

Mountain Moving Faith

Introduction

"Have faith in God! I tell you with certainty, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' if he doesn't doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. That is why I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours" (Mark 11:22-24, my emphasis).

In rejecting the extremes of some of the doctrines of the Word of Faith movement, especially that of *"What you confess, is what you will possess"* which is based on **Mark 11:22-24**, I threw the baby out with the bath water by evading this passage and by not giving it any further serious thought. But every now and then I would be confronted by the fact that the Word says that Jesus spoke with **"certainty"** and by the thought that He was not in the habit of misleading people by not meaning what He said.

What did He really mean?

Before the "says" part of verse 23 can be emphasised, more thought must be given to what the possible meanings of verse 22 might be. A Good place to start would be to look at what the Greek text has to say about the faith mentioned in this verse.

Greek scholars differ in opinion in terms of how it should be translated. Some scholars are of the opinion that when the context and all the relevant Greek grammatical facts are considered, the Greek should, in stead of being translated "have faith **in** God," be translated: "Have the faith **of** God" or "Have the God kind of faith." There are several versions that have it translated in the subjective:

*"ἔχετε (Echete- (have) πίστιν (pistin- faith) θεοῦ (theou)- from God **or** in God.*

Here are examples of a how some Bibles translate this verse:

"Have God's faith" – The Bible in Basic English

"Have the kind of trust that comes from God" – The Jewish New Testament

"Have God's faith" – Numeric English New Testament

'Have faith of God" – Young's Literal Translation

"Have the faith of God – Douay Rheims Bible)

"Have the faith of God – Worrell New Testament)

"Literally, 'Have the faith of God' " – Barnes' Notes on the Bible

"...have faith in God; or "the faith of God"... that is, exercise, and make us e of that faith which has God for its author, which is the work of God, and of his operation, a free grace gift of his..." – Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Have faith in God or Have the faith of God?

Which one should it be? The fact that there are translations representing both meanings, implies that it would be difficult to settle the problem grammatically. I therefore fall back on a proven principle of hermeneutics. Scripture should be allowed to explain Scripture, meaning that all ambiguous passages should be interpreted in harmony with other clear statements in the Bible concerning the same subject.

The spiritual gift of faith

A line of thought that I think supports the interpretation of the passage meaning “Have the faith **of** God” is the fact that the Bible speaks of two kinds of faith, namely **saving faith** and **the Gift of Faith**. Saving faith is commonly available for the salvation of sinners

“For by grace you are saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”
(Eph. 2:8)

and **the Gift of Faith** that is mentioned in **1 Cor.12:9** which God distributes as He chooses:

*“Now there are diversities of **gifts**, but the same Spirit... For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit, to another **faith**, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit...”*
(**1Cor.12:4-11**, my emphasis).

All Christians have been given saving faith, but not all receive the special gift of faith. In Scripture, the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith often empowered believers to do supernatural things in special situations (**1Kings 18, Acts 13:11**).

How do we get the gifts of the Spirit?

Although we might earnestly desire and ask for the gifts of the Spirit, we must realise that God sovereignly distributes them as He wills (**1 Cor. 14:1, 1 Cor.12:11**).

Conclusion

Many who confuse presumption with faith, quoting **Mark 11:22-24** to justify what they are doing, go around believing that everything they “*confess*” is what they will “*possess*.” On the other hand, there are those who are sceptical and come up with many arguments to try and explain why **Mark 11:22-24** does not mean what it says! The passage should challenge our unbelief and inspire us to ask and trust God for the operation of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us in serious “mountainous” situations.

Nick Maartens
Jeffreys Bay
0827826074,
nickmaartens@hotmail.com