



# the Gift

**T**HE OTHER EVENING WE WATCHED FOR THE SECOND TIME the film *Angels and Demons*, based on the book of the same name by Dan Brown—yes, *that* Dan Brown, of *The Da Vinci Code* fame. While it is true that both films strain credulity and have more than their share of absurdities, this second film requires far less eye-rolling than the first, and can be enjoyed simply as escapist entertainment. (Whereas the typical response after viewing *The Da Vinci Code* was to grab Messrs. Brown and Howard by the lapels and shout, “Do you really think we are that *stupid?*”)



At this second viewing of *Angels and Demons* I caught a line that had been missed before. Camerlengo Patrick McKenna, a Vatican priest, poses a question to the protagonist, Robert Langdon, before permitting the Harvard symbologist access to the Vatican archives.

"Do you believe in God, sir?"

"I'm an academic. My mind tells me I will never understand God."

"And your heart?"

"Tells me I'm not meant to. Faith is a gift that I have yet to receive."

Bingo!

## BORN OF GOD

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of

the will of man, but of God.

*John 1:12-13*

Faith—that is, trusting in the true God and believing what His word says about Him and Christ Jesus—is a gift. And not everyone has been given that gift. Indeed, the gift will not be extended to all, much less accepted by all to whom it is proffered. Our ability—our *inclination*—to believe is born not of man, but of God.

**When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.**

*Acts 13:48*

Faith—especially *saving* faith—cannot be manufactured, nor can it be forced into existence by sheer human will. To those who possess it, faith is precious, priceless. To those who do *not* possess it, faith is an absurdity, nonsense, a Chimera.

**But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

*1 Corinthians 2:14*

We all have faith of a kind. Those who haven't faith in God have placed their faith in something else—usually themselves.

**For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

*Romans 1:25*

## THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH

Because faith is invisible, we cannot paint its picture, we cannot photograph it. It is difficult even to describe. We can, however, describe its *effect*, for the evidence of faith is there for all to see.

**"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith."**

*Habakkuk 2:4*

Those who have received the gift of faith in God live *by* that faith. It colors their outlook, changes their perspective from worldly to other-worldly. One can usually spot them in a crowd. When life gets hard, they do not despair, for their trust is in the Lord. When a loved-one dies, even in their sorrow over the loss they can rejoice that he or she—if

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a fellow believer—is now in the presence of Jesus for all eternity. When tough decisions must be made, they can be placed in the willing hands of the One who guides their steps. When the heart is heavy for any reason, they know they have a compassionate, loving Lord who cares about them.

Likewise, the lives of those who have received the gift of faith are imbued with an inexpressible joy. Faith in God through the atonement of Christ Jesus quickens and amplifies the physical senses so that even earth-bound life is experienced through the filter of the indwelling Spirit. Sunrise brings a new day of opportunities to rejoice in Him, and sunset draws the curtain of satisfied repose, and the contented slumber of one whose life is held in the hands of a loving, protecting heavenly Father. In between morning and evening are happy hours spent in sweet communion with Him.

And it is all a gift.