

WITH GOD IN THE SCHOOL OF BUILDING FAITH

Faith: An outward decision made in response to something God has inwardly revealed through the supernatural enlightenment of the eyes of my heart.

Though what we believe is critical, even the strongest belief does not constitute faith. Even the demons believe and shudder (James 2:19). God will intentionally put alleged "faith" to the test in order to reveal its true composition. (James 1:2-4).

As a master craftsman, God is ever engaged in the tedious business of producing maturity in His people. With the hammer of contrary circumstances and the anvil of painful trials, each well-aimed, timely blow shapes faith.

Faith is substance. Like a "title deed" that lets us decisively claim ground given but not yet possessed (Hebrews 11:1-2), faith is so important that we cannot please God without it (Hebrews 11:6). In order to facilitate the faith-building process, God will sometimes unexpectedly draw aside the veil that normally conceals the spiritual world. In that instant of revelation, the "conviction of things not seen" -- like carbon infused into iron -- transforms malleable belief into faith of steel.

Who can honestly claim to have real faith until belief has been tested? Was Abraham's faith "reckoned as righteousness" simply because he believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead? No. His faith was validated when he purposed to give God the chance to prove His promise. As Solomon's sword quickly separated truth and lie, Abraham's raised sacrificial knife distinguished belief and faith (James 2:21-24).

Was Rahab's faith approved simply because she received the spies and embraced what they said? No. Her belief was not converted to faith until she sent them away (James 2:25-26). God's judgment loomed over Jericho, but the spies bore hope: tie the scarlet cord in the window and live. But that promise had no more substance than air unless they returned to Joshua. So Rahab sent them out -- at great personal risk-- by another way. If the cord was hope, then faith tied the knot that rescued her family (cf. Joshua 2:17-21).

Where do we stand today in the development of our faith? Do we long for the "good old days" when life seemed simpler and the tests weren't so demanding? Do we seek the course of least resistance that has always caused men and rivers to run crooked? Or will we be disciplined in our living, steadfastly trained by the trials of life to a faith that is more precious than gold (1 Peter 1:6,7)?

I pray that our faith would be as that of Daniel, whose life before man and God inspired Darius the Mede to count even the roaring of hungry lions as naught by saying, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." (Daniel 6:16b).