

GOLD AND DROSS.

THESSE wondrous words give a key to MANY daily life problems which exercise children of God. "WHY am I suffering so many difficulties?" Now, dear believing reader, first of all, let us not be irritated, and ask impatiently. As soon as you or I ask with annoyance, we are manifestly out of harmony with God, and thus hindering ourselves from all true perception. Our Father NEVER makes a mistake. The words "Be ye reconciled to God" are addressed to BELIEVERS (2 Cor. 5. 20). Remember that even one word of complaint displeases the Lord (Num. 11. 1). You are speaking against HIM, not against circumstances. No thought of "This is too much for me" can be acknowledged. Moses lost when he spake thus (Num. 11. 11-17). "In everything give thanks" means what it says,—what HE says. Let us be ready to COMPLAIN of the cause within that needs the chastening, even our own waywardness and faltering, but never of the chastening. That is in love. I do not mean we are to be Stoics. The Lord is not unmindful of His people's tears (Ps. 56. 8). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. 103. 13). But the "O" of disappointment, and of a wish against His wish—the fretful THOUGHT, however brief—cannot be excused. "In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5. 18).

Why then does God permit trials? There is a NEEDS BE (1 Pet. 1. 6.). Who refines refined gold? The testing of the Lord Jesus, it is true, was that He might pass through all (Heb. 2. 17, 4. 15). But our chastisement is that we may be partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12. 10) There is something lacking in our lives. This verse sweeps aside "perfectionism" in the flesh. Job had a wonderful testimony from God Himself, yet he NEEDED testing that the end of the Lord might be reached, and that he might speak of the Lord the thing that was right (Jas. 5. 11, Job 42. 8).

The figure which God uses,—gold in 1 Peter 1, and of silver in Malachi 3. 3,— must be prayerfully pondered. 'Tis very precious. Our Father chastens BECAUSE of His love, and BECAUSE He values us so much. The "circumstances" that come to a believer have quite a different meaning from that which they have when they come to the world. His Father sits, as it were, refining. The trial is one of FAITH. No believer can say, "I am all gold." It is in this connexion that many dear children of God err, when they remark, "A Christian should never be ill." They rightly declare that ENTIRE deliverance is in the atonement. But, if we humbly own we fall short now, THE FULL FRUIT OF CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK is "in that Day," and, in like manner, the full BODILY application is "in that Day." We still have dross, and therefore, our Father lovingly permits trials. If we claim deliverance from them WITHOUT seeking deliverance from the CAUSE, and victory over the defects to which they call attention, we shall lose at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Yea, we are grieving the Holy Spirit, somewhat, in the very

same way as those, whom perhaps we condemn, who think an illness is "something to be got rid of" as soon as possible, and therefore hurry to adopt ANY and EVERY human method. 'Tis NOT a nuisance to be "removed" at all costs: 'tis NOT "something" regarding which our first thought in prayer should be "removal"; rather, 'tis a visitation in love's permission, as to the GROUND of which prayer is primary. Our Father's LESSONS are precious. The trial, whether He overrules a physical oppression by the ENEMY, or a persecuting MAN, is only a beacon, a messenger of love BY THE TIME IT REACHES US. "It" is not the great matter. And so love's "Why?" of enquiry, befits a grateful believer, not the "Why?" of irritation.

Gold MUST be melted, though gold is ITSELF gold. Thus the trial AFFECTS the believer in his SPIRITUAL experience. 'Tis NOT ONLY a burden for the physical frame. THE GODLY GOLD MUST GO THROUGH THE FIRE. Hence, the preciously painful SPIRITUAL EXERCISE, without which there is no fruit (Heb. 12. 11). The NEW life knows the strain.

Have you ever thought how close dross is to gold? Yet there is NO compound. Gold is gold, and dross is dross. But you cannot separate by pulling apart, or by a knife. WATER fails, there must be FIRE, AND FIRE PAINS. But the Lord's will is perfect, and His object is beautiful, and the resultant display of His gold will more than compensate.

The NEARNESS of gold to dross explains much to-day. Here, it seems, is a godly man who speaks well of the Lord, and yet is identified with a society or denomination in which some dare to oppose inspiration. Again, two men earnestly pray: both write well on grace, and, then, one writes on believer's baptism, and one on the sprinkling of infants. And they BOTH continue praying. The dross is NEARER to the gold than we think. There is no excuse for one in error, THOUGH HE PRAYS. But the thought humbles us all, for OUR OWN FAILURES ARE HERE. Yesterday's obedience is NO PROTECTION. We may be praying, and THEN say "Thou art mad" (Acts 12. 15). The dross is NEARER the gold than we think. We need more humility, more humility, more humility. We need a closer walk with God in the Spirit. Oh for clearer perception of His will and more consistency. O for less dross. What does this mean? More fire, it may be.

But one word more. Melted gold and dross may solidify together AGAIN. Many a child of God is awhile exercised. The fire works, and God is glorified. But the step of faith is NOT taken, and the gold and dross are left together still. This lesson has impressed the writer much. O, beloved reader, if the Lord MELTS, seek His removing of the dross, WHILE THE GOLD IS MELTED.