

The Life of Faith

Advance in Faith 1 – Unit 5

Week 6 Faith and the Supernatural



Introduction

The purpose of this session is:

- *To explore the relationship between faith and the outworking of the supernatural power of God in and through the life of the believer and encourage believers to expect and embrace the supernatural dimensions of the faith life.*

1. What do we mean by “supernatural”?

“Supernatural Christianity is normative. It’s the only kind”.

– John Crowder

A basic working definition of the supernatural includes the following:

1. Of or pertaining to or being above and beyond what is natural or unexplainable by natural law or phenomena.
2. Of or pertaining to or characteristic of or attributed to God or deity
3. Of or pertaining to or attributed to unearthly beings e.g. angels

The Bible as a narrative record of God’s redeeming work in human history is full of supernatural events and happenings, most of which are attributed to God’s own direct intervention in human affairs but some of which are attributed to other non-divine spiritual beings such as angels, demons and the devil. Examples in scripture include:

- a. The activity of God - (**Exodus 7-10; John 11**)
- b. The activity of angels - (**Daniel 10; Luke 1+2**)
- c. The activity of demons - (**Leviticus 20:27; Acts 16:16-19**)
- d. The activity of the devil - (**Job 1; Matthew 4**)

While the exploration of these various manifestations of supernatural activity makes for a fascinating study, the focus of this lesson is the relationship between *faith* and the supernatural activity of *God* in human affairs. This supernatural work of God can be classified as:

- a. **Regeneration** – the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation that results in new life in the heart of the believer.

Titus 3:4-6 (NKJV)

“But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour”.

Ephesians 2:4-9 (NIV)

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”

- b. Miracles** – miracles are by definition the suspension or overriding of natural laws for the purpose of divine providence.

Hebrews 11:29-30 (NIV)

“By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

John 2:7-11 (NLT)

“Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, ⁸ he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So the servants followed his instructions. ⁹ When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, he called the bridegroom over... This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him”.

- c. Healings** – Healings are acts of divine restoration in the faculties of the human body or mind.

Acts 14:8-10 (NIV)

“In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹ He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰ and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk”.

Acts 3:5-8 (NLT)

“The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶ But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”⁷ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk!

- d. Deliverance** – the liberation of the human body, soul and spirit from the influence of demonic beings.

Matthew 15:22-28 (NIV)

“A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”... ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was made well at that moment”.

Acts 16:16-18 (NLT)

“One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.”¹⁸ This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her”.

2. Faith as a gift of the Spirit

The agent of God’s power on earth is the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.

The purpose of this power is to affirm the Gospel proclaimed and establish the Lordship of Jesus in the earth through the lives of human beings who receive Him as Lord and Saviour.

1 Corinthians 4:20^[1]_{SEP}(NLT)

“For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power”.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NKJV)

“I didn’t preach my message with clever and compelling words. As I preached, the Holy Spirit showed his power so that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God”.

One of the roles that God the Holy Spirit plays in the life of the believer is as administrator of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-7 (NLT)

“Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don’t want you to misunderstand this... There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

The reason that these gifts of the Spirit are given is to serve others as we serve God. They are not given to satisfy our need for spectacular and supernatural experiences. They are not given to affirm or validate a particular individual. They are empowerment for service.

2. The gifts explained

The Bible teaches God gives gifts of grace (charismata) to men and women as an act of gracious generosity to enable us to serve others in fulfilling His plan and purpose for our lives. This 3-dimensional understanding of the gifts God gives is a really helpful way of seeing them.



Gifts of the Father (Romans 12) – Basic life-purpose gifts / reflections of the image of God in all of us

Gifts of the Son (Ephesians 4) – Ministry Gifts given by Jesus to the church for the specific purpose of equipping people

Gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) – Momentary or occasional impartations of special ability for God-given purpose by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (NLT)

To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have".



A special gift of faith can be given by the Holy Spirit to an individual for a specific time and purpose within the sovereign will of God. In this instance the ability of the person to believe and receive supernaturally from God is based entirely on the God-given capacity to do so and not necessarily on the individual’s personal capacity, experience or knowledge of God. The 9 gifts of the Spirit often operate together.

3. Faith as relational trust

While the gift of occasional faith can be administered by the Holy Spirit at will, faith for the supernatural can also be expressed as a confident relational trust in the consistency and integrity of God’s character based on a knowledge of His will as well as His self-disclosure in Scripture, the person of Jesus and creation.

Conclusion:

The life of faith begins with and continues to include the supernatural work of God in and through the lives of those who love and trust him. This supernatural manifestation of the power of God is often opposed in equally supernatural ways by the devil and the powers of evil at work in the world today. Supernatural events, experiences and expressions are part and parcel of the life of faith and believers will need to learn to rely on the guidance of both the Scriptures and the Spirit to navigate their way through it effectively.

“Thousands of clergy and laity lack the manifestation of the supernatural power of God in their lives simply because they are afraid to trust God completely”. - Lester Sumrall

Group Discussion:

1. Have you experienced supernatural activity of any kind in your life? If so, share your experiences with the group. What happened? How did you feel? How did you respond? What did you learn from the experience?
2. How do we go about assessing or evaluating supernatural experiences to determine their source or origin (holy or unholy / divine or demonic)?
3. What steps can we take to strengthen our faith and expectation for God to work supernaturally through our lives?

Memory verse:

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NLT)

“For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God’s power”.