

# The Surprising Strengthening of Faith



## Introduction

- Faith is essential to the Christian life: without it we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).
- Abraham is our model of faith and we must “walk in his steps of faith” (Romans 4:12,20).
- Faith can be small but pure - OR - hindered by unbelief (*apistia*) which opposes God’s Word. Abraham didn’t waver through unbelief.

## Point 1: Faith Comes by Hearing, requires action, and Can be Purified by Trials

- Faith is a spiritual sense that perceives eternal, invisible realities (2 Corinthians 4:18).
- Faith arises from hearing God’s Word (Romans 10:17).
- Obedience and action is necessary for Faith to survive (Ja 2:26)
- Testing does not create faith but refines it—removing unbelief (1 Peter 1:6–7, Jas 1:2-4).
  - Like gold in fire, trials expose and remove impurities.
  - Parable of the house on rock vs. sand (Matthew 7:24–27).

## Point 2: Abraham’s Journey—A Life of Growing Faith

- God calls and blesses Abraham while in a pagan home (Genesis 12:1–3, Ac 7:2-4); he obeys partially, and slowly, but eventually complies.
- Early trials: opposition, famine, fear, and failure in Egypt (Gen 12:6–20).
- Conflict and rescue of Lot show faith maturing. His encounter with Melchizedek (Genesis 13–14).
- Covenant confirmed—faith credited as righteousness (Genesis 15:6).
- Setback with Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16); silence follows. Time is part of the testing.
- Renewal at age 99: circumcision, name change, and restored obedience (Genesis 17).
- Intercession regarding Sodom (Gen 18)
- Another failure regarding Sarah with Abimelech (Gen 20)
- Isaac’s birth fulfills the long-awaited promise (Genesis 21).
- The great test regarding the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham obeys instantly and trusts God to raise Isaac (Genesis 22). God provides and reaffirms the promise: blessing and many descendants (Genesis 22:15–18).

## Conclusion: Practical Life Applications

- Faith grows through obedience, testing, repentance, and persistence.
- Like Abraham, be *fully convinced* that God can perform what He promised (Romans 4:21). Look at the invisible, and give God glory.

## Questions

1. What does it mean to you that faith can grow stronger through testing?
2. Have you experienced a time when acting on God’s Word helped your faith grow?
3. How can we support each other in growing stronger in faith?

# List of Verses used in this talk

Rom 4:20 NKJV — "20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was **strengthened** in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

## Faith is so important

- We can't please God without it. Heb 11v6
- We're saved by it. Eph 2v8
- The victory that overcomes the world 1 Jn 5:4
- Anything else is sin. Rom 14v23
- We walk by faith & not by sight. 2 Cor 5:7

2Co 4:18 NIV - "18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Rom 10:17 NKJV - "17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

## MUSTARD SEED FAITH

Luk 17:5-6 NKJV - "5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." 6 So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you."

Mar 4:31 NKJV - "31 "It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth;"

## LITTLE FAITH VERSES

Mat 6:30 NKJV - "30 "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

Mat 8:26 NKJV - "26 But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."

Mat 14:31 NKJV - "31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Mat 13:3-23 - The parable of the sower

2Ti 3:16-17 NKJV - "16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Hebrews 4:12 - let God's word cut deep into your heart

## TESTING:

1Pe 1:6-7 NKJV - "6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials (*peirasmos*), 7 that the genuineness (*dokimion*) of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested (*dokimazō*) by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"

1Pe 4:12, 14 NKJV - "12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial (*pyrōsis*) which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ... 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

Jas 1:2-4, 13, 16-17, 21-22 NKJV - "2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials (*peirasmos*), 3 knowing that the testing (*dokimion*) of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. .. 12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation (*peirasmos*); for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." 13 Let no one say when he is tempted (*peirazō*), "I am tempted (*peirazō*) by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ... 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved

brethren. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ... 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

**dokimion** = purifying / proving that which is genuine.

**Mat 7:24-27** NKJV - "24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 "and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.""

### **THE "STEPS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH"**

1. **Leaves Ur** and go to Canaan - God's blessing promise when Abraham was in an idol worshipping household. Aged 70. It was delayed and partial Obedience. Took his dad. Terah (Abraham's father) was a pagan idol worshipper - Jos 24:2. He only moved on when his dad had died. Aged 75. **Gen 12:1-3** NKJV - "1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."" (Cf also **Acts 7:2-4**)
2. **Canaanites** in the land. **Gen 12:6** NKJV — "6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land." God speaks to him again. Delays in words from God. **Gen 12:7** NKJV — "7 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him."  
Note **James 2:26** - "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also."  
**Jas 4:8** NKJV - "8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."
3. **Famine** - **Gen 12:10-20** - went down to Egypt. Lied about Sarai.  
Trials are not authored by God, but He uses them nonetheless - **Jas 1:2-4, 13, 16-17**
4. Abram calls on God's name at Bethel. **Gen 13:4** NKJV — "4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD."
5. **Family Strife** with Lots family. They must split. Abraham is generous even though the split was hard. God blesses him again - promises him the land. **Gen 13:14-18**. Abram moves to Hebron in Obedience to God's next word to him..
6. **Gen 14** - **Lot abducted** and Abram takes 318 men to save him. Meets Melchizedek and is blessed and gives a tithe. (See Heb 7:3 re identity of Melchizedek)
7. **Gen 15:6** NKJV — "6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." God promises children to Abram. God makes a Covenant with Abram.
8. **Gen 16**. Age 86. **Hagar** and Ishmael.  
**Rom 4:12** - Abraham is "... the father of those ...who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had..."  
**Heb 6:11-12** NKJV - "11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
9. Age 99. **Gen 17**. Covenant circumcision. Names changed. Obeys circumcision. Abraham laughs in faith - Gen 17:17.

10. **Gen 18** - 3 “men” visit. Intercession re **Sodom**. In 1 year you'll have a son. Sarah laughs but eventually believes. Sarah is part of Abraham's testing in Gen 16, and Gen 18:12-15 but eventually, partly due to Abraham's faithfulness, she had faith too - Heb 11:11. We don't wrestle against people (Eph 6:12) but we wrestle against ideas, and unbelief.
11. **Gen 20** - **Abimelech**. Abraham lies about Sarah Again. Abraham has to Repent. He prayed and Abimelech's household were healed.
12. **Gen 21** - Age 100 Isaac born.
13. **Gen 22** - Age 115 - Abraham tested at **Moriah**. Immediate Obedience. Complete trust. **Gen 22:15-18** NKJV — "15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— 17 "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.""

**Rom 4:16-21** - "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."