

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - PART VI
THE GIFT OF FAITH - Part I

Text: I Corinthians 12:9a

Key Word: Faith

Key Thought: Understanding the Gift of Faith

It has been suggested that through the Gift of Faith any believer can have whatever they want. Some teach that faith is the basis of receiving from God. If a person therefore has a great deal of faith they can move the hand of God to supply anything they want. **This is of course a misinterpretation of the Word of God.** There are many scriptures that show that great men and woman of faith did NOT receive all they asked for. This was NOT due to their lack of faith.

The "Faith Teaching" to some extent was needed in the Church. The problem was that the Faith Teaching got out of balance. It became a hyper faith teaching. It has caused a great deal of hurt and guilt to come upon those who have practised its extremes.

There is no doubt that faith is a foundational Biblical truth. We often talk about the Christian faith. Faith is required to become and remain a Christian.

*"And without faith it is impossible to please God,
because anyone who comes to him must believe that
he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly
seek him."*

Hebrews 11:5

*"let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full
assurance of faith."*

Hebrews 10:22

"The righteous will live by faith"

Romans 1:17

The entire book of Romans deals with the teaching of faith. I do not have a problem in encouraging people to walk by **faith in God**. What I have had a problem with is that some very precious saints have been beguiled and actually have placed their faith in the "Faith Teaching" and not in God. **Some have had "faith in faith" instead of "faith in God."** This is what I call **Active faith.**

There is another concern that has arose over the past number of years perhaps in order to bring balance to the "Faith Teaching." The problem with this teaching is that it has swung the pendulum to far to the left. **It teaches that faith is a Passive Gift from God.** You cannot see it at work. It takes time for its operation to work.

I believe that the Gift of Faith is as active as the Gift of Miracles. The problem is that it APPEARS to be passive. In other words, we don't often see it working after we engage our faith in God. An illustration in the life of Jesus may clarify this problem.

I. JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-25)

This portion of Scripture has been often quoted by those who are the "**Right Wing Faith Teachers.**" They try to take everything Jesus said at surface value. They have taught that we can literally move great mountains if we have enough faith. I do not believe that this is what Jesus intended for us to believe. If Jesus really meant it literally, He probably would have used a great mountain and not simply the Mount of Olives.

The fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. These trees normally sprout their leaves in March or April and begin to have fruit in June once the leaves are fully out. This tree had pre-mature leaves but no fruit. It symbolized how the nation of Israel appeared before God. They had all the outward beauty and distinction of religion but they were not producing the fruit of righteousness.

This portion leads right into the account of Jesus clearing the temple of money exchangers. People were coming to the temple hungry for God and had to get through all the outward appearances before attempting to get fed spiritually. Jesus used the fig tree to show what God saw their pitiful state. **He saw the religious system of Israel as being rotten to the roots and withered in their faith. They were unable to bear fruit.**

The key to the whole discourse is found in verse 22.

"Have faith in God."

Mark 11:22

Do not have faith in faith. Do not have faith in what mighty acts you can do. **HAVE FAITH IN GOD.** With that kind of faith the Mount of Olives could be cast into the **Dead Sea** where it belonged. **The Mount of Olives was Jesus' place of prayer. It was also a place of religious ceremony and prayer. The mountain of religious practise could be cast into the DEAD SEA if they only allowed their faith in God through sincere prayer to become activated.**

I. JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-25) (Contd.)

It was by faith that Jesus cursed the Fig tree. The results were not seen immediately but the Gift of Faith was fully at work. The Gift of Faith was active setting the stage for Jesus to teach this important truth. The Revised Version brings out the fullness of what Jesus was trying to say by translating His words as "**HAVE THE FAITH OF GOD.**"

1. Key of God's will - One key of having the Gift of Faith actively working is that God's will must be done. If God does not want it to be done, no amount of faith will cause it to happen. Therefore, Jesus taught the importance of prayer when dealing with faith.

"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Mark 11:17

"whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Mark 11:24

There is no doubt in my mind that we must pray for God's will to be done NOT ours if we expect the answer to come from God. In other words, the thing that we are praying about must be upon the heart of God BEFORE it is planted into our hearts and minds.

2. Key of Forgiveness - One of the best ways to keep this channel of communication open is by forgiveness.

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

Mark 11:25

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Matthew 6:14

Years ago I learned something new about my computer program. It is what is called "**Search and Replace.**" I believe that God has activated a spiritual program like this in our lives the moment we begin to pray.

I. JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-25) (Contd.)

2. Key of Forgiveness (Contd.)

If we have something against our parents, spouse, children, etc the Holy Spirit searches it out. He brings it to our attention. Its like a little "beep." If we choose not to deal with it and go on in life God allows us to go on but it will affect the quality of prayer life. **God knows that unforgiveness will hinder us from having the Gift of Faith in its full potential.**

*** I met with a woman one day who was becoming frustrated in her prayers. She felt like God wasn't listening to her anymore.

I knew of the situation she was living in so I asked if she had forgiven her husband. Her facial expression immediately changed. I hit the "wrong button." At least she agreed it was the wrong button. In reality, it was the area that was hindering her communication with God and therefore her faith in God.

I tried to convince her that what he was doing had nothing to do with her place in God. She had to forgive him in order to see her level of faith increase.

God's gift of faith was being activated but also was being hindered because of her lack of forgiveness. She felt that she had no faith when in fact her faith was being matured.

Her faith was not passive - in fact it was very active. It was trying to grow. It was bringing her to a point of confrontation with her attitude toward her ungrateful, irresponsible, unloving, critical, unfaithful husband.

I told her to forgive him so that her faith could grow and turn him over to God. If she kept control God wouldn't interfere. She was successful for a short time and saw results. Yet she found it very hard to leave it with God. Every time she took over her faith was hindered. It took time but she eventually gave into God and saw the results of her prayers of faith.

Faith was active all the time. It simply needed the road of obedience to the will of God through forgiveness to bring her to a point of victory. ***

I. JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-25) (Contd.)

3. Key of God's Word

Faith is activated by God's Word first and foremost. If God's Word does not say it we will labour in vain at setting the Gift of faith into motion.

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

Romans 10:17

If we cannot find the basis for our faith in the Word of God we will not turn the hand of God. James and John had to learn this lesson. When Jesus was travelling on His last journey to Jerusalem He sent some of his disciples ahead to prepare for them. The Samaritans would not welcome them after learning that Jesus was going to Jerusalem. James and John took the matter to heart and said to Jesus,

*"Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy (consume) them.
55. But Jesus turned and rebuked them."*

Luke 9:54,55

They should have asked what God wanted done and followed His word without going to Him with their words of judgement. If God would have allowed their bitterness to determine the outcome it would have changed the face of church history. Instead, God refused to follow their words and later sent Philip to preach the gospel and lead the people into a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Be very careful in trying to make God's Word fit your situation. People often take a particular event and try to apply it to their lives. Isn't it interesting that it is never words of judgement of chastisement that these people receive. Why do we have to be so dramatic.

Faith must have a basis to work from. These three keys are not an exhaustive set on God's key chain. There are other keys to open the door of faith. Yet these are some of the KEY KEYS to opening the door of faith. God wants to give us spiritual Gifts more than we probably desire them.

The Gift of Faith is so important if we are going to accomplish God's will in this world. Faith is the active principle which will work behind the scenes to bring about the will of God. Do we want to be a Church that allows faith to be exercised within the limits of Scripture?

What Kind of Faith Do We Want?

1. Little Faith - Matthew 14:31
2. Mustard Seed Faith - Matthew 17:20
3. Shipwreck Faith - I Timothy 1:19
4. Wavering Faith - James 1:6
5. Increased Faith - Luke 17:5
6. Working Faith - James 2:17
7. Tested Faith - I Peter 1:7
8. Diligent Faith - Hebrews 11:6
9. Righteous Faith - Philippians 3:9
10. Victorious Faith - Daniel 3:17

Let the faith of God rise within you to stand against the evil influences of this world. Don't get sidetracked. We desperately need a baptism of dynamic faith in our churches. A faith that will lift God's people out of the clutches of depression. Faith that will stand when the enemy hurls his fiery darts towards us. Faith that breaks the grip of sickness and disease and sweeps God's people into divine health. Faith that detroys the chains of discouragement and defeat and lift us to the road of victory and triumph. Faith that supplies in the hour of need.

"who through faith conquered kingdoms administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouth of lions, 34. quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned into strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36. Some faced jeers and flogging, while others were chained and put in prison. 37. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and holes in the ground. 39. These were all commended for their faith . . ."

Hebrews 11:33-39

Is your faith maturing? Is there a possibility of a stumbling block? Let the Holy Spirit set out on **Search and Replace Mission** in your life. Better yet let it be a **Search and Destroy Mission!**

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Date: ????????

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Date: Feb 5/95

Place: FCA

Time: 6:30 Pm

Song: But Thou O Lord (Art a shield for me) - Am

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INTRODUCTION: *Hebrews 11:5; Hebrews 10:22; Romans 1:17*

I. JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (Mark 11:12-25) - Mark 11:22

1. Key of God's will - *Mark 11:17; Mark 11:24*
2. Key of Forgiveness - *Mark 11:25; Matthew 6:14*
3. Key of God's Word - *Romans 10:17; Luke 9:54,55*

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