

GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE

By Lilian B. Yeomans

We are told in the second chapter of Exodus, and the eleventh verse, that when Moses attained maturity, he identified himself with Israel, a nation in bondage to the Egyptians, rather than with the royal house of the Pharaohs, the reigning dynasty of Egypt. And, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and the twenty-fourth verse, we are further informed that he took this step, which cost him all he had, by faith. That being the case we might have felt justified in predicting that his action would make him the hero of a successful revolt of the Hebrews against Egyptian oppression. Instead it transformed him into the leader of a flock of sheep in the backside of the desert, for Israel would none of him, and Pharaoh sought to slay him. What was the matter? Was it not faith in God's Word, which caused Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter but rather prefer to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season? Certainly it was faith. The Bible says so. And precisely because it was faith, more precious than gold, it had to be tried, that all mixture of dross might be removed.

When Moses stepped out that day and defended his countryman against the Egyptian who was attacking him, it looked possible, even probable, that he might deliver Israel. His splendid powers were at their zenith, and they had been carefully developed and cultivated by studious application, under the best teachers of the day, for

we read that he was vested in all the learning of the Egyptians. No doubt he wielded a tremendous influence upon those amongst whom he lived. His native ability combined with his exalted position, would ensure that.

He may have said to himself: "The time is ripe for the exodus, in accordance with the Word of God, spoken to Abraham and handed down from father to son till it reached me. God has revealed to me that I am His chosen instrument for the execution of His purposes concerning His people. He has fitted me for this work by a chain of providences nothing short of miraculous, and now, when my powers are at their best, in the prime of manhood, I must accomplish my task."

In other words, he seems to have trusted partly in the Word of God, and partly in propitious circumstances and favoring conditions. There was gold there, but there was also dross, and the promise is: "I will purely purge away thy dross." (Isaiah 1:25) So, to the backside of the desert Moses went, that he might learn to believe that a thing was so, and would be made manifest, simply because God said so, and not on account of circumstances or conditions. Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, and the things that faith produces, or calls into existence, are merely the shadows cast by the substance. Faith, purified of all alloy, rests on the Word of God absolutely unmoved by appearances, whether

favorable or the reverse, and could, if necessary, rest there for all Eternity, sublimely content that the thing IS, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, because the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. "He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:9)

So, for forty long years, Moses remained in the wilderness leading his father-in-law's sheep to pasture. As far as his God-appointed life work went, it was apparently an utter failure. But only apparently, for he was burning away there in that furnace of bitter disappointment, protracted delay, and self-despair, until at last, when God came to him and said, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh" he replied, "Who am I? A miserable failure, forgotten by Egyptian and Israelite alike, a dead man out of mind, that I should go unto Pharaoh and bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11) And note that God had not one encouraging word to say about Moses. His answer was, "Certainly, I will be with thee" (Exodus 3:12) I AM THAT I AM." It doesn't matter who you are, Moses, or how impossible the task set for you, for I will be with you, I have spoken and I will make it good. Moses' first lesson was that he could not do the work God had called him to do with all his powers at their very best, and now he was to learn that there was no possibility of his failing to accomplish it, reduced though he was to utter powerlessness if he went in the strength of the Lord only.

We sometimes say "we are standing on the promises of God," when as a matter of fact, we are

partly supported by God's Word and partly by circumstances and conditions which appear to make its fulfillment possible, probable, or even imminent. One eye is on the Promise, but the other is keeping a keen lookout on "the things that are seen." If this is our state we may as well pack up and get ready for a trip to the back side of the desert. We are absolutely sure of being placed in the furnace, for fire is the only agent, which can remove that dross from the gold of our faith. And we shall stay there, too, just as long as God sees it to be necessary. Malachi 3:3 says "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." He shall sit. His work is unhurried and thorough. He will purge and try us until we unhesitatingly call the things that be not, of which there does not appear to be so much as a vestige of probability, or even possibility, as though they were. (Romans 4:17), on the authority of God's Word alone. Then He will say, "Come, NOW," and His mighty power will be manifested in and through us. "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40.) Believe and see; this is God's order and it is irreversible.

Sometimes we feel as though the way in which God keeps us waiting is almost cruel. But He says we keep Him waiting. In the eighteenth Chapter of Luke, and the seventh verse, we find the Holy Spirit saying, "Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, THOUGH

"HE BEAR LONG WITH THEM?" How God's heart yearned for that moment when He could say "Come Now" to Moses, for He says, "I have seen the affliction of My people, I have heard their cry. I know their sorrows." God is not blind or deaf, ignorant or unmindful. He sees, hears and knows all about each of us, and His Fatherly heart longs for the moment when He can say to us, "Come Now," and lead us forth in victory (for He has provided for us, in Jesus, a deliverance so complete, out of every trial and test, that the triumphant exit of the Children of Israel from Egypt, laden down as they were with gold and jewels, is but faint picture of it).

And He would lead us up, not into any earthly Canaan, but "Far above all principality and Power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21) and seat us there with Christ, to go out no more forever. Shall we not let Him work unhindered? If so, there is only one way of doing it, and that is the WAY OF FAITH.

A brother was talking to me about this subject the other day and he said something that sounded very simple, and the more I meditated upon it the more I became convinced that it was in reality very profound, like perfectly transparent water, which may be hundreds of feet deep without one's ever suspecting it. It was, in substance, as follows: "I go to the Word of God in as matter of fact a way as you would look at a cookbook. I desire something of the Lord and I search the Scriptures to see if it is in accordance with His revealed will.

Yes, I find that it is a 'good thing,' and no good thing will He withhold. How am I to get it? Here are directions for preparing the dish. In Mark 11:24 I read, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Then in Philippians 4:6, I find, "Be careful for nothing, but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." There are the first two ingredients of the dish I desire, belief and thanksgiving for the thing for which I have asked God, which inevitably follows a sincere conviction that it is mine. Then, in I Peter 1:8, there is a word "In whom ... believing ye rejoice." And resting on God's faithfulness in the matter in hand, I rejoice, and begin stamping around on the promise and shouting victory. I do this cold-bloodedly, if you will allow the incongruous expression. I do not feel that I believe, thank and rejoice. I do not feel that I can do these things to order, but I know I can, for God's Word commands me to do it, and I obey. And as it says in Philippians 4:7, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps my heart and mind about the matter, and, the first thing I know, when I have entered into complete rest about the thing, it comes along."

Shall we, from this moment, resolve to believe what the Bible says about things, and not what our senses report, where the two are at variance? Are they then sometimes at variance? Certainly they are. Abraham's senses reported to him that he was an old man, as good as dead, to whom paternity was an absolute impossibility, while the Word of

God told him that he was fruitful beyond any of his contemporaries, the "Father of many nations." When Isaac came, and grew and developed into strong young manhood, and the fulfillment of the promise through him began to look possible and even probable, God suddenly swept him away, and Abraham gave him over to death, still firmly believing that he, through Isaac; was the father of many nations, accounting that God was able to raise him from the dead, if need be, but not able to break His Word.

As a rule we grieve God, and lose tremendously, by the fact that when faith has called something into existence, even as Abraham's produced Isaac, we begin to revel in the thing produced, which is the shadow, and forget all about the Mighty Promise, the Word of the Living God, which is the SUBSTANCE, so God often has to recall His gift, that we may get back to the Word, and, as we encourage our hearts thereby, we rejoicingly, exultantly, yield up the shadow, shouting, "Hath God spoken and shall He not make it good?" when immediately the thing is in evidence again.

The Word of God told Joseph that he was pre-eminent among his brethren while his senses told him that he was sold as a slave into Egypt, languishing in an Egyptian prison, with his feet bound with fetters of iron. We are told in the 105th Psalm and the nineteenth verse, that "The Word of the Lord tried him . . until the time that His word came." Then the king sent and loosed him, let him

go free, made him the lord of his house and the ruler of all his substance.

This is the kind of deliverance which God has provided for you and me out of the very test in which we find ourselves at this moment. "Buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich." (Revelations 3:18) He would have us come out of the furnace of testing greatly enriched by the trial, with a faith that can claim and obtain great things from God. Do not thwart His loving purpose by unbelief.

As we read the eleventh of Hebrews we are filled with a holy envy, but, thank God, these heroes of faith have left the road they traveled behind them, and their experiences have provided us with all sorts of finger posts and landmarks, so we can be sure that we are going that way. And the Scriptures do not teach that they exhausted Heaven's resources either, but, far from it, we are actually told that God has provided some better thing for us. Shall we let Him bestow it upon us? All heaven hangs on our answer, for we occupy the center of the stage, the middle of the arena, and they are in the spectators' seats, "a host of witnesses."

How soon our opportunity, too, will be forever past! What are we doing with the present moment? Are we believing all that the prophets have spoken?

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