



Resourcing for Prayer Network Guidelines

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE (8)

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FAITH, MIRACULOUS POWERS AND GIFTS OF HEALING

Faith, miraculous powers and gifts of healings are linked together in Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts. This is because they are all part of the same manifestation of the power of God exercised through faith. They are found in 1 Corinthians 12.4 - 11. Paul says, *"To another is given faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers."* That last phrase is literally "the operation of works of power". In the Greek it is *'energemata'* and *'dunameon'* from which we get our words 'energy' and 'dynamite' or 'dynamic'- which gives a little flavour of what Paul is trying to describe when the Holy Spirit works through a believer by faith - there is an explosion of dynamic creative divine power. We will look first of all at 'faith'.

Faith

I do not usually like beginning with a negative, but I think in this case it is better to begin by saying what the spiritual manifestation of 'faith' is not! **It is not the faith of believing in Jesus that leads to salvation.** Paul says in Romans 10.9 *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* That is an act of faith that brings you into a right relationship with God the Father through Jesus our Lord and Saviour. That is 'coming to faith', not the exercise of faith.

Coming to faith is quite distinct from the exercise of the 'spiritual gift of faith' which is a specific manifestation of the Holy Spirit given to an individual believer for the carrying out of a special task which requires divine intervention and could not be achieved simply by human effort. My dear friend and former colleague, Edmund Heddle, used to say that God is never in a hurry to fulfil his promises, but he never fails to keep his word as in the case of Abraham who received a promise that Sarah would bear a child. They waited and waited for the promised child and she was well past childbearing age but still Abraham believed because God had promised. Then finally Sarah conceived and the promise was fulfilled.

Monica and I had a promise when we were working in the East End of London that God would one day give us premises outside London for our prophetic and teaching Ministry. It was more than 10 years before he fulfilled his promise, but we never doubted that he would keep his word, we simply got on with our work and waited: knowing that God would choose the right time. That is the exercise of faith.

Faith is a special gift of God that Paul says comes through *"hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ"* (Romans 10.17). God speaks to us through his word and the message he gives is the promise which he will fulfil. It is the message that the believer must hold onto once he is sure that he has rightly heard from the Lord. This produces faith that has the power to move mountains of opposition which appear to make it impossible for the promise to be fulfilled. In faith the believer goes ahead like those striding through a jungle knowing that the Lord will clear the path ahead of him or her. That is how we were led to

Moggerhanger Park and we saw the power of God released ahead of us clearing every obstacle with Holy Spirit dynamite! We were never surprised, because we expected to see the obstacles cleared. That is the exercise of faith; and we simply found ourselves continually rejoicing as each barrier was overcome.

The Gift of Healing

The exercise of the power of God in healing comes in the normal course of living by faith. When the need for healing is encountered because of sickness in the body then faith simply comes into action. Of course the exercise of wisdom and even of a message of knowledge may be required to know how to deal with the particular sickness because Christians believe that all medical knowledge has been revealed by the God of Creation and it is part of his provision for our health and well-being. If there is no medical science that can deal with the sickness then it may be that God is calling for the exercise of faith and the release of works of divine power. This is when we have to seek God very carefully to know what he is saying to us in these circumstances. Not everyone is healed and it may be the Lord's will to take that person to him but if he says that he will heal then the exercise of faith comes into action.

I remember the first time I prayed for someone who was totally blind. It was in a large church in Los Angeles and I had invited people to come forward for healing. My heart was thumping with fear when I saw a lady with a white stick approaching being led by a carer, but when she said she had seen nothing for 10 years and she had spent all her money on operations and consultants in New York and Chicago and Los Angeles I suddenly heard the Lord saying, "I will heal her: she will receive her sight." My fear suddenly left me and I was able to pray with faith in the absolute confidence that the Lord would fulfil his word. When I took my hands from her eyes she was able to see light for the first time in many years. That was in September. We flew back to London that week but she sent us a Christmas card three months later saying that she had now got her driver's license back and she had full vision.

Miraculous Power

The exercise of miraculous power was an everyday occurrence in the Early Church. In Acts 19.11 we are told that in Ephesus *"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them."* Everywhere the Apostles went miraculous power was seen, and long after the Apostles that same dynamic of the Holy Spirit was exercised by believers. It was the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled them to hold firmly to faith in Jesus in the hostile world of the Roman Empire where they were cruelly persecuted. In those days, you could not be a nominal Christian. You were either a believer filled with the dynamic power of faith or you did not survive.

In our sophisticated secularised western civilisation there is no room for miraculous powers. They are stifled by unbelief which is not only out there in the world, but also in the church. But the word of God has not changed and neither has God's ability to fulfil his promises which he makes to those who have faith. Monica and I have seen with our own eyes the exercise of miraculous powers in our travels, especially among the poor and unsophisticated where there is simple faith. We have longed to bring it home and pass it on to others. But that is not how faith is received. Faith is the direct gift of God to a believer. It is never second-hand. Each believer has to seek and receive it directly from God.

How do we receive faith - mountain moving faith? It is a bit like learning to swim or to ride a bike. So long as you are determined to keep your feet firmly on the bottom of the pool or on the ground you will never swim or ride a bike. There has to come a point when you take the plunge - when you take your feet off the ground and discover that you can swim or ride a bike. Once you have done it, swimming or riding becomes an everyday experience. That is how it is with faith.

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