

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

29 What Is the Gift of Faith?

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:8-10; James 2:19; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 11:17-19

This week I read the story about a church in Netcong, New Jersey that had a new sanctuary on a fine eight acre plot of land. However, the certificate of occupancy was refused because of insufficient parking. A forty foot mountain rose abruptly where such a parking lot should have been located. The cost of removing the mountain was beyond the congregation's means with the result that Pastor Raymond Crawford could only go to his congregation one Lord's day morning with a text from Matthew 17:20, *"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..."* Claiming that promise, the people rallied to prayer the following Wednesday. Within twelve hours the problem was solved. The local telephone company needed fill for a large, swampy site upon which to erect their new building. The church's mountain had the proper ingredients of sand, clay, and rock for such fill. Result? Four thousand yards of fill were removed, the church received \$5,400.00 and the mountain was removed, three new parking lots laid out, and the certificate of occupancy was granted. Everyone has an idea as to what faith is, but it is well to understand what the Bible has to say about this vital subject.

I. A SECULAR FAITH:

This is a faith that causes a person to act on the basis of appearance and the recognition of certain evidence. Actually, there is no such thing as a faithless person in this sense. It would be impossible to even eat a simple meal unless you could believe that it was not poisoned by someone in the preparation. A certain faith is required in virtually everything we do. The Word of God uses the word *"faith"* in three different ways. The original word is *"pistis"* meaning trust, belief, and confidence. The first is found in James 2:19 where it means recognition and assent to certain evidence, in other words, what we are calling a secular faith.

II. A SAVING FAITH:

Another meaning of the word *"pistis"* has to do with commitment, a kind of active trust. It is a committal of our souls to Christ as Paul describes in

II Timothy 1:12. This involves activity on the part of the total personality. There is the act of the mind in understanding certain truth about Christ, the act of the emotions in having certain feeling toward Christ because of what He has done, and finally the act of the will in responding to Christ by taking hold of him as personal Savior. The intellectual, emotional, and volitional are thus necessary to Biblical regeneration and salvation. Of course, few people who make a simple decision for Christ have an awareness of this activity.

II. A SPECIAL FAITH:

A third meaning of the word "pistis" is I Corinthians 12:9. It is more than saving faith and has to do with the Spirit given ability to see what God wants done and to have an unshakable confidence that God will do it even in the face of impossible difficulties. While all of God's people do not have this special gift, all are nonetheless to have a whole soul confidence in God and His ability.

Alan B. Christensen, Pastor, Hope Evangelical Free Church, Wilton, CT