

“To Another Faith, In The Same Spirit”

The above statement found in 1 Corinthians 12:9a lists the third of nine gifts. This statement leads some to think that faith cannot be secured without the disposition of the Spirit and therefore salvation (which comes about through faith) cannot be attained apart from the “irresistible work of the Holy Spirit.” While part of the aforementioned perception is true (i.e., the “faith” of the passage cannot be secured without the direct operation of the Spirit), the conclusion reached that salvation cannot be had apart from the irresistible work of the Spirit is an unnecessary conclusion and a patently false one.

Aside from the fact that “faith” not only (as in this passage and other passages, Heb. 11:6) refers to the conviction in one’s heart, but also to faith as a system (Eph. 4:5; Jude 3), and also to one’s conscience (Rom. 14:1, 23), “faith,” in the sense of conviction, is found in the scriptures to be of either a natural or supernatural occurrence, of which both the origins and purposes of are different.

“Natural” faith (if we may call it that) comes in one way alone. Paul wrote the Romans *“so then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). One sees this natural order when he reads of the preaching of the word and see the results of that preaching. *“Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8). On Pentecost Peter’s words, *“Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified,”* caused an immediate reaction for *“when this heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said to Peter and the other apostles, brethren what shall we do”* (Acts 2:36-37). The conviction that they were desperately in need of forgiveness was the direct result of Peter’s charge that they had crucified Him whom God had subsequently made Lord and Christ. Other illustrations could be given but these suffice. And it is this natural faith which works in salvation! In response to the jailer’s question, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved,”* Paul responded, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ...”* (Acts 16:30-31). Faith which came “miraculously” is something man had no control over, nor voice in, thus he could not be accountable for acceptance or rejection of it. But the faith that saves is something we are commanded to do; and which, if we will not believe, will cause us to be lost (Mk. 16:16). We are accountable for our acceptance or rejection of it.

As already noted, it is this faith which is necessary to bring about salvation for *“without faith it is impossible to please God”* and *“by grace are ye saved through faith”* and *“being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with*

God our father ..." (Heb. 11:6; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1). We can reject the evidences and overtures of the Spirit. Stephen charged those who were about to stone him, *"Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit,"* and John's words, *"and the Spirit and the Bride say come,"* leaves clear implication that man can reject the Spirit's invitations (Acts 7:51; Rev. 22:17). The faith which leads to salvation comes from hearing the word and is something all can do. It is something we can also refuse to do, we can harden our hearts against God's word.

The faith of 1 Corinthians 12 did come from the Holy Spirit when the apostles laid hands on believers. This *"faith"* had its designated "general purpose" to profit withal (1 Cor. 12:7). Such faith was essential in the working of miracles. When the apostles failed to cast an unclean spirit out of a young man and asked why they had failed, Jesus reminded them their failure lay in their lack of faith. Then He said, *"I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you"* (Mt. 17:20-21) James wrote of faith of this nature. *"Is any sick? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him"* (Jam. 5:14-15). I am persuaded that both Jesus and James spoke of the same faith Paul wrote of in 1 Corinthians 12; the faith which, as one of nine spiritual gifts came from the Spirit as a general benefit to profit the whole church and which enabled the one with such faith to work miracles; which miracles served as convincing proof that Jesus is God's Son and that His religion is from God.

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