

The Gift of Faith and Healing

Rich Nathan

June 10- 11, 2006

Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Corinthians 12:9- 10

I've been doing a series on spiritual gifts and I would like to begin by sharing a story with you. The year is 1941. The location is somewhere in northwest China. Two women were walking down a dusty road when they saw a procession of Chinese men carrying idols into a village. Behind these men were other men beating drums and yelling to the sky.

The two women who were watching this procession were very different. One was a very small Chinese woman and the other was a six foot tall blonde-haired, blue-eyed Norwegian named Annie. Both women were wearing straw hats and when the men saw these women wearing straw hats they ran over to them and screamed at them saying, "Hurry, take your hats off." The Chinese woman said, "But why?" The village leaders answered, "You know that the gods cannot bear seeing dried grass on somebody's head when there's a draught in the village. When they see dried grass on the people's heads they get furious and they send even more drought on our poor fields. Take your hats off at once, otherwise we'll tear them off and burn them."

The tall Norwegian woman named Annie kept her hat on. She said, "I can't take my hat off in reverence to your idols." And so the men began shouting and said, "We'll kill you then." Then twelve men came over with huge sticks ready to beat these women to death. Annie held up her hand and said, "Wait! My God can give you rain – your idols cannot." The oldest man in the group said, "Your God! We don't know any gods but our own god." Annie said, "Just wait and see. My God will turn the drought into rain."

The group came nearer, they lifted their sticks and again Annie said, "Just wait! I promise you – rain before midnight tonight." The oldest man in the group said, "This giant woman is promising rain. Do you hear that? Let her show us what this God of hers can do. Let her show us that she has a God better than our god, but if the giant woman and her God cannot provide rain before midnight we'll kill them both."

The two women were permitted to continue their walk. They shared their experience back at their little mission and the mission leader said, "Why did you do that Annie? You never should have promised such a thing. If there's no rain in the village before midnight they will interpret it as results of spoiling of their idols and they will come here and burn the mission and kill you." Annie responded and said,

SLIDE

"I can only believe that it is God's will that I should live and continue to preach the gospel in this country. Therefore I trust Him to show who is the one and only God Who can provide rain during this drought."

As the evening moved on, Annie and her Chinese friend knelt down in a little hut and began to pray. Half an hour before midnight the door in the hut was flung open and the leader in the mission came in shouting, "The rain is coming. The rain is coming. God be praised! He answered your prayers. Our mission is saved." People began shouting and falling on their knees. The miracle at midnight served as an opening for the gospel in that little Chinese village.

A decade later Sister Annie founded "The Haven of Hope Hospital" in Hong Kong where thousands of refugees from China have been treated at the rehab center and have been exposed to the gospel. Today the hospital that Sister Annie founded is now one of the primary rehab centers in Hong Kong. Sister Annie went on to receive numerous awards for her charitable work in China, but what characterized her life was this unique gift of special faith. She had this extraordinary ability to believe God for the miraculous when other Christians just said, "No way!" As I continue in this series on spiritual gifts I've called today's talk "The Gifts of Faith and Healing" ...let's pray.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 says:

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Let me set a little context for the discussion of these verses. The apostle Paul lists nine spiritual gifts for us in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Now, I'm going to provide some definitions along the way of the gifts of faith and healing, but I think it's important that we not draw too sharp a line of distinction between one gift and another because these things really do tend to overlap. Around the edges, the distinctions are more of a dotted line than some hermetically-sealed, walled off categories. It is difficult to know where a gift of healing leaves off and a gift of miracles begins. It's sort of like trying to answer the age-old question of where the seashore begins, or where does a mountain begin?

I like Steve Robbins' analogy of a rainbow. Where does the red stop and the purple begin? Or the yellow stop in a rainbow and the orange begin? These gifts are part of the multi-colored expressions of God's grace, as Peter literally calls them in 1 Peter 4:10, "The multi-colored expressions of God's grace." A rainbow is a very good picture of what you see here in 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts tend to mingle together, and yet you can see some distinction in the colors.

As Rod Williams, the Pentecostal theologian puts it, the gift of faith is often the immediate background for the exercise of the two ministry gifts that follow – the gift of healing and the effecting of miracles. What you regularly see, in other words, before a healing or a miracle takes place is the gift of faith is given to a believer.

Often you will see the gifts working together. It has been a regular occurrence at our church to see prophecy and healing working together. There is some discernment of a root cause of a particular physical problem and then there is prayer for the healing of the problem. There may be the working together of gifts of discerning of spirits and healing. There is discerning that at the root of a physical condition is some demonic problem, and then there is the physical healing of that problem.

Well, let's take a look at the individual gifts, then. Paul speaks about the gift of faith. And I think he tells us a little bit about what he means by the gift of faith in 1 Corinthians 13:2 when he says,

SLIDE

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 do not have love, I am nothing.

If you want a simple, shorthand definition of the gift of faith, we're talking about mountain-moving faith, the same faith that Jesus talks about in Mark 11:22 in response to the disciple's astonishment that the fig tree that Jesus cursed is now withered up. Jesus says,

SLIDE

"Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him."

That's the gift of mountain-moving faith that Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12. This is a gift that is not given to everyone. Everyone can pray for this gift. I believe from time to time God may give this gift of mountain-moving faith to someone who has not previously experienced it before, but mountain-moving faith is not something that every Christian in their own will, or by their own decision, can stir up in themselves.

Paul is not talking about positive thinking, hyping yourself up with lots of positive self-talk. Paul is not talking about The Little Engine That Could. You know that children's story, where the little train says, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can. I know I can, I know I can." That's how many people think about faith. You try to psyche yourself up and play mental games with yourself. "I will not doubt. I will not doubt. I will not doubt." The apostle Paul is talking about a gift that comes from the Holy Spirit, at the Holy Spirit's decision and determination.

The theologian James Dunn defines the gift of faith as

SLIDE

"a mysterious surge of confidence that arises within a person or within a particular situation, need or challenge and gives them a deep spiritual certainty that God is about to act through a word or action."

You have this sudden surge of confidence that God is going to move a mountain of sickness, or a sudden surge of confidence that God is going to move a mountain of financial problems. You have a sudden surge of confidence that God is going to move a mountain of relational problems or a mountain of opposition. It's this unshakeable certainty that God is about to resolve a seemingly impossible situation.

The Holy Spirit addresses your spirit with the word that God spoke to our spiritual forefather, Abraham, nearly 4000 years ago. Abraham had been promised a child for decades. His wife, Sarah, was past childbearing age. She is 90, which is way past childbearing age. God speaks a word to Abraham in Genesis 18 and says to him, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" He has this confidence, this certainty that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Mountain-moving faith has a clear vision of how big Jesus is and in comparison, how little our problems are. Big Jesus, little cancer. Big Jesus, little debt. Big Jesus, little husband/wife. Big Jesus, little boss. Big Jesus, little credit card bill. Mountain-moving faith says with certainty: "Nothing is too hard for the Lord!"

Do you know faith is a big deal in the Bible and we need to understand this issue of faith? I just looked up in the New International Version of the Bible the word "faith" and it appears 270 times. The word "trust" appears 89 times. The word "believe" appears 184 times. We are talking about over 500 times the Bible speaks about faith or trust or believing. Faith is a big deal in the Bible.

We need to understand what Christian faith is. Faith is not what Archie Bunker said it was on the old sitcom "All in the Family." He said, "Faith is believing something you know is not true." That's not what Christian faith is. Christian faith is not playing pretend. It is not playing make-believe: "I just like thinking of the world being like this even though I know that it is not. I like to think about a loving God, even though I know that he doesn't exist. I like to think that I will one day see my loved ones who have died, but I know logically that's impossible. I like to believe that ultimately everything is going to turn out OK, even though I know that it won't." Christian faith is not a form of make-believe or self-hypnosis, or fantasy about something that makes you feel better.

Christian faith is not just intellectual assent. Faith is not just checking the box "yes, yes" next to statements like, "Do you believe that God is a trinity, Father, Son and Spirit?" – and you mark "yes." "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God's only Son, our Lord and

Savior?” “Yes.” Christian faith has certain content. You are not a Christian if you do not believe that God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit. You are not a Christian if you do not believe that Jesus Christ is not fully God and fully man; one Lord, our Messiah or that He died for your sins or rose from the dead, but Christian faith is much more than assenting to a set of propositions about God.

Christian faith is trust. It is confidence in God that says regarding God, “I am sure that you will not betray my hope. I am sure that you will respond to me, that you will take care of me that you will provide for me in life and in death.” Christian faith is, “I trust in you, God.” Christian faith is the willingness to orient your entire life around what you believe is true.

Now there are different kinds of faith that the Bible speaks to us about. There is what I would call Saving Faith. We read about that in Ephesians 2:8-9 –

SLIDE

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

That is Saving Faith. You might say that Saving Faith is simply faith in the pardon of Jesus, faith in the person of Jesus. To be saved, a person must believe that God has done in Christ what we cannot do for ourselves. God in Christ has accomplished forgiveness, righteousness, and salvation through Christ’s death for us on the cross. Saving Faith believes in the pardon of Christ - that anyone who comes to Christ will be forgiven and will be declared innocent on the Day of Judgment.

Do you believe that if you come to the cross of Jesus Christ, not relying on anything in yourself, not relying on your feelings, not leaning on your understanding of your problem, not making excuses or minimizing your sin, not defending yourself – do you believe that if you just came to the cross of Jesus Christ and you opened your whole soul before God – that if you spread out your whole past and your whole corruption – do you believe that if you spread everything before God, He will forgive you for the sake of Christ?

You know, I talk with so many folks who absolutely believe that for someone who is beginning the Christian life, looking to the cross of Jesus alone will gain them the forgiveness of sins. But as we continue as Christians many folks start to believe that the cross not enough and that God expects more of you for forgiveness because you know so much now.

I’ve used this illustration before, but I think it’s so important for us to understand that we always come before God as bankrupt sinners. Bankruptcy is a terrible thing. It’s really hard to be financially bankrupt. It’s even worse to be morally or spiritually bankrupt. In the financial realm there are two kinds of bankruptcies – there is

liquidation where you sell off the assets and the business shuts its doors. It's called Chapter 7. And there is reorganization – Chapter 11 - where a business needs temporary relief from its creditors and they go through reorganization of the business and then they emerge from bankruptcy court and they continue to do business. We could call Chapter 11 “temporary bankruptcy”.

I think a lot of people approach Jesus Christ as if they're going into temporary bankruptcy. “My life is spinning out of control now, Jesus. I've got these problems that are too overwhelming for me. I can't do life on my own, so I'm going to turn to you and I'm going to ask relief from my creditors. I need relief from my problems, so I will look to the cross right now to deal with my issues.” But having looked to Christ we think we somehow emerge from bankruptcy. Christ reassembles the pieces of our life and we say “Okay, we'll take it from there.”

The reality friend is that you and I are permanently bankrupt before God. Every morning we wake up and have to say along with the hymn, “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” “I don't have what it takes God, to earn your acceptance today. My prayers this morning didn't do it. My obedience to you last night didn't do it. My cries didn't do it.” It's only the cross. Friend, have you declared permanent bankruptcy? Have you given up trying to prove anything before God?

Saving Faith is faith not only in the pardon of Christ, but also in the person of Christ. To be saved you must believe that Jesus is God come in the flesh. You must believe that the baby born in Bethlehem, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, is Incarnate God come to rescue and save us. You must believe in the person of Jesus, crucified, dead, buried and raised from the dead. To be saved you must believe that it is God's will that Jesus be the Lord of your whole life. Salvation is, in Dallas Willard's words, more than wanting a little bit of Jesus' blood to forgive you. It's desiring Jesus' whole person – Not only Jesus as Savior, but also Jesus as Lord. Do you have Saving Faith, friend? Have you trusted in the pardon of Christ? Have you trusted in the person of Christ?

Then there is what I would call Sustaining Faith – faith no matter what. What the Reformers used to call “Persevering Faith.” Sustaining faith is continuing faith. It is trust in God's faithfulness to the very end of the road, come what may, whatever life brings. I'm going to continue to trust in Christ. I will not give up on God no matter what. Sustaining Faith, persevering faith, continuing faith. It's what the apostle Paul calls ‘faithfulness’ in the list of the Fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22 Paul talks about the impact of the Holy Spirit in someone's life and he says,

SLIDE

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control,

It's what Habakkuk talks about when he says in Habakkuk 13:17

SLIDE

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."

Do you need sustaining faith now through what you are going through? Sustaining Faith. Persevering faith. It's what Jesus talked about in Matthew 24 when he said, "He who stands firm to the end will be saved." Sustaining Faith is believing in God even when I don't feel like it or feel God's presence. Sustaining faith is faith when you feel nothing. Even when life is not turning out my way, when nothing is working and all my prayers are thrown to the ground, yet will I trust in the Lord.

It's Caleb in the book of Numbers continuing to trust in God when the wisest thing to do seems to be going back to Egypt. When you are tempted, friend, to go back to Egypt, to turn your back on God and throw in the towel and say, "It's not worth it to keep following Jesus Christ," Sustaining Faith says it is. God will one day bring me to the Promised Land, even though Egypt looks so tempting right now. I will not go back to my old way of life. I will not disobey God and throw in the towel on my marriage. I will not give up on Jesus.

Maybe the best illustration of the gift of sustaining faith, persevering faith is Joni Eareckson Tada. Some of you are surely familiar with Joni's story. She recently did an interview with the BBC. Nearly forty years ago when she was 17 she was very athletic and she dove into shallow water – hit her head on the bottom and snapped her neck.

In the BBC interview she said, "I'm paralyzed in all four limbs. My hands don't work. I have pretty good shoulder muscles, half-way decent bicep muscles, but haven't walked a step in 3 ½ decades or more...and I feel like I'm sitting on a block of concrete from my collarbone down. I don't know how to describe it other than that.

I always say to my friends, "Don't do this. Do not break your neck. Quadriplegia is not a pretty thing. It's very difficult, but you have to have a good sense of humor when you can't use your hands or legs."

Joni said when she was first injured that she could not imagine living in a wheelchair, having other people do toileting routines, bathe her, dress her and sit her in a wheelchair. When she realized the extent of the paralysis and that it would be permanent she collapsed emotionally. She was despairing and suicidal. She said she would wrench her head back and forth in the pillow at night, hoping to break her neck at an even higher level and kill herself. But step by step she was able to find God.

She said this in the interview,

Don't think I'm a veteran at this. I haven't gotten this quadriplegic thing figured out even after 38 years. I still wake up in the morning...needing God desperately...but in a way, I'm very grateful for that. In 2 Corinthians 1, where the apostle Paul is speaking to his brothers, he says: "Guys, I don't want you to be uninformed about the hardships we endured. We're under far greater pressure than we were able to bear up. We even had in our hearts the sting of death." And boy I understand that. You know that feeling where you say 'I'd rather die than face this God.' But then in the next verse Paul says this, "But these things happen that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead."

Joni says, "I memorized this verse because it became my first thought every morning." "This has happened that I might not rely on myself today, Lord Jesus, but on You. And if you can raise the dead, you can raise my spirits today. You can raise my hopes." You see, the beauty of that perspective is that it is the biblical way to live, day by day, relying on Jesus.

Any one of you who has ever been addicted and you're now in recovery, you know this one. You know the saying every morning, "God, today I'm totally not relying on myself to make it. I don't have the strength. I can't do this on my own, so I'm going to rely on you, who raises the dead, to get me through the day." Any one of you who is in a family situation or a life situation that places demands that go way beyond your own strength, you know this one. "God, I cannot get through today unless I totally rely on you, but if you can raise the dead you can raise my spirits. You can raise my hope."

Joni is such a great example of sustaining faith. In the same BBC interview she said, "I know what my commitment is. It's to wake up tomorrow morning and be committed to follow Jesus, even though it's hard; even though I'm tired of quadriplegia; even though my bones are weak and thin; even though I'm 56 and there's a lot of aches and pains that go with that, I've got to stay the course."

She said, "I was talking on the phone the other day to a very depressed quadriplegic. He was a former pastor who broke his neck. He had many urinary tract infections and now he was in bed, lights off, no TV, no radio. He was saying that he didn't want any visitors, just to be left alone. He just wanted to die. I got on the phone with him and after we talked shop, you know as quadriplegics will do...I shared with him a line from a favorite movie of mine and the line goes this way: "Hope is a good thing – maybe the best of things. And no good thing ever dies, so you've got to get busy living or get busy dying."

And I said to this depressed quadriplegic, "You know, I'm in bed right now talking to you with the phone propped under my ear against my pillow, and Ron, there's about 10,000

other quadriplegics like us in the United States today and they're wondering whether they should get busy living or get busy dying. I'm going to get busy living. You want to join me?"

I want to ask you an affectionate question. "Do some of you today need to make the choice of getting busy living? Those of you who have lost a loved and have been buried in grief, do you need to make the choice of getting busy, those of you who have been ripped off and have been buried in bitterness. Do some of you today need to say, "God, give me the kind of faith that's in Joni Eareckson"?"

Saving Faith is a gift from God. Sustaining Faith is a gift from God. I don't think either of them is what is meant by the gift of special faith that Paul speaks to us about in 1 Corinthians 12:9, when he speaks about the spiritual gift of faith. There he's talking about the gift of special faith, mountain-moving faith. You know, there's always been a mountain in front of the Christian church that needed to be moved out of the way. Let me just give you a little bit of global perspective so we don't just personalize this.

If you go back to the year 1800, it was by no means certain that Christianity would ever become a world religion. Patrick Johnstone tells us that in the year 1800, Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand accounted for 99% of Christians in the world. Only 1% lived in the rest of the world in Asia, Latin America, Africa, the South Pacific, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. After 1800 years of Christianity, virtually all Christians were confined to Europe and North America. Now the majority of Christians live in Africa, Latin America and Asia. From 1% to 60% in 200 years. How did this happen?

God gave the spiritual gift of mountain-moving faith to missionaries. People like William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions. In one famous sermon Carey summed up the Christian life this way. He said, "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God." Here's the gift of faith at work. Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God.

The church continues to need the gift of faith to move mountains of sickness out of the way. In sub-Saharan Africa, AIDS is casting a dark shadow over the African continent. 71% of all of the world's AIDS cases are in Africa. Families, communities, whole countries are being decimated. Over 6000 people die of AIDS every day in Africa.

In much of the world where the church is just emerging, there is a mountain of need regarding leadership training. Leadership is limited at every level, at the village level or at the urban level, by the need for education and theological training. There's a mountain of need for indigenous curriculum. There's a mountain of need for discipling new believers that are coming to Christ by the tens of thousands.

Closer to home in the US, in our inner cities, there is a mountain of need. The educational system is failing. There are the problems of drugs and violence in the inner

city. There is a mountain of need because of the breakdown of families, the massive problem of divorce, the explosion of out of wedlock pregnancies and fatherlessness. If our Community Center that we are opening in October is going to have any impact, we need to pray for the gift of special faith.

What's going to cause these mountains of need to be picked up and thrown into the sea? We need to pray for the spiritual gift of faith for church leaders, for pastors, for missionaries. Is there a mountain in your life, friend, that needs to be picked up and thrown into the sea? Pray for the gift of special faith.

There is a lot of confusion regarding the spiritual gift of faith. Folks who are part of what's become known as the faith movement have suggested that all Christians are supposed to have mountain-moving faith. Some people teach that faith is like a force field of power, which we release when we speak out in faith. They teach that all Christians have residing within them the key to prosperity, wealth and health. You just need to use the key and the blessing of heaven will be yours.

It's really important for us to understand that mountain-moving faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift of mountain-moving faith is not something you simply choose to have or not have. You can choose to ask for the gift of faith. You can choose to fill your mind with God's promises. You can choose to lay down your competing agendas. You can choose to meditate upon God's Word, but you can't choose to have this gift. The gift is given by God, just like you can't simply choose to prophesy or to heal or to work a miracle. I Corinthians 12:11 says.

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^{1Co 12:11} All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

It is false that all believers can operate in mountain-moving faith. This is spiritual gift that is not given to everyone all of the time. A woman like Annie, the Norwegian who believed that God was going to make it rain before midnight had this gift. Everyone can pray for this gift and I believe from time to time God may give this gift of mountain-moving faith to someone who has not previously experienced it, but the spiritual gift of faith is not something that every Christian from their own will and their own decision can stir up in themselves.

And it's really important to remind ourselves that the spiritual gift of faith is faith in God, not faith in faith. It is true that if you have a mustard-sized seed of faith you can cast a mountain into the sea, but as Anglican bishop, David Pytches, once put it: "You can have a mountain-sized faith and not be able to move a mustard seed unless God chooses to move that seed."

It is not something we work up. So much teaching on faith is man-centered and not God-centered. At times I hear about putting God to work on our behalf and I just want to gag. God is not someone we harness for our little agendas and our little purposes to get ourselves bigger cars and new homes and better jobs with bigger salaries.

I totally understand why prosperity teaching would be awesomely attractive to people who have always struggled economically. They're on the bottom of the ladder and they want to climb their way up. It is a natural desire of people to want to advance themselves. I respect that. I totally understand why crowds come to hear prosperity teaching and why the books are sold and why people contribute to their TV programs. Folks want material success.

But what is called the faith teaching or prosperity teaching is built on a lie that a person can operate in this gift of faith at their own choosing and for their own purposes by listening to teaching or by listening to a CD or by hyping themselves up or by getting really excited or by confessing a verse of scripture over and over again. God does give the gift of special faith, but this gift of special faith, mountain-moving faith, is given as the Holy Spirit determines and it is faith to accomplish God's agenda, not ours. It is faith to accomplish God's plan, not our plans. It is faith to promote God's kingdom, not our kingdom

God wants to give the gift of faith. Friends, we need this gift of faith. There are mountains of problems in the way of the expansion of God's kingdom. Will you pray for the gift of faith to be given to the church? Will you pray for the gift of faith to be given to leaders in the church so that pastors and leaders can lead the church forward in divine confidence, knowing that nothing can stop the Holy Spirit? Will you pray for the gift of faith to be given to our missionaries – especially those serving in the Muslim world, so that the mountain of cultural opposition and religious prejudice and misunderstanding will be thrown into the sea?

We have a wonderful man name Yasir, who was part of this church for many years, and is now serving God in the Sudan. He goes back and forth into the Darfur region to minister to hopeless and helpless people there. Our church helps to support Yasir's work in Sudan and specifically in Darfur.

I had lunch with Yasir the other day and I asked him how his work was going, particularly in Darfur – what he was seeing there. It's a dreadful situation. There are whole villages that have been burned down. Many women have been raped. Many people are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. There's lots of suffering. Yasir's life has been threatened on a number of occasions.

Yasir said to me, "You know Rich, I'm not afraid of dying for Christ, but I just don't want to be tortured." Then he described to me what he has been threatened with. As he talked, I thought to myself, 'here is a man who is really having to face squarely in his

own life, not only the prospect of dying for Christ, but being tortured for him'. There are tens of thousands of Christians around the world facing persecution around the world for their Christian faith. Pray for the gift of special faith for men and women like Yasir. Will you pray for the gift of special faith to personally operate in your life?

We read in v. 9 about gifts of healing. One prominent theory regarding why Paul makes the gift of healing plural – gifts of healing. Maybe it's because God uses different individuals in the church to minister to different needs. Some people seem to be gifted to heal one kind of condition, but not another. Francis MacNutt, who came and did a healing seminar for us, is frequently used by God to heal arthritis and to heal cancer. His wife, Judith, is frequently used by God to bring inner healing to people. Other people seem to be used by God to heal people from demonic oppression. Others are used by God to heal people's relationships. Still others are empowered to bring wholeness to someone who is mentally or emotionally ill.

The gift of healing, like the gift of faith, is not something you can just determine on your own to do or to have. You can determine to pray. You can determine to risk. You can determine to put your hand on someone and ask God to heal, but it's up to God to give the gift in the moment. Now, some people are more frequently used by God to minister healing than others. But friends, as I said last week I'll tell you I found it so liberating, so amazingly encouraging when I learned that God may choose to give me a gift of healing in a moment to meet a particular need even though I never healed someone in the past.

John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement, called this "situational gifting." We could call it "occasional gifting". He taught that the spiritual gifts we read about here in 1 Corinthians 12 are not resident in an individual as if you could just pull out healing whenever you wanted and empty hospitals. God sovereignty determines in a moment to respond to someone's prayer and to use them to bring healing, and then he takes the gift back, and then he gives it again, and then he takes it back.

We don't just sign up for this gift. God determines where, when and how the gift will operate. Our job is to ask for the gift and to continue to ask for the gift. Sometimes in the ebb and flow of God's kingdom in this world God says "Yes" right now to healing. Other times God says "Yes, but not yet. You're going to need to wait for the fullness of My kingdom to come to earth." We must always remind ourselves that healing is not a right – it is an expression of divine mercy. Healing is not the payment of a debt to us. God does not owe us healing. We don't deserve healing. I believe we should always ask for healing. I believe that God is good, but there is a vast difference between faith in God's divine mercy and being presumptuous based on some alleged right.

VIDEO

We have Colin and Lisa's complete testimony online at our website: www.vineyardcolumbus.org

Lisa's life was totally spared because God intervened on her behalf. When you hear about healing don't you think about something that may have happened long, long ago in a far away place? Say to yourself, "Jesus might do something like this here. He did it with Lisa, maybe he'll do it with me." Say to yourself, "Jesus might do something like that now." Say to yourself, "Jesus may heal through me, through my hands, through my prayers." Will you say, "Lord, please give me, please give the church, please give my brothers and sisters around the world the gift of special faith? Use me to move some mountain that is in the way of the kingdom. Use me to heal."

Let's pray...

The Gift of Faith and Healing/Outline

Rich Nathan

June 10-11, 2006

Spiritual Gifts: Showing the Spirit Series

1 Cor. 12:9-10

I. The Spiritual Gifts: Modeled and Defined

- A. Sister Annie
- B. God's Rainbow

II. The Gift of Faith

- A. Three Kinds of Faith
 - 1. Saving Faith (Eph. 2:8,9)
 - 2. Sustaining Faith (Hab. 3:17- 19; Mt. 24:13)
 - 3. Spiritual Gifts of Faith (I Cor. 13:2; Mk. 11:22- 25)
- B. The Gift of Faith
- C. The Confusion of Faith Teaching
- D. The Growth of Faith

III. The Gifts of Healing