

## The Gift of Faith

As we enter into this advent season that leads up to the birth of our savior, I want to focus on four gifts that we have all received from God: faith, hope, love and peace.

God, he is the Father of gifts and every gift he gives is perfect.

James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Today, I want to talk to you about the gift of faith, and I believe that this is the most important gift of all because without this gift of faith, you could never have believed for this great salvation.

The basis of our faith.

Satan wants us to believe that faith is irrational; that we have no basis for our faith. He's gone as far as to make it a mystery to the point where people believe that they don't even have faith.

Faith is the most rational thing in the world because it is based on the greatest of facts and realities.

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

The fact is that God exists, and he is for you, and he has good plans for those who diligently seek him.

Faith is based on the reality that two thousand years ago on Calvary, Jesus fulfilled God's plan by becoming the last Adam and taking upon himself the root of sin and the fruit of sickness, putting an end to all that was perverted through the fall and starting a new race of people made in the image of God and they are called the children of God.

Commanded to live by faith.

Galatians 3:11 "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith.""

This is a command for those who are the justified ones, the ones who have been made right by the work of Jesus, that they shall live by faith. There is no other way to receive from God other than faith.

The gift of faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,"

We all understand that salvation is a grace gift from God, but what I want you to understand is the way you received that grace gift is by faith. Faith is also a gift.

Everyone has natural faith, which is your ability to believe what you can see, taste, hear, smell, and feel.

Biblical faith is the supernatural ability to believe what you cannot see, taste, here, smell and feel.

To receive the gift of salvation, you had to believe things that you never saw, or experienced. You had to believe that Jesus came from heaven to earth as a man, and you had to believe that he was born without an earthly father. You had to believe that he physically died and was raised to life on the third day, and he sits at the right hand of God in heaven.

One measure of faith.

Romans 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Satan wants us to believe that the super dupers of the church received a gallon of faith and "normal" Christians only received an eyedropper.

2 Peter 1:2 "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:"

God wants you to know that you have the same precious faith as Peter and Paul and all of the other apostles.

Let's look at the story of Mary and see how she used her faith to accomplish the virgin birth.

Luke 1:26-38 "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

First, she heard from God.

She took God at his word.

She had to agree with what God was saying (confession).

Then she received the promise.

Here is how God designed our faith to work.

1) First you must hear from God.

Romans 10:17 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

There are two Greek words used to describe the word of God.

Logos: the inspired written word of God.

Rhema: that which is or has been uttered by the living voice of God.

A rhema word is when the Holy Spirit speaks to your spirit to confirm or validate that the written promise is for you. This is how God intends for you to become fully persuaded.

You don't have to have a rhema word to receive the promises of God. The word of God is like a seed that always produces a harvest, but the rhema word is like putting miracle grow in your soil, it always produces fruit faster.

Matthew 16:15-17 "He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

In my walk of faith I have had many seasons, when God seemed to be silent in my life, and I have heard many other people declare that they just don't hear God.

Just because we are not hearing God doesn't mean that he is not speaking. Let me illustrate.

I worked with a guy who loved to listen to NPR public broadcasting on the radio. The moment he got in his car he would turn on that station. When he took his lunch break the first thing he would do was go back to his car and turn on that station. When he got off work he went back to his car and turned on the station. When he left his car to go to work, did that station stop broadcasting or was he just not able to receive the signal? Why? Because the receiver was built into the stereo, and he could only hear the signal when he turned on the stereo.

For us, our receiver is our spirit, and our spirit goes wherever we go.

1 Corinthians 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

You have been given everything you need to hear from God.

Romans 8:5 “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”

What you set your mind on determines which signal you are going to hear. When you are focused on spiritual things you will hear God’s voice.

2) You must take him at his word.

Mark 11:24 “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

You must believe that when you ask God answers your prayers.

This means that even if the prayer seems unanswered and there’s no physical evidence, you have to believe that it’s been given to you because God’s word is true.

Think about Abraham, the father of our faith.

Romans 4:19-21 “And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

3) You have to say what God says (confession).

One of the best ways to release your faith is to begin to thank God that he has fulfilled the promise simply because His word says he has.

You need to take whatever scripture you’re standing on and declare it as an accomplished fact and thank God for his provision.

4) Receive the promise.

You have to understand everything God gives is a grace gift and there is nothing you can do to earn or deserve it. It is never contingent upon anything you can do, but upon what Jesus has already done.