

## Spiritual Gifts #3

### FAITH

Read: Matthew 17:14-20 (ESV)

#### What is faith?

- The word 'faith' is used with different shades of meaning in Scripture
- It is important to understand the distinction

#### 1/Assenting faith

- *'I believe that Jesus is the Saviour'*
- Eg 'I believe that Mr Howard is the Prime Minister'
- 'Believing that' is not the same as 'believing in'
- This kind of faith is a beginning but it is not enough
- Even the demons believe this much – and shudder! (James 2:19)

#### 2/Saving faith

- *'I believe that Jesus is my Saviour'*
- Not believing 'that' but believing 'in'.
- Eg Philippian jailer. All he had to do to be saved was to believe (Acts 16:30-31).
- See Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 3:11 'Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."'

#### 3/Keeping faith

- *'I believe that Jesus keeps me day by day'*
- Just as we are saved by faith we live by faith
- Confident trust in Jesus to keep us to the end

*He loves, he saves, he keeps, he satisfies  
This longing heart of mine  
He fills my heart with overflowing  
With his love and truth divine  
He guides, he guards, he watches over me  
He slumbers not nor sleeps  
For he is my loving Saviour  
And he loves, he saves, he keeps*

See Hebrews 10:35-38, 'Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. [36] For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. [37] For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; [38] but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."'

#### **4/Trusting faith**

- *'I believe that Jesus is with me no matter what happens'*
- Confident trust
- Christ is with us in every situation

See Habakkuk 2:3-4, 'For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. [4] "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.'"

#### **5/Miracle faith**

- *'I believe that this miracle will happen in Jesus' name'*
- While all faith is a gift of God, this is a special gift of the Spirit
- By definition, all believers have saving faith
- But miracle faith is given by the Spirit only to different individuals to meet special needs
- See 1 Cor. 12:7-11

#### **Time and again, Jesus attributed healing miracles to people's faith**

- Centurion (Matt 8:13)
- Blind men (Matt 9:29)
- Canaanite woman (Matt 14:28)
- Epileptic boy (Matt 17:20)
- Woman with perfume (Lk 7:50)
- Lepers (Lk 17:19)

#### **6/Gift of faith**

##### *Short-term*

- To meet an immediate need
- Act 27:25
- Eg When announcing an offering to raise funds for a church manse I found myself saying, 'I believe we will raise the whole amount.' There was no way humanly speaking that this would happen. But a widow with two children told me she had been well-provided for by her husband's insurance policy and she had come to church that day asking God for a sign as to what to do with a sum she had set aside.

##### *Long-term*

- To meet an ongoing need
- Example of Jesus whose faith carried him through to the end
- Eg when Tabor College began, I felt God gave me an assurance from 1 Chronicles 4:10 that no fatal harm would destroy the work. Over 24 years, in the face of many problems and potential calamities, I found I had faith to believe we would come through. We always did. It was a gift of faith.

#### **Guidelines**

##### *1/Timing*

- Timing is critical
- Gifts of the Spirit require us to walk in the Spirit

- Put the sickle in only when the harvest is ripe (see Mark 4:26-29)

### *2/Love*

Faith must always be balanced with love

- Other people should not be placed at risk
- Eg Wesley Parker story. His parents withheld insulin on the basis of 'faith' but three days later Wesley died and they were prosecuted for manslaughter. They allowed their faith to be greater than their love. Otherwise they would never have allowed him to be put at risk by their faith.
- See 1 Cor. 13:1-3

### *3/Wisdom*

- Faith must be exercised wisely
- There is always a need for consultation
- See Deut. 19:15; Proverbs 11:14; 15:22

### **What to do**

*Where am I on the staircase of faith?*

Assenting faith?

Saving faith?

Keeping faith?

Trusting faith?

Miracle faith?

- We cannot produce faith of ourselves but it is not enough to sit back waiting
- Earnestly desire spiritual gifts
- Act in love
- Act in wisdom
- Act in faith

See 1 Cor. 12:31; 1 Cor. 14:1

### **SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT**

**Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Matt 17:14-20

### Biblical

1. Rev Dr Gordon Moyes once wrote, 'Only a church that can fail is a church that is living by faith.' Why?
2. How do you think the disciples were feeling at the beginning of this story? (14-16)
3. Look at the two adjectives Jesus uses to describe his generation. (17) Compare various translations of these words. What do they really mean?
4. What does Jesus mean by his two questions? (17)
5. What was the cause of the boy's malady? How do we know? (18)

6. How long did the healing take? (18) What can we learn from this? Find other verses of Scripture about the authority of Jesus.
7. What can you find out about mustard seeds? (20)
8. Which word in verse 20 indicates authority?

#### Personal and Practical

9. Jesus uses a single Greek word that means 'littlefaith' (20). Make up a word that he might use about you and your faith today.
10. Note again the word 'say'. (20) Jesus did not say 'pray.' What can we learn from this?
11. Did Jesus mean what he said at the end of verse 20? Do we feel the need to qualify this statement? Why? How? (cf 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).
12. How do you feel about verse 20 overall? Does it discourage you or encourage you? Why?
13. Read 1 Corinthians 12:9. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit for a gift of faith to meet exceptional needs that confront you.

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