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PROVE ME NOW HEREWITH
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Tears fell as Molly picked peas and gathered the few early red tomatoes from her garden. She wondered how much more she could stand or endure. Since Joe's accident at the shop and his many months of recuperating -- or trying to recuperate -- one adverse circumstance after another had befallen them. The compensation which Joe was to have received from the Company for which he worked and where the accident

happened and took place, still hadn't come across with a single payment. Fact of the matter was, it had gone into the hands of attorneys. Something to do with the insurance company not wanting to pay up as they were supposed to do.

"Lord," Molly cried upwards, "You know this injury was caused by the machine in the shop where Joe worked. Please help us! We're helpless without You and Your help. The bills, Lord. . . ."

Molly dropped to the sweet-smelling earth and sobbed brokenly as she poured her heart out to God. The bills, yes, the bills! She nor Joe had ever been one to let a bill go unpaid. Always, they had paid their bills and met their obligations before the due date. Now, however, there was no money coming in to pay with. Not that they made debts, ah, no! They were careful about such things. Very careful. Still, some things happened that were not of one's making; things like seven-year-old Jimmy's tonsillectomy and nine-year-old Janie's broken leg and the four tires that had to be replaced on their old but still-good car.

It seemed like everything had happened at one and the same time. Mommy remembered of having quoted the beginning sentences from Job 1:16, 17, 18 to Joe then: "While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said. . . ."

She had hoped that her light attitude would help her husband to realize that the same God who had fortified the afflicted Job, no matter how dire his circumstances nor severe and trying his trials, was their God too: He would sustain them just as He had helped Job. She had had great faith in God when she quoted the lines to Joe. Or was it faith in Joe's compensation checks?

Molly got to her feet. The question-thought shook her. She had never before thought about such a thing. Now, however, she realized that she had built her hopes around those forthcoming checks and, of course, they hadn't come. Not a single one of them.

"Lord," she cried, lifting a tear-wet face heavenward, "the tithes are all in. Every penny of our tithe is in. Our offerings, too," she continued brokenly. "You know we've never robbed You; not since we received tight on tithing and giving offerings right after we were converted those many years ago.

Lord, we need help. Now! The electric bill's coming due and . . . Joe's prescriptions are almost all gone. We have no money for the refills, Lord. O hear us! Help us. The payment at the hospital's nearly due, too, Lord."

A sweet inner peace and calm crept silently into Molly's broken heart. She felt like the Lord had wrapped a comforting blanket around her heart. Compensation check or no compensation check, she would put her whole trust in the God who owned the universe and the cattle on a thousand hills. Yes, she would.

Victorious, she picked up the bucket of peas and tomatoes and left the garden.

"You look happy," Joe remarked as she came through the doorway.

"I am, Joe. I am. The Lord revealed to my heart that I was trusting too much on those compensation checks to see us through and, of course, they haven't come. I'm trusting in Jesus now; totally and completely in Him. I don't know how He's going to provide what we so desperately need, but I know He's going to do it. I got the assurance out in the garden. He will take care of us, this I know."

Joe reached for his handkerchief and wiped the tears off his cheeks, saying brokenly, "I feel I have failed you and our children, Molly dear, by not being able to provide for you now as God intended for me to do. It's not of my making, to be sure; still, being a man, and a husband and father, I am devastated that I can no longer provide for you. You can't imagine what this does to the head of the house!"

"I've lived with you long enough, Joe, to see what it's done to you. But I feel it's time now for you to cast off the cloak of mourning and put on the garment of praise. Each of us has been too concerned about and too dependent upon receiving those checks. I believe the Lord is trying to teach us a lesson in faith and of trust in Him. I'm going to accept the challenge. He hasn't failed us one time, Joe. Not ever!"

"But Molly, that compensation money is for those who are injured and cannot work. The Company insurance is to pay this."

"I know it, Joe, and I believe that in time every one of those checks will come through. We are being tested right now; God is looking on to see if we will trust Him or mammon. I really believe this. My trust is anchored in Him who said, 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to contain it.'"

Joe's tears were falling again, fast. "Oh, Molly," he exclaimed, "I'm so ashamed of myself for doubting. I've never been this way. I suppose one's illness is a robber if one allows it."

"A robber? Why Joe, you know you're not a robber. Our tithes and offerings are all paid up. It's always the first thing we pay when we get money."

"I didn't mean that I robbed God of the tithes, nor of our offerings, Molly. But I believe I've allowed this disability to rob me of my childlike faith and trust in the Lord. The worry, and the pain, seem to have crept into my very bones until I can't cast my every care on Him like we are admonished to do in God's Word. Things bother me, now that I'm laid up. I wasn't this way before the accident happened. It was easy to obey that beautiful injunction -- 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.'"

"Like I said, Joe, I believe we're being tested. But even the fiery trials are 'but for a moment.' They will pass; they won't last forever. From today on, I'm going to put on 'the garments of praise' and see what the Lord's going to do. Satan attacks those who are ill and in pain viciously, I've heard. But the Lord hasn't abandoned the faithful, patient child of God, even though it may appear that He has. I feel we're being watched, Joe, by that 'great cloud of witnesses' and the holy angels. We will triumph, my dear: our God will give us grace and strength. And courage."

"Let's pray together, Molly, please."

"Gladly, Joe, gladly."

It was after dinner when Molly took a pan of freshly-hulled peas over to her neighbor. Mrs. Ashley was a widow. She was a pleasant woman with a ready smile and kind words for everyone. Molly liked her immensely. She

was industrious and uncomplaining, making a living for herself by a business which she operated in her home.

"Yoo hoo," Molly called from the back screen door. "Fresh garden peas for you, my dear."

Smiling as she came to the door, Mrs. Ashley welcomed Molly with open arms, saying, "Oh, Molly, you must be the answer to my prayers. Come in. Come in. And thanks for the peas. I guess I've told you a dozen times or more that fresh peas are my favorite of all vegetables. How sweet and tender these are," she remarked as she put a handful in her mouth.

"I eat my share of them raw, too," Molly confessed. "They're so very delicious fresh from the pods, I think."

Mrs. Ashley sat down on a kitchen chair, saying, "Sit for a while, will you, Molly? I'm exhausted today. I've been swamped with business. I was praying for help and you came to my door. Do you suppose you could help me, Molly? I'd pay you well, and you could run over and check on Joe whenever you want to. I've got to have a helper."

Molly felt warm with excitement. She felt her heart increase its beating. "Joe isn't an invalid, Mrs. Ashley," she heard herself saying. "He could watch the children when they get out of school until I get home. Oh, I'd be delighted to help. In fact, you must be the answer to our prayers. Joe's checks haven't come through. Not a single one. We've been praying for the Lord to provide for us. This is indeed His answer." Molly's face was wet with tears.

"Could you help me for a few hours this afternoon, Molly? I have orders that must go out today, and to say that I'm behind schedule is putting it mildly. With your help, we'll accomplish it."

"Gladly, Mrs. Ashley. I'll hurry over and tell Joe; then I'll be right back. He can put the roast in the oven for me when it's time. The potatoes are peeled and the salad's ready for tossing and, of course, we'll have fresh peas and homemade bread. You must come over for supper, the Lord willing."

Smiling, Mrs. Ashley sighed contentedly and, praising the Lord for answering prayer, Molly hurried across the lawn to tell Joe the wonderful news. God was providing. ". . . Prove me now, herewith. . . ." He had invited.

She had "proved" Him and He was faithful to His Word. Always faithful and true to what He had said and promised. He was God: He couldn't lie. He was her God -- hers and Joe's.

Rushing inside, she cried joyously, "He has provided, Joe! God has provided! Mrs. Ashley wants me to work for her."

Overcome with joy, Joe opened his arms. Molly fell into them, saying joyously, "' . . . Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, and see if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room to contain it.' Oh, my dear Joe, the poured-out blessing is coming. Our God will supply every need. I know it! I know it! Bless His worthy name!"

Joe held her close. All he could do was cry -- for joy.