**Bible Study Sept.7th 2023 – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit part 9 – the gift of faith**

Read **1 Cor. 12.4-11**Over the next few weeks we are going to be looking at the three gifts that Harold Horton classified as the gifts of power- faith, gifts of healing and working of miracles.

We have seen with the other spiritual gifts that sometimes it is difficult to say for definite which of the gifts is being used, for example, when Agabus foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine (**Acts 11.28**), was this a prophecy or a word of knowledge? Another example would be on the day of Pentecost when the believers spoke in tongues and it was understood; obviously this was the gifts of tongues but could it on this occasion also be classified as prophecy (**Acts 2.17 & 18**)? With the gifts of power, it is also sometimes difficult to say which gift is being used, for example, when handkerchiefs and aprons were carried away from Paul’s body to the sick and diseases left them and evil spirits came out this is described as “extraordinary miracles”; so was this the gift of healing or of miracles? (**Acts 19.11-12**)

We have seen with the other gifts that sometimes two gifts may be used together, for example: tongues and interpretation, prophecy and discerning of spirits and sometimes the word of knowledge and healing as in the examples of William Branham being given words of knowledge about people before praying for them to be healed. Words of knowledge such as this cause faith to rise in people’s hearts. With the gifts of power there can often be two gifts working at the same time, healing and miracles or healing and faith.

This evening we are going to focus on the Gift of Faith. The gift of faith is one of the hardest gifts to define. Every one of us has exercised saving faith on the day that we were born again. “For by grace you have been saved through faith…” (**Eph. 2.8**). We take a step of faith when we use the other spiritual gifts; it takes faith to speak in tongues or interpret tongues, we prophesy “in proportion to our faith” (**Romans 12.6**) and we certainly need faith in order to use the other gifts of power: healing and miracles. However, faith is referred to as a gift in its own right and so Paul must be referring to something more than saving faith or the faith needed in order to use the other gifts.

In **1 Cor. 13.2** Paul speaks about having “all faith, so as to remove mountains”. This is the same illustration that Jesus used in **Mark 11.20-25**. On the previous day Jesus has cursed a fig tree which had withered (working of miracles) and Jesus now encourages his disciples “Have faith in God” (**v22**). Jesus tells them that if they say to a mountain “be taken up and cast into the sea” so long as they have complete faith and no doubt, it will be done for them. Jesus was using a hyperbole here (i.e. extreme exaggeration in order to make a strong point). He did not literally mean that he intended his disciples to go around casting mountains into the sea but rather that the mountain represented obstacles, difficulties and challenges in life that humanly seem impossible to overcome but through faith in God they can be removed. In **v24** Jesus goes on to speak to them about having faith when they pray that they have received what they asked for. **James 1.6** tells us that when we pray we need to pray with faith and not doubting otherwise we will not receive anything from the Lord but **Mark 11.24** speaks about actually believing that you ***have*** received it. This type of faith is the gift of faith that can move mountains through prayer.

Most of us will be able to associate with the man who said to Jesus “I believe, help my unbelief!” (**Mark 9.24**). The context of this verse is that a man had brought his son to Jesus; his son had a dumb spirit which caused him to have convulsions and foam at the mouth and Jesus’ disciples had been unable to cast it out. Jesus said to him “If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.” (**v23**) As Jesus often did, He looked for faith in other people. On this occasion Jesus’ disciples had failed to cast out the demon and Jesus explained that “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (**v29**). In Matthew’s account of the same story (**Matthew 17.14-20**) Jesus explains that it was because of their “little faith” (**v20**) and He then goes on to speak about having faith to move mountains; so one example of a “mountain” is a demon that seems to be immoveable but can be cast out by prayer and the gift of faith.

The difference between the gift of faith and the gift of miracles is that faith is passive whereas the “working of miracles” is active. As Harold Horton says “the Working of Miracles works miracles, while the Gift of Faith trusts for miracles” (The Gifts of the Spirit 10th edition p.131). A few examples will hopefully explain the difference between the gift of Faith and the Gift of Working of miracles:

1. In **Judges 14.5-6** – a lion attacked Samson but the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he tore the lion apart. This was a miracle. Whereas in **Daniel Ch.6** Daniel prayed three times a day as he always had done and trusted that God would protect him and God sent an angel to shut the lions’ mouths (**v22**). This was the gift of faith.
2. Read **Mark 4.35-41** – Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee when a great storm arose. The disciples were in fear for their lives and thought that they were going to perish but Jesus, Who had the gift of Faith, had complete trust in God. When the disciples woke Jesus, He calmed the storm – that was a miracle.
3. In **Acts 13.6-12** – Elymas the magician withstood Paul and Barnabas and tried to turn the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, from the faith but according to Paul’s word he was struck with blindness. This was a miracle.
In contrast to this Harold Horton tells the story of Mr. Hodgson and Mr Burton (both from Preston) who were a missionaries in the Belgian Congo from 1920 – 1960 and 1915-1960 respectively with the Congo Evangelistic Mission (now Central African Missions). Along with other preachers, they were threatened by witch doctors. The witch doctor declared that by the following morning Mr. Burton would be dead but in faith he went to sleep. The next morning a great crowd gathered to see what would happen. Mr. Burton got up and went to beat the drum for the sunrise prayer meeting and at the same time there was a shriek of agony from the far end of the village as the witch doctor died (The Gifts of the Spirit 10th edition p.117-118). Harold Horton quotes this story in his chapter on the working of miracles but maybe it would be better classified as the gift of Faith.
Another example from the life of Mr. Burton was when he and a friend ate some palm nuts that had been poisoned by a witch-doctor. When they were informed that the nuts had been poisoned they claimed the promise of **Mark 16.17-18** “if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them” and they had no ill effects. The witch doctor was later converted to Christ (W.F.P. Burton, Signs Following 6th Edition p.32). This again was the gift of Faith.
4. A good example of the Gift of Faith is George Muller, who began caring for orphans in Bristol in 1836. By 1870, 1,722 children were being cared for in five homes. In the book “George Muller: Delighted in God”, Roger Steer writes:

“Through all this, Müller never made requests for financial support, nor did he go into debt, even though the five homes cost more than £100,000 to build. Many times, he received unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God. Müller was in constant prayer that God touched the hearts of donors to make provisions for the orphans. For example, on one well-documented occasion, thanks was given for breakfast when all the children were sitting at the table even though there was nothing to eat in the house. As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with sufficient fresh bread to feed everyone, and the milkman gave them plenty of fresh milk because his cart had broken down in front of the orphanage.”

Smith Wigglesworth, a plumber from Bradford who became a great evangelist and whose ministry was accompanied by many miraculous healings, once gave Pastor Willie Hacking a report on how Rees Howells had prayed in £100,000 for the Swansea Bible College. He told Pastor Hacking “Read this Brother Hacking. It will increase your faith. This does not seem to be my particular line of faith.” (Reminiscences of Smith Wigglesworth by W. Hacking, p.24). Pastor Hacking comments that this throws some light on the statement in **Romans 12.3**. Smith Wigglesworth had great faith when it came to praying for the sick but he was obviously aware of his own limitations when it came to believing God for provision. For some people the gift of faith may be for provision (as with Rees Howells and George Muller) for others it may be for protection (as with Jesus in the storm, Daniel in the lions’ den and the missionaries in the Congo) and for others it may be to remove the mountain of a demon that is causing an illness.