

## 1Corinthians 12:9 "The Gifts Of Faith & Healing"

As we continue our study on the gifts of the Holy Spirit we come to 1Co 12:9 ..."to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit..."

These two gifts of God are what we'll be looking at this morning. As with all of the gifts, these gifts are Holy Spirit given, inspired and empowered outworking's of God's resources to His people. But He expects every believer in Christ to walk in the Spirit which will include utilizing these gifts according to God's will and purposes.

Now, it's important to keep in mind that the gift of faith and the gift of healing may not be everyone's gift and yet every believer is to walk by faith and every believer should pray for the sick to be healed.

When we talk of faith and the gift of faith we are talking of degree not of kind. And so in one sense they are the same, but the difference is that on special occasions God gives a greater degree of faith for a specific task and enables the believer to act on that faith.

Before I talk of the actual gift of faith I think it's worth looking at the faith every believer has and what it is. First and foremost we must understand that like the gift of faith in our text, saving faith from God, to every one of His people, is also a gift.

Unlike the gift of faith in our text in 1Corinthians, our original faith was given to us from God to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sin and to receive eternal life. Paul speaks of this when writing to the Ephesians.

EPH 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast."

And so, from beginning to end our salvation is of the Lord. He who began a good work in you will complete it and as the writer of Hebrews says, "let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..." (HEB 12:2)

By the way, the idea of Jesus being the author of our faith means that He is the source of our faith. We didn't create it. He gave it to us.

However, faith is never intended to work without an object. And so the object of our faith is Jesus Christ, who is God . Often times what will happen is that when our faith is weak, we will have a tendency to view the object of our faith as being insufficient.

And so, to have a strong faith is really nothing more mysterious than to have a proper understanding of how awesome our God is who gave us faith to believe in Him and then to trust Him for all things. That's faith in action.

We may not be able to touch Christ and see Him with our eyes but that doesn't make Him any less real and loving. This was the point the writer of Hebrews was making when he said, "Now faith is being *sure* of what we hope for and *certain* of what we do not see." (HEB 11:1)

We may not be able to see God but we are sure in the hope of what He has promised and actually accomplished in Christ at the cross and the empty tomb. And though we see with the eyes of faith, the reality of God is still seen clearly in His very creation. This is why man is without excuse when it comes to him saying, I didn't know there was a God in whom I must trust.

ROM 1:18-20 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

One more point about the faith of every believer and then we'll move to the gift of faith, which is a supernatural enhancement of our faith. We know, according to Heb.11:6, that without faith it's impossible to please God. But just as important, if our faith has no visible manifestation in this world then it is not faith which is active.

What do I mean by that? Only this. Faith not only rests in the person of Jesus Christ, it acts in a way to please Jesus Christ, which involves following Him and obeying Him.

If on the one hand people say they believe Him and yet are unwilling to walk with Him then one of two things is happening.

1) They're disobedient children of the Lord who need to repent and seek the love and grace of God so that they may walk with Him.

2) They may not be what they say they are. They may only be paying lip service to believing on the Lord Jesus Christ when in fact they are still being governed by the old nature because they are not new creations in Christ; they have not truly believed.

A lot of that goes on. Many people will name the name of Jesus Christ and yet aren't willing to follow Him because they don't truly believe and embrace Him personally by faith.

And so they must be encouraged to repent and embrace the Savior who died so that they may have life. And that's the real difference between someone who believes and someone who pays lip service; life. And with life comes the ability to live.

Life in Christ will enable us to live for Him as the Spirit indwells us and empowers us for His service. And every believer ought to be encouraged even if his faith is weak at times, because God is the One who tells us to come to Him when we're weary. After all, He is the One who gives us strength to live in a world which is always trying to tear us down.

He gave us the faith to come to Christ and He continues to strengthen our faith as we come to Him, because His purpose for us has eternal value.

EPH 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

He has a work for each of us in Christ and we are His personal workmanship. May we always seek Him for the strength we need to be that workmanship to His honor and glory.

But what about the gift of faith? Keep in mind that the faith of every believer enables us to trust Christ for salvation and to walk in that relationship by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gift of faith is what God will use in a person's life to do extraordinary things for His service.

We look at the lives of some of the great saints of the faith and wonder how they were able to accomplish those great tasks when everything stood against them. The answer is that on many occasions they were gifted with a measure of faith that enabled them to supernaturally trust God no matter what. Let's look at

some examples. Let's look at a passage from Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar is speaking.

DAN 3:15-20 "Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"  
16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace."

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had always trusted God with a faith that knew He was true to His word. But here that faith was increased to meet a specific task to glorify their God. They were willing to give up their lives. And I suspect that many martyrs are given a similar faith to be that witness, even unto death.

By the way, having the gift of faith doesn't necessarily mean that a person will always be living on that elevated plain of supernatural extraordinary trust. One person comes to mind who was gifted with a faith that wouldn't waver and yet we see that even he doubted God.

The man I refer to is Elijah. Elijah was a prophet of God in the days of King Ahab of Israel who we're told in 1Kin.16:33.. "did more to provoke the Lord, God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel before him."

Elijah was given a special faith by God to go into the presence of King Ahab and tell him that God would punish him for his disobedience with a drought in the land. Sure enough it happened just as Elijah had said, and after 3 years the King had had enough of no water in the land which was parched, and death was everywhere.

He sought Elijah to kill him. Elijah heard of this and comes to the very presence of the King again to challenge him as God gave Elijah the faith to perform a miracle which should have turned Ahab's heart, and yet it didn't.

Elijah commanded a showdown with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah. All of Israel came out to see this spectacle. An ox was prepared for sacrifice and the challenge was to have the gods of these false prophets bring down fire from heaven and consume the sacrifice.

The false prophets were ranting and raving in prayer all day and no fire came down. Elijah then took the ox and covered it and the altar with water.

1Kin.18:36-37 "Elijah prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

And sure enough fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and the altar as well. After that Elijah commanded the people to gather the false prophets and he killed them all that day.

What faith he had to accomplish this amazing task to bring glory to God and yet one chapter later we're told that Elijah was ready to hang it all up because the wife of Ahab, Jezebel, wanted to kill him.

1Ki 19:3 "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there... "

That supernatural gift of faith for the work of service to God, was exchanged for fear. The gift of faith is a wonderful gift but even it must be used in a way that doesn't look at the circumstance as being more than God can handle.

We're told in 1Co 13:2 "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

This gift of faith will enable us to move mountains if that's what God wants to accomplish. Calling fire down from heaven was something Elijah did because that is what God wanted to accomplish.

The gift of faith doesn't prompt us to act with our own initiative but rather it acts in faith with what God wants to do. I believe that Peter and John had the gift of healing and yet they didn't heal every person everywhere.

By faith they followed God's prompting and with this gift of faith they stepped out in confidence and accomplished the task God had for them. We see this in the book of Acts.

Act 3:1-8 "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. 2 Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. 4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" 5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. 6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

The gift of faith is a wonderful gift from God as the Spirit enables us to do things that we may normally never do or could do. Not everyone has this gift and yet God may come upon any one of His people for a special task where an extraordinary amount of faith is needed.

The apostle Paul's life exemplified God's grace. And the gift of faith was certainly seen in his life. But the faith that was given to Paul to believe on Christ, which every believer possesses, is the same faith which enabled Paul to say, "therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2Co 4:16-18)

Though we may not all possess the gift of faith, every believer possesses more than enough faith, given to us by God, to look to Him and trust Him with not only our eternal destiny, but with our everyday lives as well.

And by His Holy Spirit we can trust Him and walk in His power. And if He sees fit to empower you for a task with the gift of faith praise Him for that and faithfully seek to please Him in whatever task He gives you.

The second gift in our text is the gift of healing. Actually, in the Greek the word gift is plural; gifts of healing's. This would suggest that there are different gifts and manifestations of the Spirit when it comes to healing.

There may be different ways in which a healing takes place and different ways in which the Spirit accomplishes the healing. As we've stated before the gifts are used as the Spirit enables and prompts His people to use them.

1CO 12:11 "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

But, what we must understand is that with the gift of healing it does not mean that a person now has the supernatural ability to heal. We sometimes hear the term faith healer. The truth of the matter is that the person himself is not the healer, but an instrument used in the hand of God who is the true healer. Let's look at a case in point.

ACT 14:8-15 "In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

These pagan people understood that only the gods could do such things. And they put 2 and 2 together and arrived at the conclusion

that Paul and Barnabas must therefore be gods since this man was miraculously healed.

Paul immediately rebukes them for this false conclusion as he points them away from himself to God. Notice too that the healing was not an end in itself. Paul was not as concerned for a healing as he was for the souls of these people.

He says in verse 15 that he was there primarily to preach the gospel in order that they would turn away from their false gods to the only living God "who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them."

And though most of these "Faith healers" today would not normally be so bold as to claim to have an inherent power to heal, much of their practice would suggest otherwise.

In fact, if you've ever been to a healing service most of the emphasis is placed on the healing and the healer instead of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the only thing which can give life eternal.

If you think that's an overstatement look at the advertisements for such a service and you'll see what is prominently displayed is, "Come expecting a miracle", or "Come get your healing"; not, come meet God through a personal relationship through Jesus Christ.

I'm not suggesting that some of these people do not have the gift of healing, but I would caution anyone who goes to one of these meetings that if the gospel of Jesus Christ is not the main reason for them being there then that gift, at best is misused, and at worst is being faked for the personal promotion of the individual who claims such a gift.

There have been lots of scams in recent times of people who claim to heal in the name of Jesus as they travel the country. And the reason many of them are so successful in drawing crowds is because they're dealing with one of the most vulnerable groups of people in the world; people who are physically and emotionally hurting, who seem to have no other hope than for a miracle.

Unfortunately, in most cases, when these "Faith Healers" move out of the town they perform in they leave behind the hopes and dreams of people who were looking for healing and instead found their pocketbooks and wallets being delivered instead of their bodies.



I bring this up because though there are deceivers, there is also the reality that Jesus Christ does heal and does deliver from the ravages of sickness and we should not discount the real working of the Spirit simply because someone has taken advantage of others.

The gift of healing is an authority from God given to men and women to be used in the name of Christ with the express purpose of directing men and women to Jesus Christ for salvation.

We see this authority being given to Christ's disciples for example in Mat 10:1 "He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."

In the context of this authority being given it must be noted again that Jesus was not sending them out for a healing and deliverance ministry. Look with me to what our Lord's intention was.

MAT 10:7-14 *"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'* 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 9 Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; 10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep. 11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 ***If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words***, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town."

The message of the gospel of Christ was always central. Notice too that there was to be no charge for such healing's.

Mat 10:8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

How different this is in our day when such gifts of healing have been made merchandise of, when a person gets a letter in the mail and is told that if you support this ministry you can be assured that if you send in your prayer request God will hear it because you have given to this ministry in faith.

"And Oh, by the way we take Visa and Master Card."

Notice however, that Jesus says in verse 10 that the "worker is worthy of his support or his keep". But that is in connection to the

work he was sent out to do. And that work had to do primarily with the spreading of the gospel, not with conducting healing services which is nowhere to be found in the New Testament.

Like many of the other "sign gifts" the gift of healing may not always be used according to the whim of the one gifted. As we've noted last week, the gift of the word of knowledge, for example, can only be used as God gives a prompting. The word of knowledge implies that God supernaturally gives information that only could be gained from Him, which implies this gift can't be used until He decides to give you something.

The gift of healing may be used as the Spirit is at work and at other times He may decide not to heal despite the fact that He may have previously given the gift of healing through the same person who used it in the past. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Paul, when writing to Timothy told him in 2Ti 4:20 "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus."

Excuse me Paul, you left your friend Trophimus sick in Miletus? We know that Paul had the gift of miracles and healing. Why would he leave Trophimus sick in Miletus unless the Lord did not heal or encourage Paul not to use that gift with Trophimus, for whatever reason?

What about Timothy himself, Paul's dear friend in Christ? Timothy was Pastoring a church in Ephesus and probably had to deal with all sorts of problems. And apparently in the process had a nervous stomach or maybe colitis.

Paul's recommendation was to take a little wine for his stomach. We read in 1Ti 5:23 "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses."

I'm sure that Paul had previously encouraged Timothy to go to God with any sickness and yet he reminds Timothy that a little common sense can go a long way and that common sense is not out of the will of God, even for sickness.

There are other examples to make the point that though the gift of healing is viable in the Body of Christ and is meant to be used today, God does not always choose to heal. And sometimes the reason is to use even sickness to draw us closer to Himself and cause us to look up for total dependence on Him.

We have the example of Paul's friend Epaphroditus who almost died while in Paul's very presence and yet finally he was delivered. However, in Philippians where we see this, it doesn't suggest that he was miraculously healed but gives the impression that the sickness simply ran its course.

The same was true of Paul himself who was very ill for a time and we're told that his illness was actually used to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Galatians.

Gal 4:13-14 "As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. 14 Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself."

Was it a lack of faith on Paul's part that he wasn't healed in that instance? I don't think so. Now, I don't share these things to discount the miracle working of God in the form of healing people today. I just want you to see that God is bigger than our individual need, and desires to use all things in our lives to His honor and glory.

I could give you countless Scriptures of how Jesus healed in His ministry and the ministry of Paul and others, but it was never divorced from the greater healing of a dead heart towards God.

If you're hurting, if you're sick, if you're in need let me assure you that Jesus has all power to abundantly do beyond what we could imagine. I encourage you to use the gift of healing if God has given you that gift and I encourage you to go to God if you need healing.

And in God's grace, even if someone doesn't have the gift of healing, we still have the command from God that if we are sick to call on the elders of the church "to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14-15)

Remember, sickness is the result of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and though Jesus came to restore us to a new relationship with Himself, He has not absolved the curse of sin in this world.

Death is the ultimate physical sickness and not even Christians escape that. What makes us think we can escape everyday sicknesses the rest of the world suffers? But our heavenly Father

still loves us beyond anything we could comprehend, even in our sickness, if He chooses not to heal.

Pray that the Lord would use the gift of healing in our presence, but more than that, pray that God would use us to reach a sick and sin-filled world which is on its way to hell and needs a healing of the soul and to be reconciled to the Father through the shed blood of Christ.

Jesus open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of those who will not hear and bring life where there is death and glorify your name in our midst, and use us to honor You as we go out with the message of eternal life.

And if it pleases You, enable us, by the power of the Your Spirit to heal the sick, and to give hope in Jesus Christ in whatever endeavor You use us in, with whatever gifts you give us. All to Your glory. Amen.