**Third, our faith is developed through *other people's faith*.** Proverbs 27:17 teaches that, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." If you rub up against people who have a healthy faith and who are growing in their faith they will sharpen you in your own faith. If you rub up against doubters you will become a doubter. Paul told the Romans believers in **Romans 1:11**, "I want very much to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, (12) that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (HCSB).

It is important that you be apart of a faith church- a church that believes in the power of Almighty God. The people who you rub up against the most will be the type of person you will become.

### **3. Why is it so important that we grow in faith?**

Why is it so important that we grow in faith? The Bible gives many reasons why we should grow in faith, but let me share with you just two of them.

**First, our faith is what overcomes the *world*.** Look at **1 John 5:4**, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." Every child of God can obey God and as a result defeat sin and temptation by trusting Jesus to help him. Faith in God, faith in His word, faith in His promises empowers the believer to overcome the temptations the world offers you in order to pull you away from God.

**Second, our faith is what overcomes the *devil*.** Ephesians 6:16 teaches us this truth, "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." One type of shield Roman soldiers used was a shield about two and half feet wide and four and half feet high. It was designed to protect the entire body of the soldier. This shield was made of a solid piece of wood and was covered with metal or heavy oiled leather.

In the New Testament times the tips of arrows would often be wrapped in pieces of cloth that had been soaked in pitch. Just before the arrow was shot, the tip would be lighted and the flaming arrow would be shot at the enemy troops. The pitch burned fiercely, and on impact it would spatter burning bits for several feet, igniting anything flammable it touched. In addition to piercing their bodies, it could inflict serious burns on enemy soldiers and destroy their clothing and gear. The most reliable protection against such flaming arrows was the shield, whose covering of metal or leather soaked in water would either deflect or extinguish them.

The flaming arrows that Satan aims at us are many. Satan continually attacks God's people with arrows of immorality, hatred, envy, anger, jealousy, pride, doubt, fear, despair, distrust and every other sin. Faith in God and faith in God's Word extinguishes hatred, anger, pride, doubt and fear from one's life. It is the shield of faith that protects you from the attacks of Satan's arrows of temptation.