

Like Gold

27 September 2002

A few days ago, a friend shared the following Scripture with me to my encouragement:

Job 23:8-10 "Behold I go forward but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns (hideth Himself - KJV) on the right, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Job's experience, much like the experience many of us are facing in Zimbabwe (and other places), was that he could not see or perceive God, no matter where he turned. To put it in very modern terminology, he did not know whether he was Arthur or Martha. He was confused by all the negative events that was coming upon him, and he did not know which way to turn.

For many the dilemma is so big they don't know what decisions to make any more. All logic has been removed. What is the future, where do we go? It might be easy for those who are in another country to say, "Why don't you just leave and move out of Zimbabwe?" Many have done that, and many more are in the process of leaving. However, the decision even to do that is massive, and a complete life change. For some it means leaving an entire life's investment and starting afresh at an old age. We only have one life! Such confusion reigns. Where do we go, what do we do? Where are you, oh Lord? We have

prayed and prayed till we are blue in the face, and things still seem to just get worse and worse.

Job went through a similar experience. Looking forward he saw nothing. Looking backward, he could not perceive God. What about the left? *"No, I don't see Him there either."* So let's try the right, surely He must be there somewhere. No, now the Lord *"hides Himself"* from our view! Why? Why would God do that in our time of desperation? It seems so unfair - almost sadistic, mocking. Why would a just and loving God allow a dictator to destroy the life of almost an entire nation, and no one stops him? Why did it take such a long time for Hitler to be stopped, and a world war which killed millions of people?

Have any of you ever read Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*? This godly lady struggled with the same questions, to which God slowly provided answers through the suffering and death of her own sister.

Job also found an answer:

"He knows the way that I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

The fact is that through all the wrestling and confusion, God's eye of love never leaves us for one moment. His compassion is extended towards us every inch of the way. But there is a higher purpose, and for the accomplishment of the higher purpose, He allows us to keep moving forward in this seeming confusion. *"When He has tried me ..."* What is that all about? What is the purpose of trials? I wonder how Joseph must have felt in Egypt when everything went wrong for him, and he

ended up in an Egyptian jail with no lawyers to call on, and no one even knowing that he was there!

I notice that Job's search is in the realm of the natural. He is looking for physical answers - he wants to see and understand what is happening. Sight - physical sight of the answer - is denied him. He must walk in faith, trusting God even when he can't see, all else seems to be a confusing mess. In this blind faith he must walk, not just one or two days, but on and on and on, persevering in spite of utter weariness, holding on to his integrity even when the godly counselors fail. His eyes start to be focused on something greater - a higher purpose. *"... I shall come forth as gold."*

Does he give up now? Does he opt for an easier route - more comfortable? No, he wants to go for the gold, and in its pursuit, he is willing to forfeit life's pleasures - even the "reason" of his godly counselors. He wants the gold!

So, what's the "gold" for Zimbabwe (for your situation) - this gold for which we are paying such a high price? What was the "gold" for Joseph when he was there in the Egyptian jail? The Scripture says, speaking about Joseph,

Psa 105:19 "Until the time that His Word came to pass, the Word of YHWH tested him."

Joseph received his "gold". He was able to say to his brothers,

Gen 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring out this present result, to preserve many people alive."

I am very sure that he was not able to perceive the end result while he was going through the trial. Things had looked very bleak to him, and seemingly his prayers were not being answered. But in reality, God was there all the time. He had to hold on to the prophetic word which he had received by means of a dream when he was but a youth. That was all he had to hold on to! It was that word which sustained him - which helped him to walk by faith. Never despise prophetic utterances. They are your lifeline!

With concern I am reading a number of critical e-mails condemning Cindy Jacob's prophecy and other similar prophetic statements that have been made over Zimbabwe. Folks, I know that prophets are fallible, and we can all make mistakes. God specially instructed that the prophets were to judge one another (1Corinthians 14:29), and that is because of the real possibility of error. However, this does not mean that we should never make prophetic utterances as the Scripture implicitly says,

1Cor 14:1 "Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy," (among other passages.)

If I were to "*rightly judge*" these prophetic words, as I must, then I should firstly compare it to Scripture, and secondly, to the gist of what God has been saying through the prophetic words spoken over Zimbabwe (and other places and situations) over many years.

I would like to start at the tail end for the sake of this article only (though my judgement is always the other way around!). I have been in hundreds of conferences

and church meetings in Southern Africa throughout my life, and over the past 40 years or so, have both heard and personally spoken many prophetic statements. I can say with absolute assurance that I have heard a theme being spoken again and again - times without number - that God has a special purpose for this nation. I understand from these prophetic statements, that this nation is to be as a jewel within Southern Africa, reaching out with the gospel to the nations around. I understand also that this gospel would not be an empty word but would also bring with it the blessing of physical nourishment - food and sustenance - just like Joseph was a blessing in the land of Egypt, and Daniel in Babylon.

However, I also understand from these prophecies, that God will not share His glory with another, and that the blessings which must flow, will not come out of the cleverness and ingenuity or the pride of man, but rather out of brokenness, humility, and faith in God. It will flow out of godly living and obedience to His commands. I understand that God is very particularly guiding the affairs of this nation, systematically allowing every dependence upon man's intervention to be broken down, and removing pride from our nation, so that people will fully put their trust in God and Him alone. In this regard, even though I voted for them, I had a deep concern for some of the policies of the MDC who were set to win the elections, as I considered particular policies of theirs to be against godly principles. God allowed this to be stopped - though the whole nation was enraged and deeply disappointed.

In essence, I see that the prophetic statements have directed Zimbabwe (and South Africa) towards a very

particular goal - that of massive spiritual revival and a centre for the spreading of the gospel to other African states. With this would come the necessary financial blessing to practically make this a reality. Cindy Jacob's prophecy is nothing out of the ordinary - it simply fits into a whole massive stream of prophecy, and is designed to encourage God's people.

To compare this prophetic stream with Biblical principles (the first place to judge prophecy) I see that it does not contradict Bible truth. The Bible definitely commands us to spread the gospel, and in spite of all the criticism against prosperity, I see that God often speaks about blessings which would follow those who obey His Word. However, the Bible puts the blessing into correct perspective - something which many preachers of prosperity miss.

The Bible particularly instructs us to pray for the peace of our nation - as also that of Jerusalem. This is in order to facilitate the further spreading of the gospel (1Timothy 2:2-4). The Bible also implicitly calls us to repentance and prayer, and these prophecies have certainly aligned themselves with that call.

Some say, *"The Bible already says these things, so why the need for prophecy."* My answer is quite simple - *"Ask God - He instituted prophecy not me!"* All I know is that the Bible instructs us to seek EARNESTLY the prophetic word, so that means it must be important, as a source of encouragement for us. This should never be at variance with the Bible, but rather a specific added word of encouragement and direction for us.

Naturally I cannot answer for each individual prophecy that has been spoken, and I am sure that there could have been several errors. However, we should be mature enough to see what God's message of encouragement is for us, judge it according to the principles of the Scriptures, and use the Word to aid us in our fight against evil.

Paul told Timothy,

1Tim 1:18,19 "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience ..."

So, Timothy obviously had personal prophecies spoken over him, and Paul instructed him to "*fight the good fight*" by *constant reference to these prophecies*. I have, as I know many others have too, also had personal prophecies spoken over me over the years. These have been a particular source of encouragement to me and helped me to keep up the faith during times of difficulty. It has never detracted me from the Word - rather it has drawn me closer to the Word.

So, I ask the question again, what is the "*gold*" for Zimbabwe (and in your situation) - this gold for which we are paying such a high price? Various prophetic words have indicated spiritual revival and blessing. Others speak of a crash of evil, and a victory for the gospel. Others speak of a time of financial blessing and fruitfulness for Zimbabwe. Others speak of this country being a centre for the spreading of the gospel to the surrounding nations. Again, others speak more

personally of a closer walk with God - a forming of godly character in our lives - a breaking down of worldly lusts and desires and a deepening of our prayer life and relationship with God.

Whatever it is, I don't want to miss it for anything in the world. When there is a drought, the trees which remain alive are those with deep taproots. I am putting my roots down deeper. I am investing, taking risks, and seeking for ways in which I may be a Joseph in our "Egyptian" drought situation. I believe God is calling us, like Job, to trust Him even when we can't see any way forward, backward to the left or to the right. It is a time for perseverance - a time for faith.

May I encourage you to walk that road with me. I have just seen the Lord supply most amazingly for a big step that I took by faith. I felt that I should invest in a big project (big for me), and neither had the land nor the finance to make this possible. However, through God's grace, and according to His Word, I made an arrangement a month ago, for the deal to take place on Saturday (yesterday), and as I came closer and closer to the date, everything I tried to prepare for this deal failed. I continued, and in God's wonderful mercy, on Friday evening the land was suddenly made available, and on Saturday morning, four hours before my scheduled meeting, the finance was made available. I walked into the office, signed the cheque and the transaction was done. God makes a way for us when there is no way. Some of you might remember an old chorus we used to sing:

I know the Lord will make a way for me

I know the Lord will make a way for me

If I live a holy life

Shun the wrong and do the right

I know the Lord will make a way for me

May the Lord give you the courage, not to look to the left and right, and not to be distracted by seemingly easier ways. May you by faith have the strength to **go for gold!**