

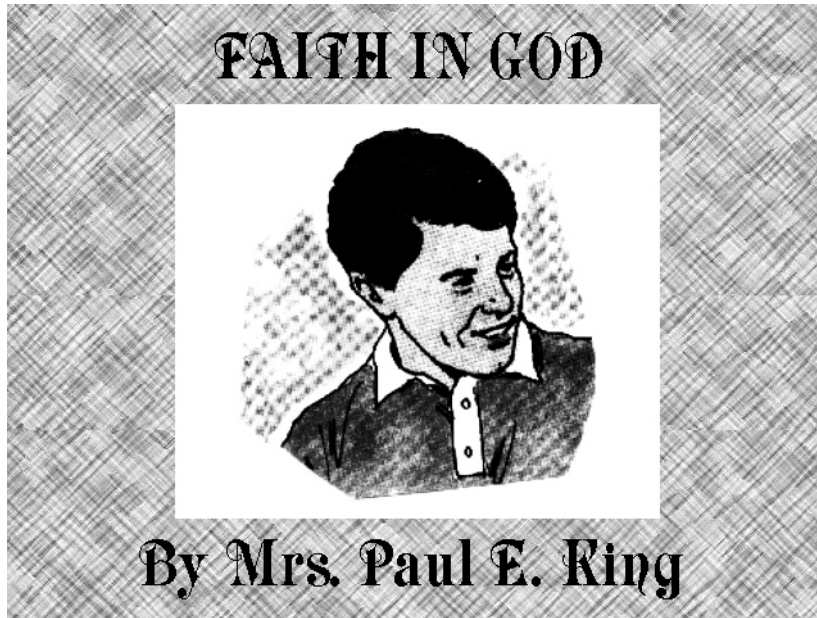
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FAITH IN GOD
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Julian slipped out of the house quietly but quickly, not wanting his mother to be disturbed from her afternoon nap. She needed the nap; Dr. Watson had ordered it as part of her healing. The sudden death of his father five months ago had shattered her fragile health even more than ever. She seemed like one in a trance. Shock, Dr. Watson had called it.

"She'll get over it in time, Julian," he had told the eighteen-year-old, adding, "with some, the time span is longer than others. But with your faith, and your kindness and love, I'd say the healing will be speeded up. Just hang in there, my boy, and don't become discouraged."

"The farm, Doctor Watson!" Julian had cried. "She says the farm will have to go, now that Father is no longer here to help work the land. But look at me; I'm big and tall and strong. I've known nothing but this farm and hard work for so long as I've been able to work. I love this place, Doctor Watson. Love it! I've always felt it was God's gift to me, even though I have no deed to it. Why would she have decided to sell? I can handle the work."

"Like I said, Julian, don't become discouraged. Faith can move mountains. All mountains. Keep the faith."

"Oh, I mean to hold on to my faith in God: I know what He did for my soul when He washed my sins away in the fountain filled with blood and then filled me with His precious Holy Spirit and cleansed my heart from inbred sin. My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. I have no inclination or intention of going back to Egypt's bondage. Not ever! I love the Lord too much to turn traitor on Him."

"I know. I know," Doctor Watson said. "Again I repeat, keep the faith! And I'm not meaning the faith about which you just spoke, Julian: I mean, keep faith in God! Yes, even about the farm. Your mother needs time to think; time to know what she needs to do. Right now she thinks she knows. But she's in a state of confusion, my boy; a state of frustration and fear; of not knowing what to do. Give her time, Julian. . . ."

Julian walked along the rose-bordered path that led downhill to the well from which their supply of water came that was now in the house and out at the barn. Years back, his father said he had to carry the water up the hill in buckets for the kitchen, as well as for bathing. What a well it was! It had never gone dry. Not once. And how sweet tasting and cold the water was year round!

He crossed the bridge that spanned the little stream which ran endlessly nearby the well, then he made his way up the small hill to the orchard. His heart felt heavy, like lead was weighing it down. Each time he saw the For Sale signs along the main road south of the property his heart

got the same heavy feeling. And Mr. Bluegett's smirk didn't help matters at all. If anything, the realtor's smirky kind of smile only added to the already heavy weight inside his hurting, breaking heart.

He dropped down beneath an apple tree loaded with apples and buried his face in his hands. Two months and twenty-two days had gone by since the signs were posted along the State Road. Three months and eight days more to go until the signs could be removed from the property -- if it didn't sell before then.

Julian's heart felt like it was knotting in tightfisted knots at the mere thought of the farm becoming the property of strangers. This farm was no ordinary farm: It was a legacy. Yes indeed. Much like the Israelites had had their inheritance of land designated for them and given to them, so this farm had been designated and given to the Prescotts. Years back, it had been his great-great-grandfather's farm, then his great-grandfather's, and his grandfather's and finally, his father's "inheritance." His father had told him that soon, God willing, it would become his -- Julian's -- farm.

Oh, this couldn't be happening! he thought, feeling the "knots" wringing his heart in pain. Surely -- surely -- his mother couldn't be serious about the farm having to go; to be sold. She couldn't. Oh, she couldn't! For nearly 43 years she had lived there. And she had loved the place; she had said so, many times. And now, to suddenly change, well, it didn't make sense. No, it didn't. Instead of making him feel like he wanted to leave the dear old familiar homeplace and get away from it completely since his father's passing, it only strengthened the ties already forged and bound by the years. He felt a fiercely strong protection toward and for his "inheritance." He knew within his being that, should he lose it to others, his life would never again be the same. God wanted him here. He knew it as surely as he knew his name.

Julian felt sobs tear his being now as he remembered seeing -- just three weeks ago -- the shiny-blue Cadillac with its out-of-state license plate and the well-dressed man who emerged from the car as Mr. Bluegett pulled off the driveway onto the grass near the house and began a tour of the place for the benefit of the prospective buyer. He -- Julian -- had fled to the small woods adjoining the west end of the back forty and there he had poured out -- literally so! -- his heart with its heavy burden, to the Lord. He prayed until he knew he had made contact with Heaven. Then, satisfied that the business

man would not be buying the farm, he had hurried home, feeling joyously happy and light as a feather in his soul.

"I'm interested in something with less land," Julian had heard the wealthy man say to the real estate agent as he hurried into the house.

"But the house, Mr. Thorndyke! You wanted a house from another era; a house in good condition from a long-ago past. You'll not find one more to your liking than this."

"The house is fine, yes. In excellent condition too, I must admit. But I'm not interested in all the land. Not at this time, that is." And the wealthy man had thanked Mr. Bluegett, slid behind the steering wheel of the car and driven away.

"O God, please, please, I need help today again," Julian cried aloud as he raised his hands heavenward. "I am totally dead to this farm -- so far as its having been given to You since the night at the altar when I turned everything I loved or wanted or thought I had to have over to You, and You sanctified me wholly and filled me with Your sweet Holy Spirit. This is Thine; every acre of land and each piece of property. It is Thine. I am Thy humble servant, put here to till the soil and work the land. Lord, I delight in caring for what is rightfully Thine. Please, for Jesus' sake, keep this property well secured in spite of Mr. Bluegett's boastings that it will go; he has no doubt about it.

"My faith looks up to Thee, blest Lamb of Calvary. I have never had a doubt that Your will for me was to be a keeper of the land -- Thy land, given to Dad and me to work and use for Thy glory. Three months and eight days, Lord. . . . Keep Thy hand upon this property, and please help my dear mother. . . ."

Julian prayed on -- Mr. Bluegett had yet another prospective or, at least, an interested buyer even now on the premises. Faith. He needed it. How badly he needed it!

He prayed on, and on, and once again he made contact with Heaven. The farm was secure. He knew it. Getting to his feet, he strode back toward the house, singing softly as he walked.

"I don't know," he heard the man say to Mr. Bluegett. "I want the place. But for some unknown reason, I feel checked to buy it. Strange, isn't it? But no, I'll not buy it, Mr. Bluegett. Something tells me I mustn't. It . . . well, for some strange reason, I feel it's not the farm for me."

"But, Mr. Coy, it has everything on it that you said you've wanted and that you've been looking for in a farm. Everything! You know it does!" The realtor's face was flushed scarlet with rising anger.

"I know it. But it isn't for me. I feel checked by the mere thought of buying it even. Like a Higher Power has control of it. You say the woman is a widow of only five months?"

"Yes Sir. But that has nothing to do with it. She wants it sold. There is only this woman and her son, eighteen years of age. Too much work for one so young."

"Not at all, Sir. No, not at all. Especially if it's that tall, fine looking, muscular young man I saw going around the side of the house. Like I said, I feel checked. I think I may know why: my mother was widowed when I was sixteen. Almost, our farm was sold out from under us. Mother couldn't think clearly for a few months after my father passed away. In her fright and fear and frustration she put the farm up for sale, thinking I wasn't big enough nor strong enough to manage a farm. And had it not been for a kind man who understood the circumstances and realized what trauma my mother was going through, we'd have moved to only God knows where. And today, instead of being a successful businessman who wants to return to the land, I may have been a bum. Or worse.

"That man who turned the farm down because of my dear mother's emotional trauma at that time, said to me, 'Someday, young man, when you are a successful business man, bestow the favor on another if you ever have the opportunity to do so.' This is my opportunity, Sir, and it is golden. If you know what you are doing, and if you can find it in your heart to have pity and mercy on a suffering, in-shock widow, you will not sell this property at all. She will regret it if you do so, when the shock wears off and she sees things clearly again."

Mr. Bluegett's nostrils dilated in anger. "What do you think I am, a fool? This is my business. And since business is business, neither you -- nor

anyone else -- will tell me what to do or what not to do. I'll sell this property, see if I don't."

"And you will be the loser by doing so. God takes a special interest in widows and in the fatherless children, my friend. And I have a very strong feeling that this widow and her son are praying people, sir. Christians, if you please. It is He -- God -- who must have checked me. Yes. Yes, it is He! I would be afraid to override and go beyond His checks. It's dangerous. Very dangerous."

"You're every bit as fanatical as they are," Mr. Bluegett exclaimed, pointing toward the house.

The man smiled. "Someday, by God's grace, I hope I may meet them. Sir, I will be buying property somewhere around here, only it will not be this farm. God has this place hedged in, and neither you nor anyone else will be able to get rid of that which the Almighty guards and protects."

"We'll see about that," Mr. Bluegett retorted angrily as he slammed the car door and drove away.

Julian watched from his vantage point beside a lilac bush until the dust from both cars, driving away, had laid down along the lane, then he hurried to the barn and busied himself with the chores that needed done. His heart seemed to have soared on eagles wings, upward, as he listened to what the man, named Mr. Coy, told the grasping, greedy Mr. Bluegett.

Poor Mr. Bluegett, he seemed never to be satisfied with what he had. Always, he was on the lookout for ways to make more money. He was known for miles around to be the most wealthy man in the entire area. Tight-fisted as he could be with his wife and family, but ever out to make money -- more money; much money. He exacted interest from any and all who owed him to the penny. The penny!

Julian said nothing to his mother about his great burden and concern over the For Sale signs along the road, but day after day after day he made his requests and petitions known to his Heavenly Father. And then, suddenly, the time was up and the farm hadn't sold. Not even another interested buyer after Mr. Coy!

It was on a bright, sunny morning, months later, his mother stood behind his chair at breakfast and placed her hands on his broad, strong shoulders. "Julian," she said, "I see Mr. Bluegett's signs are still up. Today, my boy, I want them taken down and put away. God must not have wanted the farm to change hands. For this my heart rejoices. It's almost three weeks past the designated time that those signs were to have remained on the land. Bring them up from the road and put them in the shed. I'll call Mr. Bluegett and tell him where he may pick them up. God will give you the strength to take care of the farm. I'll help you all I can."

"Thank you, Mother. Thank you! And thank You, kind Father. This is where I belong," Julian exclaimed joyously.

Smiling and kissing her son on top of his head, the mother whispered brokenly and lovingly, "This is where we both belong."

Julian jumped to his feet and, shouting, he went out the door after the signs. Faith in God had moved his mountain; now he wanted to get rid of even the telltale "signs" of that mountain.