

The Gift of Faith

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(This is the ninth in a series on the charismata and the Holy Spirit)

The author of the Hebrews epistle defined faith as "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen". This kind of faith might be described as supernatural; beyond the ordinary day in and day out trust in God.

There are several types of Faith. There is the ordinary faith that we all have enabling us to put one foot in front of the other in the certainty that everything is going to be alright. We normally operate with this type of faith without even thinking about it. It is part of daily life. There is the type of faith that prompts us to respond to the Gospel call to believe Jesus is the Savior. There is the type of faith that causes a person to venture into an experience confident that all will come to a satisfactory conclusion. My leaving the parish ministry in 1980, a good salary with benefits and church housing, and established Barnabas Ministries, Inc. without any assurance of income or acceptance of ministry is an example of a tremendous step of faith. And there is the type of faith the author of Hebrews describes.

On my first mission trip with another ministry I was asked to give a testimony at a meeting in Rangoon BURMA. I told about a healing in my older daughter. Following the meeting a man came to me and asked for prayer for his heart condition. No problem! You cannot verify the healing immediately. Someone else came asking for healing of an ulcer. Same story! I looked and the first man was working the congregation, finding people he knew needed healing. A line began to form. There was a man with a withered arm. This now was getting to a point where I wanted at least one of the other team men praying with me so I could either rely upon his faith or excuse the failure of healing on his lack of faith. All the other men were busy and I was alone to pray. I mustered up as much hope and faith I could and prayed for him, and to my surprise, he began waving his arm in the air. Healed! After a few more people a young lady who was deaf and mute wanted prayer. She had been given a New Testament in which she read that Jesus was the same today as yesterday, and she read that yesteryear he healed the deaf and mute. Again I looked for assistance and there was none. I thought at least I would be gone from Rangoon the next day and she

wouldn't remember me anyway. I prayed in English. I prayed in tongues. I recalled Jesus had said "*epiphatha*" (Mark 7:34) which means "be open" when He ministered to a deaf and mute person; so I said it. I tell you the truth; I had no faith this woman was going to be healed, but she did, otherwise she would not have asked for prayer. At last in my spirit I felt the Holy Spirit telling me to do the most unreasonable thing. I obeyed. "If you hear me," I said, "say 'Jesus loves me'." She did!

I stopped praying. I headed to the door ready to leave the building and on my way I began arguing with God. "Lord, don't you know where we are; in the shadow of the Pagoda, here in a pagan country. I pray for people in my church back in Florida and I am lucky if one out of ten gets healed. Why is it everyone I have prayed for tonight got healed?" He told me! "These people have not been taught how to doubt!"

In the early years of my formation of Barnabas Ministries, Inc. I was invited to speak at a Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship in Raleigh NC. I felt I was to emphasize Faith in the sharing of my testimony. I must admit that my teaching on faith was shallow compared to what I was going to be taught later. Following the meeting the President of the Chapter invited people for ministry. As usual there were three groups; the first for those desiring salvation; the second for those desiring the Baptism in the Holy Spirit; and, the third for those wishing prayers of healing. I had observed a young couple sitting not far from the speaker's table, and when they entered she was walking as if in tremendous pain, taking what might be described as "baby steps". Following the President's invitation I observed they went to the healing area so I went with the President to the group where people were being prayed for salvation. When we finished with that group the President and I went to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit group, and out of the corner of my vision I watched to see if the couple was still in the group. They were. We finished praying for people in the second group, and moved to those desiring prayers for healing. Frankly, I was hoping our delay would tire that couple and they would go home. They waited and they were the last to be prayed for.

The husband explained that his wife had suffered a back injury and her spine was fused. Duke University Hospital said there was nothing could be done other than give her pain medicines. It was painful for her to rise or walk and depended totally on her husband's assistance. She had come to the meeting in hopes of receiving prayer. I had given an emphasis on faith in my

testimony and now I was frankly faithless. If Duke said there was nothing could be done, that is gospel. However, they were waiting for prayer and the President and I were expected to respond. I ask the husband to place one hand on the troubled area of her back and the other hand on the corresponding area of her stomach. I anointed her forehead with Holy Oil. We prayed. I thought a long prayer would suffice and then we would send them home and we would leave the restaurant. To my surprise I heard the Holy Spirit say, "tell her to stand up quickly". I was certain that was not the Holy Spirit urging me to tell her to do the impossible. I continued to pray words and He continued to speak to my spirit that she was healed. In my mind's eye I could see her doing the impossible. Finally I succumbed to what the Holy Spirit was saying. I stopped praying. I looked at the girl and said, "In the Name of Jesus I want you to stand up quickly". I took her by the hand and she immediately stood up. "I want you to run to the other end of the dining room, in the NAME OF JESUS". She did! She turned around and ran into the arms of her husband. He had not been able to hold her or hug her for a long time.

That was the kind of Faith the author of Hebrews is talking about. There is no evidence that something is possible or realized, but confident in the power of God you know it has happened before you have the proof. Shortly after receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit the husband of a cousin came to our Charleston WV church to be prayed for prior to cancer surgery. A dozen of us gathered and in the setting of Eucharist we anointed him and prayed for him. Afterward he, June and I went to lunch. I kept feeling the need to tell him the surgery would be a waste of time, but this was new for me. I said nothing. He had the surgery and the pathologist reported there was no cancer in any of the tissues removed from his body. That night in Raleigh as well as that evening in Rangoon, had a profound impact on me. The Holy Spirit used them to teach me to trust Him. Eventually I reached a place where I do not hesitate if I feel the Holy Spirit is revealing something that in the natural would be impossible. Jesus said the things He did believers would do, and with the Gift of Faith we will see the impossible become reality.