

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (continued) - The Gifts Of Faith, Healings And Miraculous Powers - 1 Corinthians 12:9-10 - "...to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."

1) THE GIFT OF FAITH

a) Distinct from SAVING FAITH - *Saving faith* is exercised by those still lost in order to be born again. Saving faith exercised by those coming to Christ - Ephesians 2:8 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God..." Whatever questions different groups may have about this text, it is agreed by virtually everyone that the *purpose* of saving faith is *salvation*. This is different in scope from the gifts of the Spirit, which are for *service to the body of Christ* - 1 Corinthians 12:7 - "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." See also 1 Corinthians 14:26 - "What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up."

b) Distinct from CHARACTER FAITH ("faithfulness" in some translations) - Though all these categories overlap, there is another ongoing fruition of faith in *all* believers as they mature in Christ Jesus - Galatians 5:22 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness..." All of these fruits, as the name implies, are the *gradual growth* of Christlike character. I believe Jesus talked about how this growth in faith occurs. This fruit, while from the Holy Spirit, comes from *abiding in Christ* - John 15:1-5 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. [2] Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. [3] Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. [4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. [5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

This gradual growth of Christlikeness is the Father's will and the work of the Spirit in *all* believers. It unfolds over time. This is very different from the *gifts of the Spirit* which, as Paul makes very clear, are *not* all manifested in every believer (see 1 Corinthians 12-29-30 - "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?")

The fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are not the same thing. And they do not serve the same primary purpose. One deals with the believer's character before the Lord. The other deals with God given manifestations of supernatural ministry for the edification of the congregation of the local church.

c) Perhaps a good working definition of the gift of faith is a DIVINELY GIVEN ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY that God will specifically work in some situation - Of course, we are *all* encouraged to *pray, seek God, and exercise faith*. The gift of faith, however, is not so much the *exercise* of faith as it is the *giving* of absolute and total expectation and confidence for a particular need.

Jesus seems to describe this kind of faith in Matthew 17:20 - "...For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." While it's hard to be too dogmatic, Jesus seems to almost contrast the smallness of the faith of the requester and the mighty certainty of response. The certainty doesn't seem to come from the one praying. There somehow arises *great power* from a very *average prayer*.

Another possible example would be Acts 3:4-7, 16 - "And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." [5] And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. [6] But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" [7] And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong....[16].... And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all." Again, there seems to be no working up to this moment. The faith almost surprises us with its effortless confidence. Peter's explanation, without much detail, attributes the miracle to faith.

Another relevant passage for consideration is James 5:14-15 - "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

James' reference to Elijah in the following verses indicates the answer to prayer isn't due to anything special in the one praying. We simply obey the command. We anoint and we pray. And many times God graciously heals. But when the specific gift of faith is present, the healing becomes a certainty. So James seems to hint at some distinctions here. *Also*, the gift of faith is probably more likely to be given, as with all the other spiritual gifts, when people are obediently doing what God asks them to do. *Gifts follow people on the path of obedient ministry, rather than precede them.*

2) **GIFTS OF HEALING**

- a) **Directly SUPERNATURAL IN NATURE** - There is a sense in which *all* healing is from God (ie. the body will heal itself when cut or bruised, you can usually get over a cold, doctors receive their strength to work from God, God put chemicals and helpful drugs in our world structure, etc.). But the *gifts of healing are supernatural interventions into the way things 'normally' happen*. They are clear supernatural acts of God.
- b) **Not the ONLY way God heals** - We have already looked at **James 5:14-15** where there may or may not be a specific *gift of the Spirit* given. Healing frequently still occurs. In **Mark 16:17-18** Jesus speaks of healing power working through the prayer and exercised faith of *all believers who would ask in His name*. Of course, in these cases, not *everyone* is healed *all the time*. When the *gifts of healing* are given, the results are assured.
- c) **Note the PLURAL in the description of this gift** - There are "*gifts*" of healing (actually "*healings*"). That probably means that we shouldn't box God in to only work in certain ways or through certain people. It may also mean that some may be effective in ministering to *certain illnesses more than to others*. All of this seems an intentional effort on the part of God to keep us from worshipping *methods* and *techniques*.

3) **MIRACULOUS POWERS**

- a) Probably the same points would apply here as with the points above. Gifts of miraculous powers would include *supernatural manifestations in addition to healings* (ie. miracles of divine protection, miracles of deliverance, etc.).
- b) As with the above gifts, the *gifts of the miraculous* are not the only way miracles can occur. **Mark 16:17-18** record definite miraculous works without any mention of these gifts of the Spirit. *Gifts of the miraculous*, however, *insure* the miraculous working of the Spirit of God. That Paul expected these some kind of manifestation of the miraculous to continue down through the church age is seen in **Galatians 3:5** - "[5] **Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—**"