

GOODNEWS LETTER

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TRIAL OF OUR FAITH

"That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" I Peter 1:7.

More precious than gold? Off to Wikipedia I go to discover that gold is known for its **Ductility** and **Malleability**. Both words mean that the metal can take all kinds of stress; it doesn't break apart when it is hammered or rolled. Gold has plasticity. It doesn't fracture under pressure.

Wikipedia makes another point about gold that is very interesting. It has "**STORE OF VALUE**;" which means that gold can be saved and retrieved at a later time, "AND BE PREDICTABLY USEFUL WHEN RETRIEVED." Now, isn't that just like faith? Let's reach back into the store house of faith and use it, TODAY!

Utilization of faith and predictably are some that Peter had in mind, no doubt, when he penned the words: "the trial of your faith." The **New King James Version** makes the verse a bit more understandable by changing the word 'trial' to 'genuineness.' The NKJV has it, "The genuineness of your faith."

However, both writings refer to the gold idea. When Peter called faith "more precious than gold," he based upon the "Manifold temptations" that the strangers were going through at the time (I Peter 1:6).

Although, trials and temptations are always around, Peter wants us not to think it strange that such trials come, "but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings that, when His glory is revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy," I Peter 4:13.

Thus, when the Lord returns, faithful servers are going to be a happy bunch. Yet, for faith to have its course, we have to be happy servants in the here and now. We must consider ourselves so blessed to be in the work of Jesus that we **RUSH** to every part of His work; ready to "Go" or, "Stay."

And, we must remember, that faith is like GOLD in that it doesn't break apart under stress. The Bible definition of faith is something a lot of people don't realize; even people in the Lord's churches.

When, I say 'people in the Lord's churches,' I mean many that I have been with over the years. A lot of church people have placed a hard, but incorrect slant on the meaning of faith. Many of the brothers, as far back as 1959 (when I was

saved), have taught that it's going to be rough. *"And, we better not have any joy or peace in serving the Lord, either,"* they avowed; with a scornful disposition.

The emphasis was on the '**falling away**' and 'suffering for the truth,' back in those days. So much so, that I thought my house was going to be seized before the 60's were up. But, I was willing for them to take it, too!

It was taught that, certainly, Jesus would return before the year 2000! The focus was as if everything about the great falling away would occur in our life time. The Mark of the Beast, physical and financial persecution was the main message back then, in the 60's & 70's.

Yet, the truth is, these things brought about a strange paradox. A great number of the brethren who proclaimed the falling away, were the ones who "**Fell Away.**"

Many of my brethren actually defined "**Self fulfilling prophecy**" for me; in a spiritual way. It seems that they were thinking: *'If the falling away doesn't happen then I'll be wrong. I can't let that happen. So, I'll fall away and prove it correct.'*

Now, I'm sure these men did not actually think that way; but, that's what many did, nonetheless. A great number of them did; and, are still doing it. Men, who once believed and served the Lord, no longer believe. Well, they aren't serving, anyway.

Don't you want everyone serving when Jesus returns? I sure do! I want every person saved, too. Therefore, let's not forget the "**STORE OF VALUE**" definition that is given to gold and transfer that thought to our faith. Let's **retrieve** our **faith** and realize that its **value** is **predictably useful** when we cash it in on Jesus, the Christ.

We can't deny that our churches are getting smaller. Every day, it seems, Baptists change their name to "Community." And, it's hard to be a happy soul when only a few show up for services. But, we have to place this within the **BIG PICTURE**. In our day, the "falling away" has not been because of "**fiery trials.**" Not in our time, and not in America.

Christians must think in the words of Winston Churchill, who said something like, "**All we have to fear is fear itself.**" If we think about it, only fear has permeated our country. In fact, as long as I've been on the earth, we've only gotten richer and safer, decade by decade.

Yes, there's always been fear of some sort, hanging around. Back in my school days, I remember the threat of Russia. "**Bomb Shelters**" were built back in those days. It was thought that it could happen anytime! Just wait around and see the Russians a-comin'.

Is there fear today? No doubt! What kind of fear do we encounter? Is it the failing economy? The fear of Muslims ... cults? What is it that brings fears that scare people in 2010?

Well, whatever it may be, Christians must heed Paul's words and take notice. If men understood the wisdom of God, then those words would be taken into our hearts. "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1Cor. 2:5).

He goes on to say that no worldly person can ever understand God's spiritual work; not back then or today. "...for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1Cor. 2:8). Or, if they know it, they will serve the Lord.

We could say that if those 'gloom and doom' preachers had known the wisdom of God, they would still be standing for the faith - their hearts filled with a faith "which was once for all delivered unto the saints, according to Jude 3. Let's remember the "mystery, even the hidden wisdom" (2:7), and keep it deep in our faith (2:7),

In other words, God's wisdom is outside of us. It's in Jesus and His work. Our faith is in Him. We believe it, trust it and, follow it. Once our hearts match what is in Scripture, we're at home; for, "God hath revealed (it) unto us by His Spirit," 1Cor. 2:10.

Yes, it is true that brethren sometimes go a bit too far in their interpretations of Scripture. Yet, if we understand the local New Testament Church and serve within it, our faith becomes MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD. We'll never 'self fulfill,' but will enjoy the 'Christ fulfilling,' even in the times of trials.

Therefore, rather than have the world control our feelings by comparing ourselves with others, we want to feel the warm and assuring faith of God's word.

We want to learn to compare ourselves with the true standard - **that of Scripture**. The fruit of the Holy Spirit shall bring us "Love, joy, peace and..." (Gal 5:22). Then, "...the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual" (1Cor. 2:13b, NKJV).