

1 Corinthians #25
Charismatic Gifts for the Church
1 Corinthians 12: 8-9

In our last studies we looked at the gifts of the Spirit that pertain to the enlightenment of the mind, and to the sympathy of heart, and we now come to the "gift of faith." The "faith" that Paul speaks of here is not what we call "saving faith," but rather, a "wonder-working faith," the faith that can remove mountains.

The essence of this kind of faith as applied to our everyday living is seen in the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:24-34, "No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate one and love the other, or be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches! That is why I am telling you to stop worrying about your life - what you will eat or what you will drink - or about your body - what you will wear. Life is more than food, isn't it, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky. They don't plant or harvest or gather food into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. You are more valuable than they are, aren't you? Can any of you add a single hour to your span of life by worrying? And why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies in the field and how they grow. They don't work or spin yarn, but I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. Now if that is the way God clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and thrown into an oven tomorrow, won't he clothe you much better - you who have little faith? So don't ever worry by saying, What are we going to eat? or What are we going to drink? or What are we going to wear? For it is the Gentiles who are eager for all those things. Surely your heavenly Father knows that you need all of them! But first be concerned about God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well. So never worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

One of the things that I have learned through my years of ministry is that it is easy for us to talk about "faith" while we are in church, but the truth of the matter is that we live in a negative and hostile world. Our society focuses on the negatives: what is wrong, not what is right; what is missing, not what is present; what is ugly, not, what is beautiful; what is destructive, not what is constructive; what cannot be done, not what can be done; what hurts, not what helps; what we lack, not what we have. We live in a world of negatives, and it is contagious.

This negative mind-set leads to incredible feelings of anxiety. When people are surrounded with negative thoughts and negative attitudes, I can guarantee the results: fear, resentment, and anger. Negative information plus

hostile thinking equals anxiety. And yet Jesus said again and again, "Don't be anxious." **The world system works directly against the life of faith that God has planned for His people.**

Because we are surrounded by a negative mind-set, we have lost sight of divinely empowered insight and enthusiasm. And when that happens excitement is replaced with a shrug of the shoulders, fire is replaced with deadness, and vision is replaced with programming.

For the life of me, I have never been able to understand how a Christian can commit his everlasting soul by faith to the living God, and to the Word of God, and to the Gospel of God, but he some how cannot commit his life after he becomes a Christian by faith to the living God.

I think this matter of living by faith applies to every area of our lives. First of all, in our fellowship with God. I heard somebody praying the other day, "Lord, as we come into your presence..." **That sounds good, but it's not scriptural. You do not come into the presence of God.** If you are a child of God, the Holy Spirit lives in you and there is never a time when you are *not* in His presence.

Although there are times when we sense His presence more manifestly than others, and there are times when we seem to enjoy His presence more, but there is never a time when we have His presence more. Jesus said in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Paul said in Romans 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." **You cannot claim to be a Christian without at the same time claiming the indwelling of God's Spirit.** In 1 Corinthians Paul said our body is the dwelling place, the tabernacle, of the Holy Spirit.

And having said that, I must also confess there are times when I get down to pray and I don't feel Him at all. There are times of pressure and anguish and heartache and reverse and loneliness when I don't sense God anywhere. There are times when I feel absolutely deserted by God.

Did you ever set out to read your Bible and it just didn't have that crisp and vibrant meaning to you it had at other times? Did you ever sit down in a church service and everybody else was being blessed beyond measure, but because of problems and pressures and the attacks of Satan upon you, you just didn't seem to get the blessing that others were getting or that you had maybe received at other times? You were walking in the Spirit, there was no question in your mind but you were obeying God, there was no unconfessed sin, yet it seemed you just could not get hold of God, you could not sense His blessed

presence. **And it is just such times as these that it becomes necessary to continue to walk by faith and not by sight.**

A Christian psychologist was sharing with a colleague about his having being saved. He told about having a desire to read the Bible, and how because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit, he asked Jesus Christ to forgive him of his sins and save him. His colleague was interested but somewhat skeptical and asked the new Christian, "What did it feel like when you got saved, what kind of feeling did you have?" The new Christians answered, "I didn't have any feeling at all. I wasn't looking for a feeling; I was looking for a Savior."

And we too must walk by faith and not by feeling. And I must confess that as we live our Christian life, and as we walk with God, and as we have fellowship with Christ, there are times when we simply have to walk by faith and appropriate His presence regardless of what we feel. He is there. It is a matter of that He has to be there. He is in you. You are in Him. The Word of God says, "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." **We are in Him and He is in us. And that is a biblical fact that we must appropriate by simple child-like faith.**

It is simply, then, a matter of believing what the Bible says, no matter how you feel, and no matter how pressured you might feel, and no matter how lonely you might feel. God is there. And when you get down to pray or when you get up to read, thank Him that He is there. **Thank Him and praise Him that He is within you, that He is closer to you than the blood flowing through your veins and the oxygen in your lungs.**

We must claim His presence by faith.

Therefore, the Bible teaches if we are to be successful in our service for Christ, we must live by faith. Listen to me tonight; if you are going to stay in the service of Christ, then you had better learn to serve by faith. There will be times when it will seem that everybody is against you. **And there will be times when the storms are raging and all Hell is breaking out and financial burdens are heavy and answers are few. And if you are not serving by faith, you will quit, you will become a spiritual casualty, you will become a spiritual "drop out."**

May I remind you of the words of Jesus found in John 15:16, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Whatever God has called you to do, do it with all your might for the glory of God, and remember we are called to serve by faith.

We have also been called to build a Christian home by faith. The Word of God tells us that we are to raise our children “[in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.](#)” We need to win our children for Christ; we need to raise them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Raising a family is a full-time job. And it is a difficult job. I can understand why the unsaved world is totally losing its children. I can see why most of the movie actors, the financiers, the politicians, have rebels for children. We Christians know what a job it is with everything we can draw from God to raise ours up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

But I will tell you this, after you have done all you can do: love them, prayer, bible study, church attendance, after we have done everything we can do, there has to be the exercise of that thing called "faith." We bend our knees in believing faith. We have to bring our children over the hurdles, down the road, and into spiritual adulthood, through our faith in a sovereign God. It will not work any other way. You don't just feed them and watch them grow like you do a house plant. You can't just run them through a computer, a program of the church and school with a little “one, two, three, go” attitude. There has to be an exercise of believing faith.

Kids today, as in every day, are facing tremendous pressures and problems. Today the Devil is working overtime through television, through movies, and through literature to pervert and corrupt their minds. And only God, through our obedience to Him and our following His plan and our exercise of believing faith, can help us to raise up children who are an honor to God.

Listen, mom and dad, the greatest love that you can ever show your children is to show them the way to Jesus Christ. And, in our families, godliness is more “caught” than it is “taught.” Therefore, we must build our Christian homes by faith.

Last of all, it is by faith that we catch our vision from God. Proverbs 29:18 says, “[Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.](#)”

The Lord is talking to us about a vision. The difference between mediocrity and greatness in the work of the Lord, as in anything, is always vision. It is not educational background, it is not economic resources. Success, greatness in the work of God, is predicated upon vision. If a man does not have a vision, if a church does not have a vision, there will be no growth, there will be no greatness. If you aim at nothing, that is usually what you hit.

We need to live by faith in the carrying out of our divinely given vision. Every man and woman here ought to have a vision. A vision is a redemptive revelation of God and what God wants for me. *Faith* is taking God at His Word, believing what God has said is true. *Vision* is not only believing what God has said is true, but acting upon it and cooperating with Him in the fulfilling of it. *Faith* can be very passive, but *vision* is always active. A man can believe every word in the Bible, but somehow never amount to very much, but a vision causes us to reach out to higher goals.

Remember, "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world." **Nobody can stand against faith.**

If you are not saved, come to Christ by faith.