

The Verification Of Your Faith

In a sense your faith verifies or validates itself. God has provided two methods by which your faith is verified. Without understanding how these methods operate your faith may be seriously impeded. One of the heroes of faith that understood these means, and the principles that operate them, was Abraham. **Hebrews 11:9**, "And even when Abraham reached the land God promised him, **he lived there by faith**—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise."

I'm sure you will agree, few men have been tried as severely as Abraham. So what was it that made this man a "father" of faith? Simply, 'the **testing** of his faith'. Having faith in itself does not necessarily guarantee greatness. It is the trails that you go through - *the testing of your faith* - that builds greatness. 1 Peter 1:7, "These trials have come so that your **faith**—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved **genuine** and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. "Abraham was a man of great challenges, and this is in fact what helped to shape and frame his greatness.

Note, Abraham left his homeland and journeyed to an unknown destination, and when he arrived there was no outward confirmation that he had done the right thing. All Abraham had was the inner witness of the Spirit of God. He probably looked across the fields, the hills and the valleys of Canaan and said: "What am I doing here?" However, what made the land of Canaan 'a land of promise' was not that which could be seen but rather that which could not be seen (what had already been affirmed by God's Spirit). Had there been any 'external' confirmation, no **faith** would have been required, and therefore, it could not have been called "**the land of promise**." This principle is what makes faith faith! And we should all be truly thankful for this - for the land of promise. But what is your land of promise? It may be elsewhere, or it may be where you are right now. But don't be fooled by the absence of what you think is promising or exciting, for this unattractiveness (or even barrenness) is probably where God is going to display His awesome power.

Please understand, it may be that your 'land of promise' is where you are right now. And in spite of the bad circumstances and adverse conditions you're in, you may be exactly where God wants you. The word of the Lord says: "With men things are impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). Where you are in life isn't necessarily an indication of where you are with God. And therefore, it should be affecting your faith.

During any test or trial, when your faith is being proven, there are two types of confirmation / verification - (1) **internal** confirmation and (2) **external** confirmation. The 'internal' confirmation is essentially the same process as God affirming matters through the Holy Spirit. And this form of confirmation is sufficiently powerful to preserve you and hold you steady in the face of great adversity (during the storms of life). The essence of **true faith** is this "inner witness" of the Spirit of God. And it's what Abraham was dependent on when he arrived in Canaan." By faith he tarried (waited) in the land of promise."

If 'internal' confirmation is an inner witness, what is an 'external' confirmation? It is the tangible outworking of things you've been believing God for (applying your faith to) - when things begin to fall into place! For example, it can be a wonderful answer to prayer - the sort of God experience that is a tremendous encouragement to you. It may also be the providence of God in your everyday affairs so that things take

place in such a manner (beyond your own manipulation), that you know only God could have done it. It's when God deliberately intervenes in the natural course of your life. I love it when God cuts across what I'm doing and let's me know that He's in control! An 'external' confirmation is always tangible - something you can clearly see.

There are however, certain principles with which you ought to become familiar in connection with these two methods of **confirmation**. The first principle is; (a) the 'internal witness' should always be your primary confirmation. Otherwise you will be deriving your main witness from the natural realm. And note, the weakness of the flesh will always yearn for 'external' confirmation because it does not require as much faith. So God is probably doing you a favour when He postpones any external confirmation. For in the postponement of outward signs you have a wonderful opportunity to grow in faith. It is in times like these that you discover the degree of your testing and consequently the level of your faith. The second principle is this; (b) the 'external' witness can often be the grace of God making concessions for the weaknesses of your flesh. The nature of faith is to believe the promises of God alone, but the flesh wants to believe only what it sees.

However, all of us need God's 'external' confirmations. God knows exactly how much you can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). So He provides 'external' confirmations not a moment later than you can endure without them - and not a moment sooner. God is never too late and never too early - He is always exactly on time. Jesus was the only person to walk the planet who did not need external confirmations. His faith was perfect (without measure). Just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He prayed; "I know that You hear Me always but, because of the people who stand before Me I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me" (John 11:42). Perfect faith requires no external confirmation.

The more faith you have, the less you will need 'external' confirmation. Yet, because of your weaknesses God (by grace) will sometimes grant you external signs to bolster your faith in Him. However, faith must have been present in the first place for this to happen. For it's only **faith** that moves God - whether He is providing confirmation through external signs or through an inner witness. The Bible says that *the just shall live by faith*, and that it is *impossible to please God except by faith*.

The thing that stands out with regards Abraham's faith is that he was content with 'internal' confirmation. He was able to exist on this alone! The only confirmation that came to Abraham (time and time again), was God's voice. God would say to Abraham: "Look at the stars. Count them. Look at the sand. Count the grains. So shall your seed be. "But each confirmation was really no more (or less) than what God had said to him the first time, in Genesis 15:5 and 12:2. Therefore, any 'internal' confirmation you receive may be strengthened by a renewal or repetition of the same word. This is God's Spirit bringing His word to your remembrance.

The third principle with regards the two kinds of confirmation is; (c) the longer you can postpone the 'external' confirmation, the more significant it will be when it manifests. If you have to be served continually with external confirmations, then the great things that God may do for you later will not mean as much as they should. The seed of greatness in you is then stifled and mediocrity is encouraged. So learn to be content with the fact that God desires to hold *in reserve* your peak 'faith experiences' so that you may enjoy (to the full) the satisfaction of having waited!

Primarily, Abraham was nourished by God's voice - the promise - God's word. And as the story progresses we hear that Abraham dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the joint-heirs with him of the same promise. Confirming that Abraham was eventually given great external confirmations and great rewards. The most satisfying being the birth of a son - and a grandson. Another thing to know about Abraham is that he never forgot that he was in a 'strange country'. Even though he had set foot on the 'land of promise' it was always a strange land to him. He considered himself an alien - a foreigner to Canaan. Abraham never truly settled in - not because of where he had come from but because of where he was going. The irony of life is that when ever you focus on the transitory nature of life, you make the greatest contribution to your world. When you are most detached from the world, you make the greatest contribution to it. Seeking first the kingdom of God, and being heavenly minded, is the key to your success. This is where you will find it easy to follow the inner witness and not seek outward signs.

According to Jesus, you cannot live until you lay down your life. "For whoever shall save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25). Abraham became great and prospered in all matters of life because he was detached from the 'land of promise' and attached to his final destination - heaven. When you become too attached to what you can "see" it becomes the greatest hindrance in life. Why? Because you are always afraid of losing it.

However, when you are heavenly minded, and follow the 'internal witness' of the Holy Spirit (through the Word), God has a way of eventually showering you with external benefits that go beyond anything you dare ask or think. This is the most exciting way to live! This is the faith walk at it's best!