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## THE FAITHFUL APPROVED AND TESTED

– REVIEW. – JUNE 23. –

**Golden Text:** – "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.  
– Isa. 43:2.

REVIEWING the lessons of the quarter we find that they indicate that God was seeking for and approving and encouraging and testing those of his people who exercised special faith in him – to the extent of obedience, to the extent of their ability. Nor should this surprise us: what other quality could God seek in any member of the fallen race? Surely he could not seek for perfection, for his own Word declares explicitly that "There is none righteous, no not one." (Rom. 3:10.) As he sought not the perfect in mind or morals or features, we ask ourselves what quality would especially commend any member of the race to the Lord, and our answer is, in harmony with the evidences of the quarter, that "God seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth" – in honesty, in sincerity. Such worship would be impossible except as it had a basis of faith: as it is written, "He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him"; and again, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6.) True, the Apostle writes that love is the principal thing, but the Apostle is writing to those who already have been approved in their faith. In another sense of the word faith is the principal thing, because it is the basis and only condition upon which any other of God's favors are now obtainable.

Abraham – what did he do? What great exploits? How is it written? "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:3.) According to this, faith will hide a multitude of defects? Indeed, according to the Word, it is only by

the exercise of faith in our Redeemer that we are reckoned as covered with the robe of righteousness, and made acceptable to the Father, and permitted to stand complete in him.

What was there in Isaac's experiences in life to mark him as one of the Lord's. Isaac did nothing great, nothing wonderful. He founded no colleges, he built no churches, he organized no great relief funds, etc., etc., praiseworthy as those things may be; but he had the approval of God because he also believed God.

What wonderful things did Jacob do to give him a place of such prominence in the history of God's people, and to make him worthy to be the father of the nation of Israel? There is no record of any very wonderful works on the part of Jacob, aside from the fact that he had a wonderful faith in God. He believed in the Oath-bound Covenant made to his grandfather Abraham – it saturated and **[R4003 : page 169]** filled his entire life. Everything in his entire course from first to last was shaped in accordance with that faith. God counted his faith to him also for righteousness, and his name has come down to us amongst others who had the grand testimony that they pleased God and are ultimately to have a share in the great work of God as a reward.

## **JOSEPH, THE FAITHFUL**

Joseph accomplished more than his forebears as respects great and useful work in the world: in the line of God's providences he not only saved the nation of Israel, his father's house, but also the nation of Egypt from the famine which otherwise might have destroyed them all. But Joseph is not brought specially to our attention in the Scriptures because of this great deed. Rather the Scriptures lay as much emphasis upon some of the smaller transactions of his life, and recite all of his affairs as evidences of his faith in God. Without that faith Joseph would not have been anything. It was his faith that kept him in good courage and of restful heart even in the midst of trying

circumstances and conditions; it was his faith and loyalty to the one in whom he believed that kept him from the hour of temptation while a member of Potiphar's household; it was his faith that triumphed in the prison and gave him opportunities for comforting and assisting others, and learning himself to sympathize with those in distress. It was his faith which prompted him to have that relationship with God which brought to him the interpretation of dreams and the exaltation to power and influence. It was his faith still that enabled him to use those opportunities without losing his head, that showed him to have the spirit of a sound mind.

### **MOSES, THE MEEKEST MAN**

Moses, perhaps more than all the characters of this lesson, was a mighty man both in word and deed; but while his greatness as a leader and a lawgiver shines out and marks him as a wonderful character, his faith is the most remarkable feature of his history. Not that in his case or in any of these cases the matter of faith is specially paraded and held up to our admiration – rather it is told in that simple manner which carries with it powerful conviction. We see the faith in its operation without being told about it. Moses without the Lord would have been nothing; Moses with the Lord, without faith, would have accomplished nothing, for God would not have used him, but would have found another instrument for his service. It was the combination – God, Moses, Moses' faith and obedience – that prompted the grand exhibit which we find in his life, and constituted him in the eyes of the whole world one of the most gigantic figures of history. So great was Moses that he could in simplicity and without bombast write, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up of your brethren like unto me" – in reference to the great Messiah, King of kings and Lord of lords.

These things being true teach us that the most important thing for us, that we may have the divine favor and approval and

blessing, is first of all that we have implicit faith in God. And this faith we find both from the Scriptures and from experience is a matter of development, growth. Our faith should grow stronger with every day, month and year that we live, so that our closing days in life would be the fullest of trust. But here we must note a danger and difficulty amongst those who seek to cultivate faith: the Adversary would present faith in man and in the words of man and in the theories of man as instead of faith in God and his Word.

How many have been hindered, turned aside from the right path, by a misplaced faith! How many today are worshiping the creeds and theories of men and neglecting the Word of the Lord! How necessary to us that, while recognizing the fact that God has always used mouthpieces and leaders amongst his people, we should also recognize the fact that Satan has many mouthpieces and provides many leaders, and that our method of discrimination as between the true and the false prophets must be by their faithfulness to the Word of God, as it is written – "If they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20.) Let us then not only resolve to cultivate faith, but that we make sure that it will have foundation in the Word of the Lord. And to thus make sure will imply such a love for truth, such an appreciation of the divine Word, as will lead us to spend time and energy, money, everything, that we may know the truth and be made free by it. Whoever, therefore, loves money, praise of men, honors of men, etc., more than he loves God or his Word, is not likely to obtain or to hold the proper knowledge of God, upon which alone **[R4004 : page 169]** the proper faith and obedience can be built.

## **IN THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLINE**

It was not sufficient that Abraham had faith to begin with, so that he was ready to follow the invitation of the Lord to leave his own country for another upon which as yet he had no claim except

the divine promise. It was because Abraham had such a faith and was able to exercise it that God counted him worthy to receive promises at all. Then came the test as to how strongly he would hold to the promises – for instance, the test respecting his son, whose birth was the very center of all the divine promises. Twenty-five years did God test the faith of Abraham on this point until he was growing old, and Isaac was born when he was a hundred years old. Notice again how God kept Abraham in the school of discipline, testing his faith; not testing it with a view to breaking it and destroying it, but on the contrary applying the tests so as to increase the faith, to make it stronger and every way better. Note, for instance, that Isaac was allowed to grow up to be a young man, and Abraham to pass the time of life when he might hope to have another son, when God commanded the slaying of Isaac as a sacrifice. How grand was the faith that never faltered, that still believed that in his Seed all the families of the earth should be blessed! What evidence we have here that Abraham was well taught and had learned well the various lessons under the divine instruction! He was able to offer up his son, and counted that God was able to raise him from the dead and thus to fulfil the promise – never doubting. O, what a grand summit of faith was thus evidenced! How such a character must have pleased God! and it shines out the more because of the darkness and idolatry of his time.

Consider how Isaac and Jacob were also schooled in advance, and learned well the lesson of confidence in God **[R4004 : page 170]** and his Oath-bound Covenant. See the same in the case of Joseph, whose life was full of adversity and was grandly rounded out by these trying experiences, his faith becoming stronger, apparently, at every step of the journey of life. Note the same in Moses' case from first to last. He who was so humble minded respecting his own talents that he insisted he was quite unfit to be the leader of the people, after being assured that God would lead him and use him as his representative and channel merely – then

Moses was willing and ready and able to do all things through his faith in the Almighty God. The lesson clearly is that the trials and difficulties, tests and disciplines of faith were specially provided of the Lord for the development of the character of the ancient worthies chiefly along the lines of faith; that they not only had faith prominent to begin with, but that God saw to it that this characteristic was more and more a pronounced one in them.

### **THE TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH**

We are glad to have the testimony of the Apostle that these grand characters of the past met with the divine approval, and fell asleep in death to await at the resurrection a grand reward – their trial and testing having been successfully finished. But in the same connection the Apostle tells us that in the divine plan the "little flock" of this Gospel age has been called to a still higher station and privilege and blessing than the ancient worthies. The Apostle's words are, "These died in faith, not having received the thing promised; God having provided some better thing for us [the Gospel Church], that they without us should not be made perfect." Their perfection will be to the human nature; ours, if we are of the very elect, will be to the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and powers.

What then shall we suppose respecting God's approval in the Gospel Church, and the tests that he will apply? Can we think that he would make faith a test in the past and ignore it as respects the present election? Nay, verily! Faith is still the test of all who would please God. So then, as God in the past selected for the channels of his promises and blessings only those who could exercise faith, we may expect that in the present time the Lord has nothing whatever to offer except to those who can exercise faith in him and in his promises. We know that this must of necessity signify that the called of this Gospel age would be a very much smaller number than the whole population of the world; and then

again we have the further declaration that of the called few will be chosen. What does this signify except that few will prove themselves to have the requisite faith and obedience to please God, to be counted worthy a share in the Kingdom with his dear Son, our Lord.

And if only those who have faith have been called throughout this Gospel age, what shall we say of the testings of faith for these? The Apostle's intimation is that their faith will need a great testing. He says, "The trial of your faith is much more precious than that of gold which perisheth." (1 Pet. 1:7.) Gold has a special value at the present time by reason of its scarcity – a value that will perish when with the new order of things it will be as easy to have gold as to have clay or iron; but the "little flock," which the Lord is selecting during this Gospel age, is always to be specially precious in that to this class alone of humanity, so far as the divine revelation shows, will be granted the divine nature, with its glory, honor and immortality. Hence the trial of the faith of this class is very precious, a very important matter. None shall be admitted to that glorious immortality without first being tested and proven by the Lord. But here again let us remember that our testing is not as respects the flesh, to see whether or not we are perfect in the flesh, but on the contrary we are assured that God knoweth our condition – that all things are open and naked before his sight, and that he declares that we are all imperfect.

What then is God seeking in us? The development and perfection of faith! The first element in it is to believe in him as a faithful, wise, true God; and secondly to believe in his revelation of Jesus as his Son, and the one through whom he has provided a covering for our imperfections, our blemishes, past, present and future. This is the essential phase which must be held on to, and which he will therefore test in order to prove our loyalty. This is the faith that must grow stronger as the days and months and years roll by. This is the faith through which will be reckoned to us the

merit of Christ's atonement, and through which we will have reconciliation. This is the faith that must be proven to have such tenacity and strength that it will trust the Lord even where it cannot trace him, as did Abraham when he believed that God was able and willing to fulfil his promise, even though it should imply the resurrection of Isaac from the dead. We must learn, we must develop, at least that much faith also, so that we will believe in God and the fulfilment of his promises even though the fulfilment of them signifies not only our own resurrection from the dead to glory, honor and immortality, but signifies also an awakening of all the families of the earth from the prison-house of the tomb, that they may have fulfilled toward them the gracious promise made to Abraham – "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Without such faith in God and in his promises it will be impossible to please him and to become of the elect class which he is now selecting.

### **"IF GOD BE FOR US"**

Nor are we to worry ourselves to make tests for our own faith – rather we are to leave the matter in our Lord's hands. The tests will probably not come to us along the lines of our expectancy, but, on the contrary, from unexpected quarters. That many such tests are before us in the "evil day" in which we are living, the Apostle assures us. He tells us that we will require the whole armor of God in order to be able to withstand the assaults upon our faith in this time. So subtle will be these assaults that our Redeemer tells us that if it were possible the "very elect" would be deceived. But, thank God, it is not possible for these to be deceived. The Lord has become their refuge and their habitation; he has accepted the supervision of their affairs; he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape. (1 Cor. 10:13.) While we are not to think it strange concerning these fiery trials, our faith in the Lord's testimony respecting them will have much to do



with **[R4004 : page 171]** our preparation for withstanding them: if we believe his Word we will improve every opportunity for putting on the helmet, the breastplate, the sandals, and for the learning to use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and the shield of faith, whereby we may quench the fiery darts of unbelief. Whoever does not take heed to the Word and thus put on the armor of God is thereby showing his lack of faith, his unbelief, being disobedient to the word of the Commander. When he assures us that every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is, and that only the gold and silver and precious stones of divine truth will constitute such faith as will stand the tests of this day, we may be sure that our Lord understood the matter thoroughly; and in proportion as we have this faith we will be energetic in getting rid of any wood, hay or stubble of our theology, and replacing the same with the precious things of the divine Word, that we may be able to stand in the "evil day," that we may be counted worthy to be helped of the Lord as those who are truly his. According to our faith it will be unto us. **[R4005 : page 171]**

**"FAITH CAN FIRMLY TRUST HIM,  
COME WHAT MAY"**

Our Golden Text is a very encouraging one. In view of the fact that all of the called, chosen and faithful must be required to pass through the school of experience, discipline and testing with a view to their final approval, how encouraging it is to know that the Lord will indeed be with us in every trouble, that he sympathizes with us in all of our trials, adversities, afflictions, perplexities, etc., and that "behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face." The waters of affliction, disappointment, perplexity, trouble, will be about us, and we are not to float with the current either, but are to endure hardness as good soldiers. But our source of strength in battling with the current of life is never to be forgotten – "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." Blessed thought! "I can do all things through Christ

who strengtheneth me," and he assures us, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9.) Our Golden Text implies rivers of trouble, but assures us that when we pass through the rivers they shall not overflow us, they shall not extinguish us; on the contrary the Lord will pull us safely over to the other side, where we shall have life, and that more abundantly, with the glory, honor and immortality which he will provide for his Bride – his Elect.

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