

Joseph
Hamilton Smith.

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1 Loved and Hated Genesis 37: 1-11

LOVED

To all who love our Lord Jesus Christ there is an abiding charm in the histories of the Old Testament saints, for therein can be traced bright unfoldings of the glories and excellencies of Christ. Such foreshadowings of things to come are doubtless hidden to the natural man, but plainly discerned by those who, through the Spirit, seek "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

Of all Old Testament histories none presents a richer or more distinct picture of Christ than the touching story of Joseph. Other lives may give in greater detail personal experiences and human failure, teaching many a wholesome lesson; but as the story of Joseph is unfolded we feel that the Spirit of God keeps in view the display of the glory of Christ, and all that pertains to the weakness and failure of a man of like passions with ourselves has little or no place. And yet, however rich the picture, we soon recognize that the life of no single saint could adequately set forth the fullness of Christ. In common with Joseph, other saints of God, as Isaac in his day, and David and Solomon in a later day, have their tale to tell concerning the glories of Christ. Moreover, there is no mere repetition, each has some special glory to disclose. Isaac tells of the sufferings and affections of Christ whereby He gains His bride; David of His sufferings and victories whereby He gains His kingdom; Joseph of His suffering and supremacy by which He administers His kingdom. Solomon takes us a step further and unfolds the glories of His kingdom when He is supreme.

HIS SERVICE

The story opens with Joseph, as a lad of seventeen, feeding the flock with his brethren and "doing service" with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah. He who will yet be supreme must first be

a servant. The place of supremacy is only reached by the path of service, according to the word of the Lord: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20: 26, 27). In this the Lord Himself is the perfect example of His own teaching, for He can say, "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22: 27). And because He "took upon Him the form of a servant . . . and became obedient unto . . . the Cross.... God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name." Thus at once in this history we see that shadowing forth of One that is greater than Joseph.

HIS SHEPHERDING

But there are other ways in which the opening history of Joseph will speak of Christ. Like Moses and David in a later date, Joseph is a leader of sheep before he becomes a leader of men. For forty years Moses must be content to lead a flock of sheep at the back of the desert before he becomes the leader of God's people through the desert. And of David, is it not written that Jehovah "chose . . . His servant and took him from the sheepfolds . . . He brought him to **feed Jacob** His people, and Israel His inheritance" (Ps. 78: 70, 71)? Thus not only in the fact of service but in the manner of service these saints of old prefigure the great Shepherd of the sheep.

HIS SEPARATION

Service with his brethren, however, does not necessarily imply fellowship with their evil. As the obedient servant he is very near them; as a man of integrity he is entirely apart from them. His service brought him into the company of others, his character made him a man apart from others, his very presence exposing their wickedness, so that he can but bring to his father "their evil report." And thus it was with Christ the perfect Saviour; His grace brought Him very near to us in all our need, His holiness kept Him entirely apart from all our sin. Our desperate needs, and His infinite grace, made Him a Servant moving amidst the needy crowds, and yet our sin and His holiness made Him a lonely Stranger in the land. As the perfect Servant He was accessible to all, as a holy Man He was apart from all. His service of love took Him into many a needy home, His holiness left Him without a home.

HIS SUPERIORITY

If, however, the character of Joseph set him apart from his brethren, the love of his father gave him a distinguished place above his brethren, for we read "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children." Moreover Israel bears witness to this place of distinction by clothing Joseph with a coat of many colours — a public testimony to the delight of the father in his son. At once our thoughts travel from Joseph to Christ and the unique place He had in the Father's affections, and the Father's pleasure in bearing witness to His delight in His Son. The very chapter that tells us, "God so loved the world," also tells us that "the Father loveth the Son." A measure is given to the love of God for the world, infinite though it be, but no measure is, or can be, given for the Father's love to the Son. The announcement stands in all its majestic dignity. "The Father loveth the Son," and faith delights to accept it. But if the Father can furnish no measure for this love, He can bear witness to His love for the Son. Joseph's coat of many colours, the public testimony of his father's love, has its bright counterpart in the opened heavens of the New Testament. Never are the heavens opened apart from Christ, and when opened they always bear some fresh witness to the Father's delight in the all-varied graces of the Son. No sooner has Christ taken His place on earth as the Servant of Jehovah than at once "the heavens were opened unto Him" that the host of heaven might look down on a Man on earth of whom the

Father can say: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 16, 17). A little later and again the heavens are opened, that a man on earth may look up and bear witness to "the Son of Man" in heaven (Acts 7: 55, 56). Again, the day is not far distant when the heavens will be opened to let the Son of Man come forth in glory as the victorious "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19: 11-16). Having come forth as King of kings the heavens will again be opened that ascending and descending angels may bear witness to the Son of Man reigning in glory on the earth (John 1: 51). On these bright occasions we see our Lord Jesus invested with the coat of many colours. In other words, we see in the opened heavens the Father's delight in Christ as His beloved Son in humiliation as the Son of Man in heavenly glory, and as the King of kings and Lord of lords, coming forth to reign on the earth as Son of Man in supreme power and glory.

HIS SUPREMACY

Furthermore, the One who is loved by the Father, and marked out as the special object of His delight, is the One who is destined to universal supremacy. This great truth is brought before us in Joseph's dreams, both setting before us the supremacy of Joseph. One dream might have sufficed to foretell the glories of Joseph, but would be wholly inadequate to shadow forth the glories of Christ. For His supremacy will have a twofold character. He will yet be supreme on earth, and many passages tell of this earthly glory. The dream of the sheaves making obeisance to Joseph's sheaf may well speak of this excellent supremacy over all the earth which Christ is destined to wield. Yet this first dream fails to set forth the supremacy of Christ in all its vast extent, for He is destined not only to be supreme on earth, but to hold universal sway over heaven and earth. The Father according to His good pleasure, has purposed in the fullness of times to head up, "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. 1: 9, 10). And this second dream speaks of this heavenly supremacy by presenting heavenly bodies — the sun, the moon, and the stars, making obeisance to Joseph. The two dreams thus set forth the supremacy of Christ over things on earth and things in heaven to the remotest bounds of the created universe.

HIS SUFFERINGS

Thus the Spirit of God delights to exalt Christ by Presenting His universal supremacy as the leading thought in the history of Joseph even though it is the path of suffering by which the place of pre-eminence is reached. There are the graces and excellencies of character that the sufferings call forth, as well as the heartlessness of His own and the evil and indifference of the world.

HATED

If Joseph has a unique place in his father's affections, and if he is destined in the counsels of God to the place of supremacy, he will, in the meantime, have to face the hatred of his brethren. This must be so if, in any measure, his story is to shadow forth that far greater hatred which Christ was called to endure at the hands of men. The One whom God has destined to the place of universal dominion is the only one that is hated by every natural heart. Why does the natural heart bear such hatred to Christ? Was there any cause of hatred in Him? Surely not, for in Christ there was an entire absence of the cruelty and violence, the lust and covetousness, the pride and arrogance, the meanness and selfishness, which in other men give such occasion for hatred. In Him there was everything to call forth love. While others went about doing evil, He "went about doing good" (Acts 10: 38). Man's mouth may be full of cursing and bitterness, but at least man must bear witness to "the gracious words which proceeded out

of His mouth" (Luke 4: 22), and the officers who were sent to take Him said, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7: 46).

HATED BECAUSE THEY WERE EVIL

And yet in spite of His acts of love, and His words of grace, they rewarded Him evil for good, and hatred for His love (Ps. 109: 5). Truly He could say, "They hated me without a cause." Alas! plenty of cause of hatred, but no cause in Him. No cause in man to call forth Christ's love, and no cause in Christ to call forth man's hatred. But why should the evil heart of man hate the One whose whole life was spent in showing love to man? Let Joseph's history supply the answer. Why was Joseph hated by his brethren? Was he not in their company as one that served? Truly, but they were evil and hence, however desirable his service might be, his presence exposed their evil, and called forth their hatred. And for a like cause, and in far deeper measure, the world hated Christ, as He could say, "Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (John 7: 7).

HATED BECAUSE THEY WERE ENVIOUS

There were other causes for the hatred of Joseph's brethren. When they "saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." And so with Christ confessing His unique place with the Father, He can say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5: 17). Immediately the hatred of the Jews is called forth and "they sought the more to kill Him," and at once the Lord declares that "the Father loveth the on, and sheweth Him all things." The Beloved of the Father is hated by man.

HATED BECAUSE OF HIS DREAMS

Further, the dreams that speak of Joseph's future supremacy are a fresh motive for the envy and hatred of the brethren. He had been a witness against them of their evil, now he is a witness to them of his future glory. They will have neither one nor the other. Even so when the Lord witnessed against the evil of the world, and bore witness to His coming glories, like Joseph, He drew upon Himself the hatred of the world. Before the assembled leaders of Jerusalem the Lord speaks of His coming glories: "Hereafter," He can say, "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power," a confession that is followed by a furious outburst of hatred, priests and elders uniting to spit in the face of the Son of God.

HATED BECAUSE OF HIS WORDS

Lastly, the brethren of Joseph hated him for his words. As we read: "They hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words." Nor was it otherwise with the Lord. Men heard the words of Him that spake as never man spake, and some believed, but "many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?" The hatred could not be hid. So too Christ is still the object of a hatred that men cannot conceal, try as they will. A constant stream of abuse of His Name, denial of His Person, and refusal of His work, issues from apostate pulpits, and an infidel press, often masquerading under the cloak of religion. It is still His professed brethren that cannot speak peaceably of Him. But let us never forget that behind all the "hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" there are the "ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." The evil lives of Joseph's brethren were behind the hatred in their hearts, and the evil words of their lips. It is so today, the ungodly deeds in

men's lives lead to the 'hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 15).

But who Thy path of service,
Thy steps removed from ill,
Thy patient love to serve us,
With human tongue can tell?
Midst sin, and all corruption,
Where hatred did abound,
Thy path of true perfection
Was light on all around.
In scorn, neglect, reviling,
Thy patient grace stood fast;
Man's malice unavailing
To move Thy heart to haste.
O'er all Thy perfect goodness
Rose blessedly divine;
Poor hearts oppressed with sadness,
Found ever rest in Thine.
Love, that made Thee a Mourner
In this sad world of woe,
Made wretched man a scorner
Of grace — that brought Thee low.
Still, in Thee, love's sweet savour
Shone forth in every deed;
And showed God's loving favour
To every soul in need.

J. N. D.

2 Rejected and Sold Genesis 37: 12-36

Jacob may have special affection for his son Joseph, nevertheless his other sons have a real place in his affections, and Joseph is to become the witness of the Father's love to the brethren. Accordingly Jacob desires that Joseph shall leave the home in the vale of Hebron and journey to distant Shechem, there, as the sent one of the father, to enquire of his brethren's welfare and bring Jacob word again. Joseph on his part is ready to obey, though he has experienced the hatred of his brethren. Jacob's request meets with Joseph's immediate response, "Here am I." So we read Israel "sent him out of the vale of Hebron" and Joseph "came to Shechem."

THE SON RESPONDING

In this journey there is a foreshadowing of that far greater journey undertaken by the Son of God when, leaving the Father's home of light and love, He came into this world of death and darkness, well knowing the evil into which He came. And yet He turned not back. Even as at the cross we read, "Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon Him went forth" (John 18: 4). If the love of the Father would send Him, then the love of the Son is ready to do the Father's bidding. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." He comes as the sent One of the Father to declare the Father's love.

THE SON REJECTED

Joseph's touching story foreshadows too what manner of reception the world has given to the sent One of the Father. Having no heart for their father, these men of evil ways have no eyes to discern the sent one of his love. For them Joseph is only a dreamer whose dreams they would fain frustrate by conspiring to slay him. Even so of Christ, His people said, "This is the Heir, come let us kill Him." And how eager man is to express his hatred. "When they saw him afar off . . . they conspired against him to slay him." But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. If it is a question of the Son of the Father's love drawing near to men, then indeed He will be rejected while yet afar off. But if it is a question of a sinner being drawn to the Father, then we read while "yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him."

THE SON REPROACHED

The evil heart of man is marked by corruption and violence. Not only are the brethren ready to rid themselves of Joseph by violent acts, but they were prepared to cover their violence by corrupt and lying words. "Let us slay him," they say, "and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him." Violence and corruption are the outstanding marks of fallen man who is shameless in his violence and corruption. He is not simply overcome by some sudden temptation; but, as with Joseph's brethren, they can deliberately plan their violent act and corrupt lies. Man had not progressed far on his downward course before "the earth was filled with violence" and "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." In spite of laws and treaties, moral training and codes of honour, and notwithstanding prisons and reformatories, violence and corruption are rampant in every part of the earth.

THE SON REBUFFED

Nothing brings man's evil into evidence like the presence of goodness. It was the presence of Joseph that called forth the violence and corruption of his brethren; even as the presence of perfect goodness in the Person of the Son of God became the occasion of the most furious outburst of man's evil. At His birth the enmity of man is ready to kill the child Jesus, and to cover its murderous intent with lying words (Malt. 2: 8, 16). But at the cross goodness is displayed as nowhere else only to call forth the greatest expression of man's evil that the world has ever seen. There goodness rises to its supreme height, and evil sinks to unutterable depths. The cross is the display of "hatred against God and good . . . the truest friend denies, the nearest betrays, the weaker ones who are honest flee the priests, set to have compassion on ignorant failure, plead furiously against innocence; the judge, washing his hands of condemned innocence; goodness alone and the world mean, universal enmity; against it. Perfect light has brought out the darkness; perfect love, jealous hatred."

THE SON REVEALED

Man vainly imagines that corruption and violence will prosper, even as the brethren of Joseph, having counselled to slay their brother, and designed to cover their act with lying, can with the utmost confidence say, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." They will indeed see. And alas for the rejecters of Christ, they too will see, for is it not written, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him"?

THE SON REVILED

Perfect goodness brings out the universal guilt of men, but though all are guilty, there are different measures of guilt, and of this the Judge of all the earth will take account in due time, rendering to one few stripes, and to another many stripes. Of these different degrees of guilt we have intimations in the story of Joseph. All the brethren were guilty, but not in the same degree. Reuben, though unstable, and morally corrupt as we know from his history (Gen. 35: 22; Gen. 49: 3, 4), was not necessarily cruel. In common with his brethren he has wronged his father, but all human affection is not extinguished in his heart. He would have spared Joseph's life, and his father's feelings. Judah, too, may be covetous, but he also has some compunction as to laying hands upon his brother. And these differences we see in the way men treat the Christ of God. All verily are guilty, but there are degrees of guilt. Herod, vile and pleasure-loving man that he was, would mock the Lord and set Him at nought, but he finds nothing worthy of death in Him. Pilate will go further than Herod, and yield up Christ to the murderous hatred of the Jews; but he has no personal enmity, and will at least make some feeble effort to preserve from death One that he knows to be innocent. But of the Jews Peter has to say, "Ye delivered (Him) up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go . . . and killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3: 13-15).

THE SON REFUSED

And still there are the pleasure-lovers, strangers to all religious convictions, who have no good word for Christ and yet will not oppose. But there are others yet more guilty concerning Christ. They profess to admire His moral excellencies. Pilate-like they find no fault in Him; yet to retain their popularity with the world, they stifle their convictions, decide against Christ, and range themselves with that thrice-guilty class whose active enmity never ceases to attack His glorious Person and trample under foot His precious blood. There are the careless and indifferent, there are the fearful and fainthearted, and there are the furious haters — open and avowed enemies of Christ. But all unite in the rejection of Christ.

THE SON REPUDIATED

Thus it was in Joseph's history. His brethren stripped him of his coat of many colours and cast him into the pit. The father had distinguished him by a coat of many colours, the brethren degrade him by stripping him. So on many illustrious occasions when Christ is distinguished above all others by some special display of divine power, wisdom and grace, man will at once strip Him of His coat of many colours and seek to degrade Him to the level of a mere man by asking, 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' or "Is not this the carpenter?" As in the case of Joseph, the stripping was only the prelude to the pit, so with Christ, the rejection of every witness to His glory, led man at last with wicked hands to

deliver Him to death.

THE SON RESCUED

There is however a significant difference between the type and the antitype. Isaac in his day very blessedly brings the death of Christ before us. He may be bound upon the altar, Abraham may stretch forth his hand and take the knife to slay his son, but at once the angel is present to stay his hand. Joseph may again take up the story of the cross, as his brethren cast him into the pit, but for him "the pit was empty, there was no water in it." How different the cross of Christ. The same God at whose bidding "Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son," can now say, "Awake, O sword, against the Man that is My fellow," and though twelve legions of angels await His commands, yet not one is bidden to hold back the sword of judgment. It is no empty pit into which He must go. He can say, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves" (Ps. 88: 6, 7).

THE SON REWARDED

While the sufferings of Isaac and Joseph both point to the cross, yet each portrays a different aspect of that great mystery. Isaac goes up to the mount to be offered up. Joseph goes down to the pit. And the mount speaks of the glory of the Person offered up. The pit tells of the misery and degradation of those for whom He is offered up. He is the son, and more, the only son, and yet more he is the promised heir, Isaac, and the beloved of his father. But when Joseph goes down to the pit, while it is true his moral excellence cannot be hid, yet it is not his personal glory that is prominent but rather the evil and corruption of those who surround Joseph. If at last his brethren are to be brought into blessing and share in the glory of Joseph, then Joseph must take their place of distance and degradation as set forth in the pit. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," and "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone."

THE SON REVEALING

Having cast Joseph into the pit, his brethren "sat down to eat bread." Nor was it otherwise at the cross. The presence of Joseph only serves to reveal the evil of his brethren, just as the cross becomes the occasion to expose the depth of corruption in the heart of man. The leaders of Israel yield up the true Passover Lamb to death, and calmly sit down to eat the passover feast — an evil and adulterous generation, like the adulterous woman of Proverbs, of whom it is written "She eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith I have done no wickedness."

The company of merchant men on their way to Egypt at once suggest to Judah the opportunity of making profit out of their brother. Why not sell Joseph and make a little money? If they are not going to gratify their hatred by killing Joseph, why not gratify their covetousness by selling Joseph? Hence they gave their brother up to the Gentiles, and gave themselves up to money making. And what Judah did a thousand years before Christ came, His descendants have done for nearly two thousand years since His rejection. At the cross the Jews abandoned their Messiah to the Gentiles and ever since they have abandoned themselves to the worship of mammon. "Profit" is the word that governed the actions of Joseph's brethren. Judah asks the question for the covetous heart — not "Is it right?" or "Is it wrong?" but "What profit is it?" And "profit" has governed the policy of the Jew throughout the long centuries since that sad day when their Messiah was sold for thirty pieces of silver.

THE SON REMOVED

Thus Joseph passes into the land of the Gentiles and is "brought" into Egypt. Egypt was a snare to Abraham, and his sojourn in Egypt brought him only sorrow and shame. With Joseph, however, it brought blessing and glory. Why this difference? Is it not that in Abraham's case he "went down into Egypt to sojourn there" (Gen. 12: 10); but Joseph was "brought" into Egypt. One went there in unbelief and self-will. The other was brought there according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Having practiced a heartless piece of deceit upon their father, which plunges the old man into the deepest sorrow, these hypocrites gather round to comfort him. While none can excuse the wickedness of his sons, yet we cannot but see in this scene that Jacob is only reaping what he had already sown. Thirty years before Jacob had deceived his father with "the skins of the kids of the goats," and now after long years, he himself is deceived by his sons with "a kid of the goats." There may be long years between the sowing and the reaping, but at last the reaping time comes. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small.

THE SON RESURRECTED

We need hardly wonder that Jacob "refused to be comforted" by such comforters, but in the presence of what to him was the actual death of his son, his faith seems to have grown exceeding dim. How different the behaviour of David in the presence of the death of his son. Jacob says, "I will go down into the grave unto my son in mourning"; but of David we read he "arose . . . and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped." Both men are in the presence of the death of a child, but one says, "I will go down into the grave mourning," the other, "I will go up to the house of the Lord and worship." Yet both were true saints, but one looked no further than death and the grave, the other looked beyond death to resurrection, into a scene where there is "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying nor pain."

O bright and blessed scenes, where sin can never come,
Whose sight our longing spirit weans, from earth where yet we roam!
And can we call our home our Father's house on high,
The rest of God our rest to come, our place of liberty?
Yes! in that light unstained, our stainless souls shall live,
Our heart's deep longings more than gained, where God His rest shall give.
His presence there, my soul, its rest, its joy untold,
Shall find when endless ages roll, and time shall ne'er grow old.

J.N.D.

3 Suffering and Supported Genesis 39 & 40

The history of Joseph already considered presents in type the rejection of Christ by the Jew. The history that follows gives the experience of Joseph in the hands of the Egyptians, speaking to us of the rejection of Christ by the Gentiles. At the hands of his brethren Joseph is consigned to the pit. In the hands of the Gentiles he is bound in the prison. We need both pictures to adequately set forth the truth,

for the coming of the Son of God into the world cannot be confined to the Jew. Truly He was sent by the Father to His own, but equally true He came that the world through Him might be saved. Alas! He was rejected by both Jew and Gentile, "He was in the world . . . and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1: 10, 11).

TWOFOLD SUFFERING

While, however, both Jew and Gentile joined in rejecting Christ, there was a difference in the way they treated Him; a difference that was foreshadowed in the history of Joseph. With the brethren the leading motive for their rejection of Joseph was envy and hatred. However, in the house of the Gentile, though we see corruption and injustice at work, and in the prison of the Gentile selfish indifference, yet in neither case was there actual enmity to Joseph. And these differences between Jew and Gentile are strikingly seen at the Cross. Cross injustice and callous indifference may mark Herod and Pontius Pilate, the representatives of the Gentiles, but envy and deadly hatred mark the Jews — such envy that it is even discerned by the Gentile, and such hatred that it blinded them to every appeal of reason, every demand of justice, and to all sense of shame.

PROLONGED SUFFERING

Returning to the story of Joseph in Egypt we have other lessons to learn. Cut off from his own people in a strange land he becomes a slave in the house of the Egyptian; falsely accused by a wicked woman, and under the stigma of a great sin, he is cast into prison. There treated with base ingratitude, he is left to languish, a forgotten man. Suffering dishonour upon dishonour, his path is ever downward. The clouds gather round him and his way grows darker, until apparently his sun has set in hopeless gloom.

CRUEL SUFFERING

But behind all that is apparent to nature, faith can discern the purpose of God to exalt Joseph to a position of supremacy and glory. If God is set upon the fulfilment of His purpose, Satan will put forth every effort to thwart God's purpose. Satan uses the wickedness of the brethren to banish Joseph from house and home; he uses Potiphar's wicked wife to bring Joseph into prison; and he uses Pharaoh's ungrateful butler to keep him there. Every step in the downward path is an apparent triumph for Satan, and would seem to make the fulfilment of God's purpose more remote. To the natural view Satan's plans appear to prosper, and God's purposes suffered apparent defeat.

NECESSARY SUFFERING

Faith, however, can discern the hand of God behind the wiles of Satan. If Satan is using man to hinder God's purposes, God is using Satan to carry them out. Every kind of agent is at God's disposal. Angels and archangels, saints and sinners, the devil and his demons, all serve to carry out God's plans. The very elements — fire and hail, snow and vapours, and stormy wind — are "fulfilling His word" (Ps. 148: 8). Nor is it otherwise with the circumstances of life, as we see in the story of Joseph. The trials he passes through, the treatment at the hands of his brethren, the bondage in the house of the Egyptian, the false accusations of Potiphar's wife, the prison of Pharaoh, and the neglect of Pharaoh's butler, are only so many stages in the path that leads to glory. His labours as a shepherd, his mission to his brethren, his services in Potiphar's house and in Pharaoh's prison are preparing for the exercise of

power in the day of his glory. The service in the trials prepares for the right use of glory.

TYPICAL SUFFERING

In all this Joseph is but a type of One whose sufferings were far deeper even as His glory is far greater. He, too, in the days of His flesh was amongst us as One that serves, for He could say, "Man acquired Me as bondman from My youth" (Zech. 13: 5, N . Tr.) . He, too, suffered under the false accusations of the wicked, for again He can say, "They laid to My charge things that I knew not" (Ps. 35: 11). He, too, was led to prison and to death; and in a full measure He had to meet the base ingratitude of those who had received only good at His hands, so that, with a heart broken by unrequited love, He cries, "I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind" (Ps. 31: 12).

PREPARATORY SUFFERING

But as with Joseph in type, so with Christ the glorious antitype, every downward step in the path of suffering was but a further stage on the way to glory. His service in the days of His flesh prepares for His rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. The false witnesses that rose up against Him will bow down before Him when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The day is not far distant when the "poor wise Man" that no man remembered shall be "in everlasting remembrance" (Ecc. 9: 15; Ps. 112: 6).

SUBMISSIVE SUFFERING

But not only does this portion of the history of Joseph supply a beautiful type of Christ, but it is rich with practical instruction for the saint in his individual path. First, we cannot read the story without being impressed with the fact that he was a submissive man. His circumstances were hard and his position trying. Cut off from his kindred, a stranger in a foreign land, he had passed from the love of his father's home to the bondage of the Egyptian's house, yet there is no repining. He harbours no bitter thoughts against his brethren, utters no complaints as to his hard lot, nor a single rebellious word against the ways of God. His spirit was kept in beautiful submission. Had not God revealed to him his high destiny - and faith, resting in quiet confidence in God's word looks on with clear vision to the glorious end (see 2 Cor. 4: 17, 18). Faith kept God and His word between himself and his circumstances. In the path of God's purpose he submits to God's ways. So Paul, another prisoner of the Lord in another day, in like spirit of submission, writes from his prison, "the circumstances in which I am have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel."

PROFITABLE SUFFERING

As a result, "the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man" (verse 2). The submissive man will ever be a prosperous man. Nature would say that slavery and prosperity must be an impossible combination, but if we submit to His ways, the presence of the Lord can turn days of adversity into days of prosperity. All the world would admit that Joseph was a prosperous man in the day of his exaltation, but faith sees, and God declares, that he was a prosperous man in the day of his humiliation. He will, in due time ride prosperously as the ruler of Egypt, but first he must live prosperously as the slave of an Egyptian. The prosperity of the prison must precede The prosperity of the palace. The trials and the sorrows, the losses and the crosses, the rough ways and the dark valleys, will all become occasions of the greatest soul prosperity if we remember that God has a settled purpose

for us in glory, and in the meantime all His ways with us are in view of His purpose for us. In the light of His purpose we shall be able to submit to His ways, and submitting we shall find the Lord with us, and if the Lord is with us we shall prosper with that prosperity that is above all — the prosperity of the soul. "Beloved," says the aged apostle, "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2).

PATIENT SUFFERING

Moreover, being a prosperous man Joseph became a witness for the Lord in the house of bondage. We read, "His master saw that the Lord was with him" (v. 3). His testimony, too, was the testimony of his life rather than his lips. Potiphar was impressed by what he "saw" rather than by what he heard. "His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." Had Joseph been forever complaining of his hard lot, or enlarging upon his high destiny, he would have been no witness for the Lord in the house of Potiphar. The Egyptian cared nothing about his past, and, even if set before him, would comprehend nothing of his future, but his daily life of wholehearted attention to his duties Potiphar could see and appreciate. Nor is it otherwise today. For a Christian servant to be often grumbling at his lot before his unconverted master, and saying that the day is coming when he will judge the world and even angels, would be wholly out of place. To an unconverted master it would not only be the wildest folly but also the grossest impertinence. To speak to the world of the glorious purposes of God is only to cast pearls before swine. These are things totally beyond the comprehension of the natural man. But to see a Christian servant living a quiet, consistent, uncomplaining life, in the faithful discharge of daily duties, is indeed a true witness for the Lord, and is something that the unconverted master can appreciate.

REWARDED SUFFERING

Thus it was in the history of Joseph, with the result that the one who was a witness for the Lord was respected and trusted by man. So we read, "Joseph found grace in his sight . . . and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand" (v. 4). The Lord was not only with Joseph, but He was for Joseph, disposing the heart of the master in favour of his servant.

It follows that Joseph became a source of blessing in the house of the Gentile: "It came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field" (v. 5). The Christian is not only called to blessing but, as he passes along his way, to be a blessing.

MEEK SUFFERING

Viewing Joseph as a type of Christ, it is important to remember that it was God's purpose to set Joseph in the place of supremacy, and hence every one who submits to his supremacy is blessed. Thus Potiphar gives Joseph a place of supremacy in his household, and immediately Potiphar is blessed. A little later the jailer makes Joseph supreme in the prison and blessing follows. Just as in the day of his universal supremacy all submit to him, and all are blessed. The world will be compelled to submit to the supremacy of Christ in the day of His manifested power, but faith delights to anticipate that day and own His supremacy in the day of His rejection. And in the measure in which we yield ourselves, our lives, our all, to the supremacy of Christ, we too shall be blessed, even as the world will be blessed

when it submits to His universal sway. The supremacy of Christ demands the submission of man, and the submission of man leads to the blessing of man, though in the day of His rejection that blessing is spiritual rather than material.

Thus we have seen that in the house of the Gentile Joseph was a submissive man, a prosperous man, a witness for the Lord, a respected and trusted man, and a centre of blessing. Such characteristics constitute a very complete life, and hence we are not surprised to read that "Joseph was of a beautiful form and of a beautiful countenance" (v. 6, N. Tr.). The life that is beautiful before God and man is exemplified in this Old Testament saint.

TRIUMPHANT SUFFERING

It is not, however, to be expected that the devil will leave unmolested a life that is beautiful in the sight of God and man. Devotion to the Lord exposes Joseph to the hatred of the devil. Having entirely failed to overcome Joseph by the frowns of the world and the trials of hard circumstances, the devil alters his tactics and seeks to overcome Joseph by the pleasures of sin. In the person of Potiphar's wife he has a ready instrument whereby to tempt Joseph, combined with circumstances that favour her evil designs. In result the temptation only serves to bring out the moral excellence of Joseph. He escapes the snare through maintaining his faithfulness to his master and his fear of God. "Behold," says Joseph, "my master . . . hath committed all that he hath to my hand . . . how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (vv. 8, 9). Here is the secret of Joseph's consistent life before his master. He served faithfully in the presence of man, because he walked continually in the presence of God; and walking in the fear of God he was kept in the hour of temptation. Well for each one of us, if the moment of fierce temptation finds us walking so near to God, that at once we ask, "Can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" To ask that question is to escape the snare. The only thing we have really to be afraid of is fearing anything, or anyone, more than God.

PROLONGED SUFFERING

The devil, however, is not content with isolated attacks upon the children of God. He will wage a continual warfare. It was so with Joseph. The temptation came "day by day" (v. 10), and the attacks more persistent until Joseph "flees" from the temptation and the devil is foiled. But having failed as the tempter, he now becomes the persecutor (vv. 13-18). The woman who formerly had cast her evil eyes upon Joseph now witnesses with lying tongue against him, as an old divine has said, "Those who have broken the bonds of modesty will never be held by the bonds of truth. It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst crimes by those who are themselves the worst of criminals." In result Joseph escapes from a bad woman and retains a good conscience. But to retain a good conscience may cost much. Joseph has to exchange the comfort of Potiphar's house for the hardships of Pharaoh's prison.

Here Joseph must pass through a new testing. In the house of Potiphar he has borne a bright witness for God, he has overcome temptation, and endured persecution. In the prison of Pharaoh he must learn not only to witness for God, but to wait for God. This as we well know, is one of the hardest lessons for the saint to learn. It is one thing to witness for God in the busy world, it is a very different thing to wait for God in the lonely prison; in fact it is impossible to nature. Saul the natural man, lost his kingdom because he could not wait for God (1 Sam. 10: 8; 1 Sam. 13: 8-14). But while it is impossible to nature it is a sore trial for the man of faith. Abraham in his day must learn to wait for God. Under the stress of waiting he yields to the suggestion of nature and unbelief and attempts to obtain the

promised seed by fleshly means, only to find that he is shut up to God, and must wait thirteen long years to reach God's due time. So, too, at a later date no one could have given a bolder witness than John the Baptist in the day of Bethabara; in the presence of the assembled crowd, he exclaims, "This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me; for He was before me." But when John finds himself within the prison walls, when the crowds have gone, when the witnessing time is over, and the waiting time has come, then under the stress of this new trial he exclaims, "Art Thou He that should come?" (John 1: 30; Matt. 11: 3).

UNRELIEVED SUFFERING

Thus Joseph, in his day, finds the waiting time in prison a testing time for faith. He, too, seeks deliverance by an arm of flesh. Having befriended the king's butler, he naturally concludes the butler will intervene with Pharaoh to obtain his release. "Think on me," says Joseph, "when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of his house." Joseph must not only learn that the help of man is vain, but that God is his only resource. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' But to receive this "help" we must learn to "be still" and know that God is God (Ps. 46: 1, 10). God has His time as well as His way to bring His purposes to pass.

RELIEF IN SUFFERING

In the meantime, if man forgets to show Joseph Kindness, God will not forget to show him mercy. As we read, "The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy." Joseph may fail, just as we may and do, but the Lord's "compassions fail not, they are new every mornings great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion saith my soul; therefore I hope in Him" (Lam. 3: 22-24). The devil may tempt us day by day, and God may test by keeping us waiting from day to day, nevertheless His mercy will be renewed every day. Thus though we oft-times have to wait for the Lord's deliverance, yet "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him," and on our side we learn that "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait For the salvation of the Lord" (Lam. 3: 25, 26). Forgotten by man Joseph is remembered by the Lord, until in God's due time he learns that "those that wait upon the Lord . . . shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37: 9) .

Commit thy way to God,
The weight that makes thee faint;
Worlds are to Him no load,
To Him breathe thy complaint.
He, who for winds and clouds
Maketh a pathway free,
Through wastes and hostile crowds,
Can make a way for thee.
Hope, then, though woes doubled;
Hope and be undismayed;
Let not thy heart be troubled,

Nor let it be afraid.
This prison where thou art —
Thy God will break it soon,
And flood with light thy heart
In His own blessed noon.

Paul Gerhardt

4 Exaltation and Glory Genesis 41

In this portion of Joseph's history we reach the period in which God unfolds His plan for the glory and exaltation of Joseph as well as the government of Egypt. And as this fine story is developed we see therein a picture of God's purpose for the exaltation of Christ and God's plan for the government of the world.

GOD'S INSTRUMENTS

God's plans, however, must be carried out in God's time, by God's instruments, and in God's way. Joseph had probably looked forward to an immediate release when the butler was restored to his position in Pharaoh's household. But two full years must pass before God's time is reached. The due time having come, the last instrument in the hand of God is ready to complete the work that leads to the exaltation of Joseph. Already God had used the king's captain, the king's jailer, and the king's butler, now He will use the king himself. Moreover, it must be in God's way. It will be "a dream, a vision of the night," by which He will trouble the spirit of Pharaoh and awaken the slumbering memory of Pharaoh's butler (vv. 8, 9).

MAN'S INTELLECT

First God reveals what He is about to do; but even so man cannot profit by the revelation. God will speak in a vision to Pharaoh by writing on the wall in Belshazzar's day, by "great plainness of speech" In our day, but, as in the days that are past, so now, the wise men of this world are utterly at fault in their efforts to interpret the Word of God. Thus Pharaoh appeals to the "magicians of Egypt and all the wise men thereof," only to find "there was none to interpret" his dreams (v. 8). Man's natural pride of intellect blinds him to the simple fact that communications from God can only be interpreted by God.

FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION

Having thus destroyed "the wisdom of the wise" and brought "to nothing the understanding of the prudent," God falls back on the man of His reserve, "a man in whom the spirit of God is." But God's man is always of little account in the eyes of the world. The man who is destined to wield a power that no mortal, before or since, has ever exercised, is for the moment languishing in a prison and reckoned among "the base things of the world and things which are despised." Nevertheless, he is the chosen of God to "confound the mighty" and "bring to naught the things that are." So it comes to pass that Joseph is brought from the dungeon into the presence of earth's most powerful monarch. Pharaoh, speaking as a natural man, at once says, "I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret

it." Joseph straightway confesses, "It is not in me." It was no more in Joseph than in the wise men of Egypt. They may indeed be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, they may hold the very highest positions in the court of the king; Joseph, on the other hand, is "a young man, an Hebrew, a bondman," in a dungeon, but God being with him he can surpass the wisdom of the wise, stand without fear in the presence of the king, and with the utmost confidence say, "God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." He does not say, "God can give Pharaoh an answer," however true that would have been, but faith passing beyond what God *can do*, definitely states what God *will do*.

CLEAR INSIGHT

It is still the possession of the Spirit of God that makes the immeasurable difference between the children of God and the wise men of the world. Many indeed may possess giant intellects, well stored with such learning as this world can afford, holding, too, high rank in the religious world, but unless born again they are mere natural men, without the Spirit, and cannot even see the things that belong to the kingdom of God, much less enter that fair kingdom.

DIVINE INTELLIGENCE

Having heard Pharaoh's account of his dream, Joseph proceeds to give the king a threefold message from God. First he twice repeats that "God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do" (vv. 25, 28). The wise men of Egypt doubtless had their theories as to the future of Egypt, and shaped their policies and made their plans in accordance with their own ideas — even as today the leaders of this world, whether political, religious, intellectual, capitalist, or labour, have their various theories of future government of the world. But from the most exalted imperialist through all shades of thought to the most degraded Bolshevik, there is one thing in common — all the theories of men leave God out of God's world. Men will not own God as "the God of heaven and *earth*." God is welcome to heaven, about which man knows nothing and cares less, but as for earth, the centre of all man's affections, it must be governed according to man's ideal, an ideal which enthrones the will of man as supreme to the total exclusion of God. Nevertheless, God has His plans for the future government of the world, and of these plans He has not left us in ignorance. In Pharaoh's day, "He showed Pharaoh by a dream what He was about to do. In our day He has shown us still more plainly by direct revelation "what He is about to do." God was going to govern Egypt by one who had been rejected by his brethren, cast out, and forgotten by the world. And God has disclosed to us that according to His good pleasure He has purposed to head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth. The One, who, when He entered the world, found "no room" even in a wayside inn, who, as He passed through it, was "a stranger in the land" and a "wayfaring man" with not where to lay His head, who when He went out of the world was nailed to a cross between two thieves, is the One of whom God has decreed, "The government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9: 6, N. Tr.).

HUMAN INSTABILITY

Moreover, Pharaoh learns a second truth at the lips of Joseph. Not only has God a plan for the government of Egypt, but "the thing is established by God" (v. 32). The ingenuity of man can evolve a bewildering succession of theories and plans, but over all there is the fatal stamp) of utter instability. One generation unfolds its theories and pursues its plans with immense energy, only to have them entirely flung aside by a succeeding generation. But God only can declare "the end from the beginning,

and from ancient times the things that are not," and He can say, "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46: 10).

DIRECT INTERVENTION

Then a third truth is proclaimed to Pharaoh. Not only "the thing is established by God," but "God will shortly bring it to pass" (v. 32). God has a revealed plan. God has established His plan, and what God has planned and established, God will bring to pass. Men dream of bringing about a millennium after their own thoughts and by their own efforts, through education, civilization, disarmament, leagues and confederacies, but all will be in vain. God has made it perfectly clear that His millennium will only be brought about by the direct intervention of God Himself. As in Joseph's day, so in our day, "God will bring it to pass." Has He not said by the mouth of the prophet, "I have spoken it and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isa. 46: 11)? Moreover, "God will *shortly* bring it to pass." The time may seem long, for God has lingered in long-suffering grace, not willing that any should perish, but as in Pharaoh's day so in ours, it has been given to the One who is going to be supreme, "to show unto His servants things which must *shortly* come to pass" (Rev. 1: 1).

EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION

In accordance with God's settled plan, Pharaoh is also instructed as to the way God will take to carry out His plans. Seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine, and Pharaoh is told to "look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt" (vv. 21-33). Two things mark this plan. First, God ordains that only one man shall be over the land, second, God will so order circumstances that all will be brought under the sway of this man. Joseph was to be set over all, and all would be brought under Joseph by the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine. The circumstances and the man would combine to bring about God's purposed plan.

PROPHETIC INSIGHT

This, too, is God's plan for the future government of the world. Not by parliaments, or cabinets, not by counsellors and ministers, will God govern, but by "a Man discreet and wise" set over all. And all will be brought under His sway either by the day of grace or in the day of judgment — the years of plenty or the years of famine. For nearly two thousand years God has been meeting man's deepest need according to the riches of His grace, and many have thus been brought under the sway of Christ by confessing Him as Lord to His glory and their blessing. But the world at large that has neglected God's grace and rejected the claims of Christ will be brought to bow in the day of judgment that will follow the years of grace. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26: 9).

OUTSTANDING IMPORTANCE

All being good in the eyes of Pharaoh, he proceeds to carry out the God-given counsels of Joseph. Thus it came to pass that the man "who was separated from his brethren" is exalted to a place of supremacy "over all the land of Egypt." The rejection by his brethren, the humiliation he had borne, the lowly positions he had filled, and the sufferings he had endured, all led to the place of exaltation, and have an answer in the varied glories that fall to him as lord of all. Moreover if the days of his sorrows were a foreshadowing of the yet deeper sufferings and rejection of Christ, so too the

supremacy of Joseph foreshadows the still greater glories of Christ as the exalted Man. In story after story of great saints of old the Spirit of God delights to anticipate the supremacy of Christ; by glowing Psalms and thrilling prophecies His exaltation is foretold, and when at last — His sufferings all fulfilled — He is glorified at God's right hand, with yet greater delight the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and unfolds before us His varied glories as the One exalted over all.

WORTHY PRE-EMINENCE

In Ephesians we learn that *the counsel of God has purposed the exaltation of Christ*, for there we read that, "according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself," He is going to head up all things in Christ, "both which are in heaven and which are on earth," and in accord with this purpose He has already "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet."

In Colossians we learn that *the glory of His Person demands the place of exaltation*. If He is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," the One by whom all things were created, who is before all, and sustainer of all, then indeed He must "in all things" have the preeminence.

In Philippians *His lowly grace secures His exaltation*, for there we read that "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name."

In Hebrews *His sufferings prepare Him for His exaltation*. The One who is set over all — crowned with glory and honour — was first made perfect through sufferings.

In Peter we learn that *His preciousness in the eyes of God is witnessed by His exaltation*. The "stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men," but with God "chosen" and "precious," has been made the head of the corner.

Moreover, John tells us that if others are to share in the blessings and glory of His exaltation, then *suffering and death must be the pathway to exaltation*. When the moment had arrived that the Son of Man should be glorified, then the time had come when that corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or ever abide alone.

CONSISTENT INVESTMENT

But if Joseph is set in a place of supremacy he must needs be there in a condition suited to the place. The prison garments are put off with the passing of prison circumstances. The royal ring, the fine linen, and the chain of gold betoken his high estate, and in a yet deeper and more spiritual way is this true of Christ in His exaltation. The garments of humiliation and poverty by which in grace He clothed Himself, or man in scorn placed upon Him, are forever laid aside. The crown of thorns is exchanged for a crown of glory, the reed for the royal sceptre, and the seamless robe for the shining raiment exceeding white as snow. On earth He appeared as the poor Man, in heaven the glory of God is shining in His face. Not only is He in glory but He is glorified.

REASONABLE INFERENCE

As exalted and vested with glory, all are called to "bow the knee" to Joseph and no man is to act independently of him "Without thee," says Pharaoh, 'shall no man lift up his hand in all the land of Egypt." If Joseph is supreme, all are called to submit. And so today, if God has exalted the Lord Jesus and given Him a Name which is above every name, it is "that at the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow." The Christian delights to bow during the plenteous years of grace; the world will be compelled to bow in the years of famine.

SHARED INHERITANCE

In the day of his exaltation Joseph is proved to be a true Revealer of Secrets or Zaphnath-paaneah. The wise men of Egypt, with all their learning, could not interpret mysteries or unroll the future. God, too, has His mysteries unknown and unuttered by prophets, priests, or kings. Glorious things they had to say of Christ, but there were secrets that awaited the coming of Christ — the Revealer of Secrets. Then indeed, when Christ is exalted, the greatest mystery of all is disclosed — the mystery of Christ and the church, of which, now that it is revealed, we can see a dim shadow in Joseph and Asenath, his Gentile bride. Rejected by his brethren who are left in far off Canaan, he is, unknown to them, exalted to a place of highest supremacy, there to receive a Gentile bride to share his place of glory. So Christ, rejected on earth by Israel, leaves them under guilt of their sin, and takes a place in heaven, and during His session at the right hand of God the church is called out from the nations and presented to Him to share His kingdom glories.

GREAT INGATHERING

During the years of plenty Joseph uses his place of exaltation to reap a great harvest for Egypt. He deals with the harvest of Egypt during the years of plenty, he will deal with the men of Egypt during the years of famine (vv. 36-49). In this day of grace the world is passing through its "seven plenteous years," when the grace of God is bestowing blessings by "handfuls." The men of the world may entirely neglect the blessings that grace brings to their door, and pursue their way quite heedless of the future. Apparently the men of Egypt took no advantage of the years of plenty to lay up for the years of famine. We do not read that they gathered up any food. It was Joseph that went throughout the land, and gathered up corn. And so today it is the exalted Christ who is reaping a harvest of souls during the day of grace. He is going through the world gathering His people out of the world. But when the days of grace have run their course He will deal with the men of the world.

PERFECT SATISFACTION

The two sons that are born to Joseph will also bear their witness to Christ. Manasseh, as we know, signifies "forgetting," and Ephraim "fruitful." Rejected by his brethren, his path had been one of suffering and toil, but Joseph has his great reward and becomes fruitful in the land of his affliction. Nor is it other wise with Christ. His ancient people may despise and reject Him, they may number Him with the transgressors, but in the day of His rejection, when His soul is made an offering for sin, then "He shall see His seed," yea, "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Israel could say, "His blood be on us and on our children," and they will drink to the dregs their cup of guilt, but Christ has not lost by their rejection. His "toil" has its glorious answer in a great harvest of souls gathered out of the world during the time of His rejection by Israel. The time when He is

"forgotten" by Israel is the time when He gathers fruit among the Gentiles.

Lord, we joy, Thy toils are ended,
Glad Thy suff'ring time is o'er.
To Thy Father's throne ascended,
There Thou liv'st to die no more.
Lord, we worship and adore Thee
For Thy rich, Thy matchless grace;
Perfect soon in joy before Thee,
we shall see Thee face to face.

5 The Years of Famine Genesis 41: 53-57; 42

We have traced Joseph's path to a position of exaltation and power, and we have seen how he used that tower during the years of plenty. But "the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come" (vv. 53, 54). How will Joseph act in the years of dearth? His brethren had consigned him to the pit, the Gentiles had flung him into prison. Will Joseph take occasion by the world's extremity, and his brethren's need to use his power in taking vengeance? Nature might act thus, but grace will take another way. Joseph will use his place of supremacy and power for universal blessing. But while showing grace he will maintain righteousness, hence a cry of need will be wrung from the Gentiles and they must submit themselves to Joseph before the blessing is received. So too repentance must precede blessing in the case of the brethren.

NEED AWAKENED

During the days of plenty the world paid little heed to Joseph. Of his brethren we hear nothing, they were wholly indifferent to him. When, however, the dearth set in, need is awakened; "the land of Egypt was famished" (v. 55); and Jacob and his sons are faced with starvation and death (Gen. 42: 1, 2). The need calls forth a cry for bread, and the Gentiles have to learn, and the brethren discover, that none can meet the need save the one that once they scorned and rejected. The Gentiles must "go to Joseph," and the brethren must bow themselves before him with their faces to the earth (Gen. 41: 55; Gen. 42: 6). The once rejected but now exalted man is alone the resource alike for Gentile nations as for Jacob and his sons.

THE ONE RESOURCE

All this, however, speaks plainly of things to come. There fast approaches "the hour of temptation (i.e. trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3: 10), and for the Jew the time of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world" (Matt. 24: 21). "Alas!" says the prophet Jeremiah, "for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30: 7). And in that day of unprecedented trial the one resource will be the exalted Christ, who, in the days of His humiliation, was rejected and crucified by Jew and Gentile.

THE STOREHOUSES OF BLESSING

Both Jew and Gentile will pass through seas of misery in their attempts to bring about prosperity and peace in a world from which God and His Christ are excluded. But not until the Gentile submits to Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the Jew at last confesses, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," will the time of blessing be reached. Then the exalted Christ will, like Joseph of old, open "all the storehouses," of blessing.

DEEPER TRIBULATION

There is, however, in the story of Joseph, a great difference in the treatment meted out to the Gentiles and in his dealings with his brethren. The Gentiles have truly to learn their need and submit to Joseph before the storehouses of blessing are opened. The guilt, however, of the brethren was far greater than the guilt of the Gentiles, and the exercises must be correspondingly deeper that bring them to repentance Deform they obtain the blessing. And so, too, Scripture makes it abundantly plain that the Jew, with the deeper guilt of having crucified their own Messiah will pass through far deeper tribulation than the Gentile before obtaining the millennial blessing under Christ.

DEEPER EXERCISES

These deeper exercises of the Jew are foreshadowed in Joseph's dealings with his brethren, as detailed in the chapters that follow. Under the stress of famine Jacob has to say to his sons, "Why do ye look one upon another?" They are in desperate plight, and this much they realize, there is no help in one another. If help is to come it must be from one outside themselves. Hence the ten brethren come to Egypt and present themselves before Joseph.

CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES

Time was when Joseph was a weak and helpless youth in the hands of his elder brethren. What could a youth do in the power of ten men? And in those far-off days they were not slow to use their power to gratify the hatred and envy that filled their hearts. Twenty years have rolled by; circumstances have changed; Joseph is exalted; his brethren bow before him — ten helpless, needy men. What can ten strangers do in the presence of the all-powerful governor of Egypt? The day of humiliation is past, the day of power has come. How will Joseph use his power? Will he condemn his brethren to hard bondage even as he had suffered bondage at their hands? Human nature might prompt such a course, vengeance might delight in it, justice might be pleaded for it. On the other hand, nature might suggest a very different course; could not Joseph act with generosity and entirely overlook the sin of his brethren, even as Esau, the man of nature, overlooked his brother's wrong in an earlier day? Nature can often talk in an airy way of letting bygones be bygones and seek to exalt itself by a show of generosity. Joseph, however, will take another way. The conduct that seems so highly commendable in the eyes of the natural man has no attraction for the man that fears God.

LOVE DIRECTING

This was the secret of Joseph's life. Through all the vicissitudes of his path from youth to old age he was governed, not by the dictates of nature, but by the holy fear of God. Thus it is in the presence of his brethren he can say, "I fear God" (v. 18). This is the secret spring of all his actions. His thoughts,

his words, his ways, were governed by the fear of God. Nature leaves God out and thinks only of self-vindication, self-gratification, or self-exaltation. Faith thinks of God and what is pleasing and due to God. Joseph seeks to "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12: 28). In the day of his temptation he was kept from the path of evil by the fear of God, for he could say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" In the day of his exaltation he is kept from taking vengeance on his brethren by the fear of God. No sorrows in the day of his humiliation, no glories in the day of his exaltation are allowed to move his soul from the fear of God. He knew how to be abased, and he knew how to abound. Be the circumstances sad or bright, he ever kept God between himself and his circumstances. Thus walking in God's fear he takes God's way with his brethren, and God's way was a way of love, and yet not the way of mere human love, which is often a feeble and failing thing, even as men say, "Love is blind." Divine love with its clear vision is not blind to the faults in the objects of love, but rather, in full recognition of all that is contrary to itself, it sets to work to remove every blemish, so that at length it can rest with satisfaction in its object.

LOVE DISCERNING

Moreover, love is quick to discern. Multitudes from surrounding nations were driven by need to the feet of Joseph, but directly these ten men appear before him love discerns that they are his brethren, as we read, "Joseph saw his brethren." For twenty years he had not seen them, but with love's quick perception he sees in those ten needy men the brethren from whom he had so long been parted. And love "*knew* them." "Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not" (v. 8). Love knew their past history and the present need that brought them to his feet.

LOVE REMEMBERING

And love knew, because love "*remembered*." "Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed of them" (verse 9). The dreams of the past, the anger and scorn with which they had been received by the brethren, the treatment they had meted out to him, all is remembered, but remembered by one that loves them, for, as Joseph speaks with them "He turned himself about." Time will come when ail the pent-up affections of Joseph will flow out without restraint as he weeps before them, but ere that moment comes he has other work to do. Love will set itself to work to win their hearts and set them in perfect ease in the presence of the one against whom they had so greatly sinned. To reach this end love will find a way whereby, in righteousness, every stain on the past can be wiped away, so that with every question entirely settled nothing will remain to hinder its outflow between Joseph and his brethren. There is, however, only one way whereby the heart can be set at perfect ease in the presence of one that has been offended. All must be brought to light and fully confessed. The slumbering conscience must be aroused, the sins recalled, and the sins confessed. It is only through the conscience that the heart can be reached and set at ease. Moved by love, Joseph will et himself to reach their consciences. He "made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them" (v. 7).

LOVE ALLURING

Christ after the same fashion made Himself strange in the day when a Gentile woman was driven by her need into His presence and was met by silence, for we read, "He answered her not a word." And when He does speak, is it not, for the moment, "hard things" that she has to hear? But we know it was the way of perfect love that led to blessing. So too in His future dealings with the Jew, Christ will make Himself strange when according to the prophet He will say, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and

make a wall that she shall not find her paths"; and says the Lord, "I will take away my corn in the time thereof." The Lord will bring famine upon the Jew, in order to bring the Jew into the wilderness, where they have no resources but God. In that wilderness place the Lord can say, "I will speak to her heart" (Hosea 2: 6, 9, 14).

LOVE TESTING

The brethren protest that it is their need that brings them into Egypt. "We have come to buy food" (v. 10). They have indeed come to the right person, but they have come with a wrong plan and with a wrong plea. Their plan is to buy, and their plea, "We are true men" (v. 11). As yet they know neither the love of Joseph's heart, nor the evil of their own hearts. They must learn that Joseph is too rich to sell to his own, and that they have nothing in themselves to plead. Their money shall not buy corn, and of merit they have none whereby to claim it. They must learn that while Joseph is ready to bestow every blessing, he is one upon whom they have forfeited every claim. Love is a giver when worthlessness has nothing to plead. The love of Joseph's heart will shut out all mere barter, and the evil of their hearts exclude all plea of merit. If they think they are true men then Joseph will put them to the test.

LOVE TEACHING

Moreover Joseph's brethren must learn that all their blessing depends upon the man of whom they say "one is not" (verse 13). They say, as it were, "We have not seen him for twenty years; he has entirely passed out of our lives, as far as we are concerned 'He is not.'" So, too, in a day to come the Jew will have to learn that all their blessing depends upon One that they have set at naught. "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 11, 12).

LOVE CONVICTING

The brethren have condemned themselves out of their own lips. They have protested that they are true men, and in the same breath they say, "one is not," knowing full well that if Joseph has passed out of their existence it is entirely owing to their own wickedness. They stand in the presence of the one that they had rejected with unrepentant hearts, and yet protest they are honest men. Joseph now takes the first step to convict them of their sin, by putting them into prison. The fear of losing their lives had brought them in Egypt, with the result that they lose their liberty. For three days they are left in prison that they may learn in some measure what their sins merit. Joseph had been thrown into prison unjustly, but they are justly brought into the same condemnation. The result is conscience begins to work, for they say, "We are guilty concerning our brother — (verse 21). Conscience connects their present trouble with their past sin. The prison has so far done its work. They not only say, "We are verily guilty," but "We are verily guilty *concerning our brother.*" We saw the anguish of his soul, but we hardened our hearts. He besought us but we stopped our ears to all his entreaties, "Therefore is this distress come upon us." They rightly connect their present distress with the past sin of twenty years ago.

LOVE WEEPING

But all this awakening of conscience, while so far good, is only amongst themselves. It must all

come out before Joseph if they are ever to be happy in the presence of Joseph. Hence Joseph will keep his hand upon them. Simeon is bound before their eyes, but it is love that binds the cords round Simeon, for even as he does so he turns aside to weep. The cords that bound him were cords of love. Moreover, he commanded that their sacks be filled with corn. He is not unmindful of their needs and thus grants a measure of relief; none the less Simeon is held in bondage. And in the way Joseph meets their needs he is still leading his brethren a further stage in their restoration, for while supplying them with corn he returns every man his money. Had they eyes to see they would learn in this that Joseph was a giver. But in their condition gifts bestowed only arouse deeper fear. Their hearts fail them at the discovery of their money. "What is this that God hath done unto us?" (verse 28). They have recalled their sin, now they see that *God is dealing with them*. The fear of God is arising in their souls. Not indeed that holy fear that marked Joseph. "They feared because they were offenders; he feared lest he should offend." So again when they had returned to Jacob, and each finds his money in his sack, "they were afraid." The goodness of Joseph should have gladdened their hearts, but they are miserable and afraid in the presence of a goodness that their guilty consciences tell them they do not deserve.

LOVE MISUNDERSTOOD

Jacob is not guilty, like his sons, but his feeble faith can see no trace of the hand of God in all these circumstances. As he hears the story of his sons' experiences he can only say, "All these things are against me." How different the language of faith which can say, "All things work together for good to them that love God." The very things that to sight and nature were against him were the very means that God was taking for his blessing. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away." These are the things that were for him. Joseph lost to his father, rejected and sold, imprisoned and exalted, Simeon held in bondage, Benjamin taken from his father, were all stages in the pathway to blessing, and means used by God to restore Joseph to his father and to bring Jacob and his sons into richer blessing. Yet Jacob is saying to his sons, "Then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." At the very moment when Jacob could see nothing in the future but sorrow and the grave, God was about to bring him into joy and blessing. Had Jacob been able to persist in his thoughts he would have thwarted God in His ways of blessing, for says Jacob, "My son shall not go down."

There is a need-be for each pain,
And He will one day make it plain
That earthly loss is heavenly gain.
Like as a piece of tapestry,
Viewed from the back appears to be
Naught but threads tangled hopelessly.
But in the front a picture fair
Rewards the worker for his care,
Proving his skill and patience rare.
Thou art the workman, I the frame;
Lord, for the glory of Thy name,
Perfect Thine image on the same.

6 The Brethren Tested Genesis 43 & 44

The sin of Joseph's brethren has been recalled; their conscience has been awakened; the fear of God has arisen in their souls. There are, however, other experiences they must pass through before Joseph can reveal himself in all the love of his heart, and ere his brethren can be at perfect ease in his presence.

A GROSS DECEPTION

In the past they had sinned, not only against Joseph, but also against their father. They had been "reckless of a brother's cries and of a father's grief." They had sinned as brethren before their brother, they had sinned as sons before their father. One they had treated with the utmost cruelty, the other with the grossest deception. Both as sons and as brethren they had revealed the evil of their way and the hardness of their hearts. The time has come when they will be tested, and Joseph will prove how far any real change has been wrought in them. They have said, "We are true men." Joseph will therefore place them in circumstances that will reveal whether at last they can let as true brothers, and true sons. With the utmost wisdom Joseph will re-enact the past. Once again ten men will have to act in regard to a younger brother. Once again they shall have to face an aged father with his great love for the younger son.

A GREAT QUESTION

Times have changed and circumstances have altered; the setting of the picture is entirely new, but in principle the story of the fields of Dothan is to be enacted in the land of Egypt. Will those ten men once again abandon their brother, and invent some story to deceive their father? Has true repentance been wrought in the hearts of those brethren? This is the great question that Joseph will solve in their second visit to Egypt.

A GRACIOUS PURPOSE

Again it is their desperate need that brings them into Egypt. Before starting they make their plans to appease the Governor of Egypt and to secure the safety of Benjamin. Judah undertakes to be surety for Benjamin, and the present is arranged for the Governor. The former goodness of Joseph in returning their money is looked upon as a possible "oversight" (v. 12). All shows how impossible it is for nature to understand the ways of grace. "Why," says Jacob, speaking after the manner of the natural man, "tell the man whether ye had a brother?" (v. 6). Their reply shows the way that grace had taken, "The man asked very *closely* after us, and of our kindred" (New Tr.). Grace can forgive all, but grace will have all brought to light (v. 7).

A GENERAL PROPOSITION

Then Israel unfolds his plan. And, man of faith though he was, he speaks now according to the man of nature. "If it must be so, do this." Jacob's plan depends upon man's doings. He needs corn, he would fain obtain the release of Simeon and secure the safety of Benjamin, and he proposes a way whereby all shall be brought about by their own *doings*. And this is still the way man takes, and has ever taken, to obtain blessing from God. Cain took this way when he brought the firstfruits of his own labours as an offering unto the Lord. Israel took this way when they said, "All that the Lord hath

spoken we will *do*." The lawyer of New Testament times would take this same way when, in the presence of the Lord, he said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And after nineteen hundred years of grace man still clings to this fatal way, for, in the closing days of Christendom, there are still those of whom we read, "They have gone in the way of Cain."

A GENEROUS PRESENT

Occupied thus with their own doings, Jacob unfolds his plan. "*Take*," says he, "a present" to appease the man. "*Take* double money" to buy the corn. "*Take* also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man." Nature cannot think of God as a giver, or man as a receiver. Nature has no true knowledge of God or man. It cannot conceive of God so rich in sovereign grace that He can only give, or man so helplessly ruined that he can only receive. But this Jacob and his sons must learn, for all their plans entirely fail to secure the blessing at the hands of Joseph.

A GRAVE MISTAKE

Furthermore, we learn in the story that not only are man's plans utterly futile but that occupation with our plans blinds the soul to the grace of God. Jacob, as he thinks of the goodness of Joseph that had returned their money, can only imagine "it was an oversight." There is, however, no oversight with God. The oversight is all on man's side. Blinded by his own doings he overlooks what God is doing (11-23)

A GLOOMY UNCERTAINTY

Having made all his plans, Jacob finally commends his sons to the mercy of God Almighty. He puts his plans first and God Almighty second. If there is anything lacking in his plans he expresses the pious hope that the mercy of God will make up the deficiency. And thus it is that men treat God and Christ today. God in mercy sent His Son, Christ accomplished the mighty work of redemption, but still man clings to his own doings and looks upon the mercy of God and the work of Christ as mere make-weights to fill up any little shortcomings in man's endeavours. But as with Jacob, so with men. Their own plans leave them in hopeless uncertainty. Jacob had to confess that after all he is quite uncertain of the results. "If I be bereaved, I am bereaved" (14). What a picture of man's way of seeking to obtain blessing from God. Do your best, look to the mercy of God to make up for any failure in your efforts, and then hope for the best in the future, and if you are saved you will be saved, and if you are condemned you will be condemned.

A GRAND RECEPTION

The brethren of Joseph proceed to act upon their father's plan only to realize its utter futility. They took the present, they took double money, and Benjamin, rose up and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph (15). Joseph pays not the slightest heed to their gifts, he does not touch their money, he will not accept Benjamin as a ransom. He entirely ignores their plan and commences to act according to his own heart. First, he says, "Bring those men home, and slay and make ready; for these men shall dine with me." Is this not an anticipation of that far greater message that God sends to a world of sinners, "Come, for all things are now ready"? The purposes of Joseph far transcend the plans of his brethren. Their plan was simply to obtain a blessing from Joseph; his purpose was to bestow a blessing, but a blessing that they should enjoy in his company and in his home. Their plan was to buy

corn to make a feast among themselves, his plan to spread a feast to be enjoyed with him. "These men," he says, "*shall dine with me*" (v. 16). Like the brethren of Joseph we are equally slow to take in God's thoughts of blessing. We would be content to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and salvation from hell. But how far short of God's thoughts! His thought is to have us with Himself to feast with Him in His home. The prodigal was driven by his need, and some small sense of grace, to return to the father, hoping to get his need met and possibly the place of a servant in the father's house. But no servant's place will suit the father's heart. The prodigal must be brought into the father's home as the father's son, there to feast and make merry with the father. If God sends out the Gospel it is to secure a vast host of redeemed sinners to be in His presence holy and without blame before Him in love.

A GUILTY SUSPICION

But we are slow to take in the greatness of God's grace. Even as Joseph's brethren, who "were afraid" when they were brought into Joseph's house. They could only think they were brought in to be condemned, they could not imagine they were brought in to be feasted. Thus they said, "It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks . . . are we brought in," They looked upon Joseph as against them, as one that must be appeased. They had yet to learn that he is making all things work together for good. Instead of judging themselves they are judging Joseph. In all these marks of favour they can only imagine that Joseph is seeking occasion against them — is going to fall upon them and make them bondmen (vv. 17, 18).

A GROUNDLESS EXPLANATION

They explain to the steward that they have brought double money. But though knowing all about it he sets all on one side and brings Simeon to them (vv. 19, 23). Still clinging to their own efforts they make ready their present "against Joseph came at noon," only to find that Joseph in his turn sets it all aside. The money and the present entirely fail to effect anything (vv. 25, 26).

A GRIEVOUS EXPERIENCE

Joseph speaks kindly to them, yearns in love over his younger brother, weeps in love in secret, but restrains himself in love, for love's time to reveal itself has not yet come. Even so, in perfect wisdom does the Lord deal with the woman by the well. He does not reveal Himself until her conscience is reached and is out, and she discovers that she is in the presence of One who, knowing her whole history, yet loves her with such a love that He can say to her, "Come hither." Then she can say, "Is not this the Christ?" Joseph will anticipate these perfect ways of **grace** with a poor sinner. He too speaks words of grace, but restrains himself in the presence of his brethren. He will feast them, but in such a way that they cannot but see their history is known. They are set before him, "the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth." In the enjoyment of all this favour, "they drank and were merry with him," but they must learn other lessons before he can be merry with them. They are rejoicing in his gifts, but they have yet to rejoice in himself (vv. 27, 34). However, before Joseph can be revealed to them they must be exposed before Joseph. To this end Joseph's cup is placed in Benjamin's sack. The brethren having departed are pursued by Joseph's steward, and charged with having taken the cup. They protest their innocence. "God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing." Then they profess their honesty. "Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouths we brought again . . . how then should we steal?" Is it likely that men who deal so honestly in money matters would be guilty of a paltry theft? It must be remembered that these are the men who

once sold their brother into slavery for twenty paltry pieces of silver. Surely men who had acted thus would be quite capable of stealing a silver cup, in spite of all protestations to the contrary. The charge is not therefore so unreasonable, *unless indeed full repentance for the past has been wrought in their souls*. That they are innocent of the matter of the cup, Joseph knows full well, but have they repented of the past? This Joseph will find out. In the past they had been neither true sons nor true brothers. Has repentance done its work? Has the heart of stone been changed to a heart of flesh?

GRUELLING TEST

Benjamin stands in the place that once had been Joseph's — the youngest and best-loved son of his father. Benjamin shall pass into bondage, as once Joseph had filled the place of a slave. The ten brothers are perfectly free, as once before, to return to their father in peace. What will they do in these circumstances? Will they again act as in the days of old in the fields of Dothan? Will they abandon their brother to slavery knowing him to be innocent? They had acted thus with Joseph; will they do so with Benjamin? Will they return to Jacob to face his grief with some false story to account for the absence of Benjamin as once they had accounted for the loss of Joseph? Ah, no! grace has wrought in these men, repentance has done its work. Under the searching questions of Joseph the whole truth is confessed. Joseph can say, "What deed is this that ye have done?" "Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly make trial?" (6-15, marg). And this is ever the way grace takes. Thus it was the Lord dealt with a sinful woman "near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave **to his son** Joseph." "Go call thy husband" was only another way of saying, "What deed is this that ye have done?" and how truly He made Himself known to that guilty sinner as the One that can "certainly divine," for she said, "He told me all things that ever I did." And none can be happy and at home in the presence of the Lord of glory until such times as they have learnt that the Lord knows the very worst thing bout them, and yet loves them.

A GENUINE CONFESSION

This too, is the way Joseph takes, and with what blessed results! No longer do they justify themselves. They exclaim, "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants!" They no longer attempt to justify themselves as to the present, they do not attempt to clear themselves as to the past. They are convicted sinners "found out" by God; and they entirely submit to Joseph, "we are my lord's servants," they say (16).

A GRIPPING APPEAL

This indeed is excellent, but these are words and may be but empty profession. Words must be proved by deeds. Judah, therefore, comes forward on behalf of the brethren, and proves the reality of their words by what they are prepared to do. He can say, "Let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren." More over, the pleading love that breathes throughout Judah's touching appeal proves how deep the repentance that has been wrought in their souls. The heart of stone has indeed been changed into a heart of flesh. As a son he pleads for Jacob. He is our father, he is an old man, he loves Benjamin (20), "his life is bound up in the lad's life" (30). How can "I see the evil that shall come on my father"? (34). As a true brother he pleads for Benjamin. He is "a lad," "a little one" (v. 20), "our youngest brother." But this appeal to Joseph shows that not only repentance has been wrought but confidence has been in measure won. A beautiful picture

of that "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" which always accompanies a true work of grace.

Listen, oh, listen, my Father, all holy,
Humble and sorrowful, owning my sin,
Hear me confess in my penitence lowly
How in my weakness temptation came in.
Pity me now, for, my Father, no sorrow
Weighs on my soul like the pain that I know,
Trembling and fearing that all thro' the morrow
Missing the light of Thy love I may go.
Father, I know for the grace I am seeking,
Nothing or mine can I offer to Thee;
Thou to my sinful and sad spirit speaking,
Giving forgiveness — giv'st all things to me.
Thoughts of my sinfulness contrite shall make me,
Thoughts of Thy favour shall humble me more;
So keep me lowly until Thou shalt take me
Where sin and sorrow forever are o'er.

Anon.

7 Reconciliation Genesis 45: 1

Hitherto Joseph has made himself strange, spoken roughly, and dealt grievously with his brethren, for here was conscience work to be done and repentance to be wrought. But love's strange work being accomplished, Joseph can no longer refrain from making himself known. Having exposed the guilt of their hearts, he must make known the love of his heart. Have they discovered the evil of their hearts, then he will disclose the yet greater grace of his heart, that, knowing all their evil, can rise above it in full, free forgiveness.

THE REVELATION OF JOSEPH

Joseph must make "himself known" (v. 1). Nothing less will satisfy his heart; nothing less will give rest to their hearts. And this is still the way of the loving Saviour with the anxious sinner. Nothing will roll away the burden of guilt but the discovery that all is fully known, and fully forgiven, by the One against whom we have sinned. The knowledge of our hearts, however necessary, will bring no rest to the soul. We may mourn over the past, and weary ourselves with our sins, but no discovery of evil in our hearts, no repentance, however real, no sorrow for sin, however sincere, will bring comfort to the soul. For rest and peace Jesus must make Himself known. Then we discover with great delight that His heart is full of grace for man that is full of sin. That with the full knowledge of all our sins there is

nothing but love in His heart towards us. Then we can rest but we rest in what He is and not in anything we find in ourselves. For such discoveries of His heart we must be *alone* with Him. Even so Joseph, before he could make himself known, has to say, "Cause every man to go out from me" (verse 1). Wonderful moment in the history of our souls when all men fade from view and we see "no man any more save Jesus only"; when alone with Him in the consciousness of our sinfulness, we discover that He knows us through and through, and yet knowing us, He loves us. The woman of Sychar finely illustrates such a moment. Alone in His presence He revealed all the sin of her heart — told her all things that ever she did — and then disclosed Himself as the Christ full of grace and truth, for a sinner full of sin. He knows all that she ever did, but, He says, "I that speak unto thee am Christ." She finds herself a sinner exposed in the presence of the Christ of God, but instead of repelling her He can say, "Come hither." He seems to say, "I know the worst about you, and though your sin has made you a lonely woman — though it makes you shrink from the company of your fellow-women — yet you are welcome to Me — Come hither."

THE RECEPTION OF HIS BRETHREN

Such ways of grace are blessedly foreshadowed in the history of Joseph. Alone with his brethren he at once declares, "I am Joseph." And as the Lord could say to the woman, "Come hither," Joseph can say to his brethren, "Come near to me" (verse 4). It is not only that Joseph is ready to forgive, but he desires the company of those he forgives. We rejoice in the grace that meets our need, but how slow to realize that the One who has removed our guilt desires our company; Christ has come near to us that we might come near to Him. When passing through this world "He ordained twelve, that they should be *with Him*." When He left the world, He "died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together *with Him*"; and when He comes again to receive us unto Himself it is that we may for ever be "*with the Lord*." If love makes us suited to His company, love will not be content without our company.

THE REMOVAL OF FEAR

Moreover, if the brethren are to be in the company of Joseph for the satisfaction of his heart, they must be there without a trace of fear, without a single regret, and without a shade of care. No regrets for the past, no fears in the present, no anxieties for the future must rise up to mar the joy of communion between Joseph and his restored brethren. With infinite skill Joseph will remove their fears, banish their regrets, and relieve their anxieties.

THE REASSURANCE OF LOVE

That they did fear is evident enough, for we read, "they were troubled at his presence" (verse 3). Joseph, however, draws them to himself with the cords of love; "Come near to me," he says. "And they came near." And having drawn them to himself, he seeks to remove every fear by reminding them he is still their brother, "I am Joseph *your brother*." He says, as it were, "I know full well how you treated me in the days that are past, you hated me, you spurned me, you sold me, but fear not, I am Joseph *your brother*. I know, too, that the day of my exaltation is come, and though you see me — the very one you rejected — in the lace of power, fear not, for though I am supreme, I m still Joseph *your brother*."

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PAST

Moreover, as to the past, Joseph cannot allow that any regrets should rise up to mar their enjoyment of his love. Now therefore, says Joseph, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither" (verse 5). The sin had been confessed, and Joseph will not only forgive, but he will remove all lingering regrets and self-reproaches. He will assure them that behind their sin, yea, by means of their sin, God was working out His purposes of blessing. It is true, "You sold me hither," Joseph has to say, but he adds, "God sent me before you to save your lives by a great deliverance." Thus he delivers his brethren from occupation with themselves by engaging their thoughts and affections with himself, his glories, and the blessings that flow to them through his exaltation.

THE RELIEF FROM ANXIETY

Then as to the future no care or anxiety need cloud their horizon, for Joseph can say, in the message he sends to his father, "Thou shalt dwell *in* the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near to me, thou, and thy children and thy children's children, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee" (v. 10).

THE REALIZATION OF LOVE

Thus with marvellous skill and infinite love, Joseph makes himself known to his brethren, dispels their fears, delivers them from self-occupation, and relieves them from anxiety, by filling their vision with himself and his glories, and engaging their thoughts with **his gracious words**. "Behold," says Joseph, "*your eyes see . . . that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you*" (v. 12). Fear dispelled, grief assuaged cares banished, love can flow without hindrance — "He kissed all his brethren"; "and *after that his brethren talked with him*" (v. 15). But their eyes have seen his glories, their ears have been charmed with his words of grace, their hearts have been warmed with his love and, in the warmth of love, they are set free to talk with him. No shade remains to hinder the communion of love between Joseph and his brethren. Perfect love casts out fear. All this foreshadows the yet future dealings of Christ with His earthly people who rejected Him in the days of old. But more, the story tells us the say Christ takes to teach us the evil of our hearts, and then to dispel all fear by making Himself known in the love of His heart.

THE RECALLING OF HIS DEALINGS

Moreover, we do well to remember that before Joseph "made himself known" to his brethren, "he made himself strange unto them" (Gen. 42: 7). That they might learn the evil of their hearts, he "made himself strange"; that they might learn the love of his heart he "made himself known." Cannot many Christians recall a time in the history of their souls when Christ appeared to make Himself strange and deal roughly with them as they were left to travel through some dark valley of soul exercise, there to discover the evil of the flesh within? In such moments many a dark passage in life's history will rise up to confront the soul in all its hideousness and hatefulness, until the cry is wrung from the soul, "Behold I am vile" (Job 40: 4). But even so this is not enough, for, as Job found, there is a deeper lesson to learn, and for this we must travel back outside the range of our personal experience until we reach the solemnities of the cross. There may have been plenty of evil in the lives of Joseph's brethren, but if they are to learn the depth of evil in their hearts, they must go back over twenty years of history to recall their treatment of Joseph, when in the face of his love as a brother, they hated him, cast him into a pit,

and sold him into Egypt. So with ourselves. Truly, we have to learn that in the flesh *is no good thing* — that it is irremediably bad — we must go to the cross. At the cross there was the display of perfect goodness in God and perfect goodness in a Man — the Man Christ Jesus. At the cross grace and love, and goodness shone out in all their splendour. How did the flesh act in the presence of perfect goodness? It utterly refused the One in whom goodness was displayed. It rejected Him, spat in His face, mocked Him with a crown of thorns, nailed Him to a cross, and cast Him out of the world. Every one of us was represented at the cross, for every class of man was there, religious and godless, educated and ignorant, refined and rough, all were there, and all rejected the Christ of God. Each can say, "There I see my flesh — myself — brought face to face with perfect goodness, and without hesitation my flesh — whatever form it takes — declares its utter hatred of goodness." As one has said, "The sight of a rejected Christ has discovered myself to myself, the deepest recesses of my heart are laid bare, and self, horrible self is there." Learning the flesh experimentally, I discover its lusts and covetousness, its pride and vanity. In a word, I discover by bitter experience that the flesh *loves evil*. But when I come to the cross I learn more terrible phase of its character, for there I discover that the flesh within *hates good*.

THE REFUSAL OF SELF

Moreover, in result, the difference is great between learning the character of the flesh experimentally and learning it in the light of God revealed at the cross. If I only know the flesh as I discover it in myself, I may be left with the thought that it can be improved. I may admit that it is vile — that it loves evil — but I may say, "Is it not possible to improve and reform it?" It is possible to do a great deal for man in the flesh in the way of cultivation and reformation, but in the end it is farther from God than ever. This great lesson I learn at the cross. There Christ was not only the song of the drunkard but the *sober men* — the men who sat in the gate — "speak against Him." Drunk or sober the flesh hates God, and Christ in whom God was expressed. Thus the cross proves the flesh to be irremediably bad. A man that loves sin might be improved, but a man that hates perfect goodness is beyond improvement. When we reach this point, we can say with Job, not only "I am vile," but "I abhor myself." We do not abhor a man, however vile, if he is endeavouring to overcome his evil, we rather admire such an one, but when a man is proved to be bad beyond all hope of improvement we rightly abhor him. To this Job had to come, and we, too, in the light of the cross must reach this point when we give ourselves up as hopelessly bad.

THE REST OF COMMUNION

But when like Job in his day, and the brethren of Joseph in their day, we have learned the evil of our own hearts — the utter corruption of the flesh — with what relief we turn from self to Christ, and how He delights to set us free by making Himself known in all the grace of His heart. We may well be appalled as we discover the evil of our hearts. But as Christ reveals to us His heart and tells us that He loves us, though knowing all the evil of our hearts — as He draws us to Himself and discloses to us the desire of His heart to have us in His company as He gives us to behold His glory and to hear His voice — then the torments of fear are ended by perfect love — the love that casteth out fear — and no more the soul turns in upon itself to grieve over the evil within, the future is no longer dark with dismal forebodings, but in the consciousness of His love we can hold sweet communion with Him, after the manner of Joseph's brethren who "talked with him,"

8 Service Genesis 45: 9-24

Joseph has made himself known to his brethren. He has dispelled their fears, dealt with their past, and secured their future. The love of Joseph has brought his brethren into sweet communion with himself, as we read, "He kissed all his brethren . . . and after that his brethren talked with him" (v. 15). Now we are to learn that the intimacies of love prepare for the service of love. Those whom Joseph has won for himself he will enlist in his service. His brethren shall become his witnesses.

THE PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

In like manner the Lord deals with the demoniac of the Gospel story. Clothed, in his right mind, and brought to sit at the feet of Jesus — set free by the Word of the Lord — he is prepared for the service of the Lord by the directions from the Lord, for the Lord can say, "Return to thine own house and shew how great things God hath done unto thee" (Luke 8: 29, 35, 39). So too, the Lord deals with His disciples on the evening of the resurrection day. As the true Joseph in the presence of His brethren He makes Himself known to the terrified and affrighted disciples. He speaks to their troubled hearts the word of peace. Then it is He gives them the great commission and speaks of the high privilege of being His witnesses (Luke 24: 48; Acts 1: 8).

THE PATTERN OF SERVICE

As with the brethren of Joseph, the demoniac of a later day, and the disciples of the resurrection day, so with ourselves, preparation for service must precede service. We are oftentimes more anxious to be used than exercised to be "*meet* for the Master's use, and *prepared* for every good work." Further, our preparation for service is only gained as we are found alone with Christ learning His mind in communion with Him and in the realization of His love. How touchingly is this prefigured in the fine scene between Joseph and his brethren, when, apart from all others, "he kissed all his brethren . . . and after that his brethren talked with him" (v. 15). The measure of holy separation to the Lord is the measure of our preparation for His service. They who would serve acceptably must first sit at His feet and hear His Word. There only, in the secret of His presence, can we learn His mind and thus serve under His directions. It was thus with the brethren of Joseph; all their directions as to service came from Joseph. Not one of the brethren suggested service. And when Joseph speaks of service, they do not set one another to serve, nor decide how to serve, to whom they shall go, or where they shall go, or what they shall say. The commission to serve, and every detail of the service, they receive from the lips of Joseph.

THE PROMPTNESS IN SERVICE

First, Joseph presses upon them the urgency of their mission. "Haste ye" is the word with which he sends them forth, and in like manner the exhortation for these days — the last days — is "Proclaim the Word, be *urgent* in season, and out of season" (2 Tim. 4: 2).

THE PLACE OF SERVICE

Second, not only are they told how to go, but they are instructed where to go. The word is "Go, get you into the land of Canaan" (v. 17). They were to be witnesses for Joseph in the very land where, in the days of his humiliation, Joseph received only evil for good and hatred for his love: where he had

been stripped of his honours, flung into a pit, and sold for twenty pieces of silver. And thus it was in that last parting scene between the risen Lord and His glad disciples. They not only receive a commission to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, but they are instructed where to begin. The Lord's word is "beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24: 47). The witness was to begin in the blackest spot on earth, and amongst the worst of sinners, in the place where the Lord had been sold for thirty pieces of silver, stripped of His robe, mocked with a crown of thorns, and nailed to a cross between two thieves. As an old servant of the Lord had said, it is "As if the Lord had said, 'Tell them though they have gainsaid My doctrine, blasphemed My divinity, taken away My life, . . . endeavoured to murder My reputation, too, by making Me an impostor, go to Jerusalem, and by beginning there, show them such a miracle of goodness and grace that they themselves must confess that nothing can be greater than their sin except this mercy and grace of Mine which where their sin abounded grace does much more abound.... Begin at Jerusalem, and after the saving efficacy of My grace appears there, no one will question the possibility of their salvation.'"

THE PLAN OF SERVICE

Third, they learn from the lips of Joseph to *whom* they are to carry the message. "Go up to my father" is the direction of Joseph (v. 9). The one they had so grossly deceived, and before whom they had denied all knowledge of Joseph, is the very one before whom they are to bare witness of Joseph. Nor is it otherwise with Christ and His disciples. The woman of Sychar goes back to the men of the city to bear a bright witness for Christ before those who well knew the manner of her life. In the very place of her sin she is to bear witness to the One who has set her free from sin (John 4: 28, 29). Peter, too, bears witness to Christ before those in whose presence he had once so shamefully denied Christ. Moreover, it is not only to the father that Joseph's brethren are sent, but to the father's children and the children's children, indeed, says Joseph, tell him the good news is for "*All that thou hast*" (v. 10). And the message is still, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

THE PERSUASION IN SERVICE

Fourth, the brethren of Joseph are sent back with a very definite message to be delivered with all the authority of Joseph's word. It was to be introduced with a "*Thus saith thy son Joseph*" (v. 9). We do well to remember that the power behind the Gospel message is the authority with which it is proclaimed. It roes forth with a "Thus saith the Lord."

THE POSITIVENESS IN SERVICE

Fifth, the great theme of the message was Joseph and his glory. Tell my father, Joseph can say, that "God hath made me lord of all Egypt" (v. 9). And he adds, "Ye shall tell my father of *all my glory*, and of all that ye have seen" (v. 13). This is still the message that alone will meet the world's famine. Peter preached it with no uncertain sound in the ears of the Jews when, on the day of Pentecost, he said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." And again before the Gentiles he can say that Christ "is Lord of all" (Acts 2: 36; Acts 10: 36). Moreover it is still our privilege to declare the glories of the One who is Lord of all, whether it be His personal glories as the eternal Son, His moral glories as the One who is altogether lovely, or His official glories as King of kings and Lord of lords.

THE PROCLAMATION IN SERVICE

Sixth, the message that Joseph sends to Jacob is "Come down unto me" (v. 9). If Joseph is lord of all with the riches of glory at his disposal for all yet it is only those who "come" who obtain the blessing. If all power is in his hands to bless, all grace is in his heart to attract to himself — the blesser. Joseph says in effect to his father, "I want you," for it is not only "Come," but "Come down *unto me*."

THE PURPOSE IN SERVICE

Seventh, the message speaks of the blessings that await those who "come" (vv. 10, 11) . If Jacob will but come the days of his wandering will be past, for, says Joseph, "Thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen", distance and estrangement will be no more, for "thou shalt be near unto me"; care and want will be banished, for "there will I *nourish* thee." Still the Lord of glory can say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The soul that comes to Him will find the days of the wandering feet are over, the loneliness of the desolate heart is ended, and the famine of the distant land is met. In the company of Christ there is rest for the conscience. satisfaction for the heart, and food for the soul.

THE POINT IN SERVICE

Finally, the message carries with it a word of warning. There is untold blessing for those who come, there is imminent danger for those who delay. Hence Joseph's word is "Tarry not . . . lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty" (vv. 9, 11). How far greater the danger if we trifle with that far greater message that comes from the Lord in glory! Well may the apostle ask, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" And again, "If they escaped not who refused Him who spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven" (Heb. 2: 3; Heb. 12: 25). If the message of grace opens up a vista of glory with its rest, and satisfaction, and plenty, it also warns those who reject the message that there is nothing before them but the poverty of hell where there is no God, no Christ, and no hope.

THE PLATFORM IN SERVICE

Such is the message that Joseph sends to his father foreshadowing the Gospel message which the believer carries to the world from Christ the Lord of all.

It is an urgent message, "Haste ye."

It is a message that proclaims the exaltation and glory of the Lord of all.

It is a message of grace that says, "Come."

It is a message that tells of the blessings for those who "come."

It is a message of warning to those who refuse to come.

THE POWER FOR SERVICE

Continuing the story of Joseph we discover further rich instructions for the servant of the Lord. The message is full and clear, but it is not enough to be entrusted with a message, the messenger must be fully equipped to deliver the message. The disciples whom the Lord commissioned to preach had to

tarry until endued with power from on high. And again the Lord can say, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 8). The power in which they are to serve comes from the Person *who* lives them their commission, and from the place of Exaltation in which this Person is. Is this not foreshadowed in the story of Joseph? For the word is, "Take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come" (v. 19). They were provided with a newpower to journey on their way. And the power that took them back to Canaan was the power in which they were to bring their father to Joseph. Thus we read, "Joseph gave them wagons" (v. 21).

THE PROVISION IN SERVICE

Further, Joseph can say, "Regard not your stuff," or according to a better translation, "Let not your eye regret your stuff" (v. 20). There are things that belong to us naturally — the eloquence of man, and the wisdom of man, and there are carnal means and methods that appeal to the natural man. But, says the apostle, "my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," and again he can say, "we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (1 Cor. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 10: 3, 4). In the service of the Lord that which is merely natural is neither to be regarded nor regretted. The Gospel that we carry is too great and serious for the feebleness of carnal methods and the levity of natural eloquence.

THE PROVISION FOR SERVICE

Moreover, had the brethren fallen back on their own "stuff" to support them in their service they would have slighted the provision of Joseph. Their action would have said, "Joseph's provision is not sufficient for Joseph's commission." Joseph, however, can say, "The good of the land of Egypt is yours," and, in accord with this, he "gave them provision for the way" (vv. 20, 21). In carrying out their service for Joseph they were sustained by the good of the land from which they came, received from the hand of the one that sent them. Nor is it otherwise in the service of the Lord in this day of His grace. We have received full provision to carry out His service, and hence to import human methods into this service is to cast a slight upon His provision. By so doing we say the Holy Spirit, and spiritual means, is not sufficient for the service of the Lord. Let us then beware of regarding our "stuff" and neglecting His provision. May we ever remember the words of one who, though in the world's sight an "unlearned and ignorant" man, could say, "His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1: 3).

THE PROHIBITION IN SERVICE

Another lesson we may learn is that, in the service of the Lord, the servant is not only spiritually equipped, but he is dependent upon the Lord for his temporal needs. From the moment Joseph's brethren set forth in their path of service until the day of their return, they were sustained by the provision of Joseph. They were not provided for by the people to whom they were going, but by the person from whom they had come. Apparently they were not to take of Jacob's things to carry out Joseph's work. So in the New Testament we read of those who "for His name's sake . . . went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles" (3 John 7).

THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVICE

But blessed as all this is, it is not enough for the service of the Lord. If the service is to be effectual the life of the servant must be in harmony with the message that he delivers. This important truth is strikingly set forth in the dealing of Joseph with his brethren. Not only did he give them provision for the way, but we read, "To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment" (v. 22). They were not only to deliver a message concerning the glory of Joseph, but they themselves were to be witnesses of the change that the glory effected. And, as we have seen, not only were the apostles sent forth to preach Christ but they themselves were to be witnesses to Christ — "ye shall be witnesses unto Me." "Having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that has created him," it is our privilege and responsibility to display the change of raiment by expressing the character of Christ in all His lovely traits — compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness and love.

THE PERIL IN SERVICE

Finally, Joseph sends forth his brethren with the warning word, "See that ye fall not out by the way" (v. 24). And in those last words of the upper room, when the Lord is equipping His disciples to be His witnesses, He thrice exhorts them to love one another (John 13: 34; 15: 12, 17). Alas! we have fallen out by the way. The Galatians by their legality fell out by the way, for the apostle has to say, "Ye bite and devour one another" (Gal. 5: 15). The Corinthians by their carnality fell out by the way, for the apostle writes, "There are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1: 11). And as in the beginning so it has ever been through the long history of that which professes to be a witness for Christ in the earth. Had love prevailed there would have been no room either for legality or carnality to divide the servants of Christ and mar their service to the Lord.

We will love with tender care —
Knowing love to Christ —
Brethren who His image bear —
When there's love to Christ.
"Jesus only" shall we know,
And our love to all shall flow,
In His blood bought church below,
For the love of Christ.

Wm. E. Reed

9 Glory and Blessing Genesis 45: 25 to 47: 31

The brethren of Joseph fulfil their mission according to the directions of Joseph. They "came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor of all the land of Egypt" (vv. 25, 26). They witness to a living and exalted Joseph, even as today it is the privilege of the believer to witness to the risen and exalted Saviour. A testimony so incredible to the natural mind that it is received with unbelief. Thus it was with Jacob. The exposure of his unbelief was the first result of hearing the good news. Twenty years before these same men had brought a lying

report to Jacob with evidences to support their lie. And without a question Jacob believed the lie. "Without doubt," he said, "Joseph is rent in pieces." Now his sons bring a true report of Joseph with evidences to support the truth, and at once Jacob doubts. His "heart fainted, for he believed them not." Ever since Adam gave his ear to the devil's lie it has been natural for fallen man to believe a lie. Only a work of grace enables men to believe the truth. Hence we read that those who believe on the Name of Christ are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God.*"

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

Thus with Jacob, grace overcomes his unbelief. His sons repeat "all the words of Joseph, which he said unto them." Moreover, they show Jacob "the wagons which Joseph sent to carry him." The grace and goodness of Joseph breaks down the unbelief of Jacob. When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." This is the confession of faith. He believed with his heart and confessed the truth with his lips. Nor is there any other way of blessing for a sinner today. We may indeed at first listen to the good news with unbelief, but as we hear the grace of the words of Christ, and see that all has been done that we might be blessed, our hearts are won — the goodness of God leadeth to repentance — we believe in our hearts. Just as Jacob sees that Joseph has made every provision that he might personally be blessed, so we see that Christ has done a great work that we individually might be saved, and that God is satisfied with that work, for He has raised Christ from the dead. We believe in our hearts and confess Jesus as Lord with our lips, and we are saved (Rom. 10: 10).

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

It was Jacob — the man so often marked by unbelief and crooked ways — that could not believe the good news; but directly he uses the language of faith, God gives him his new name "Israel." Jacob expressed all that he was by nature, Israel all that he was by grace. But not only is faith kindled in the heart of Jacob, but love goes out in longing to Joseph — "I will go and see him before I die." This is the language of love that is satisfied with nothing less than the one that is loved. The heart that has been won by the grace of Christ will not be satisfied at a distance. The test of love is — does it desire the company of the one that is loved? Are we content to say, "we shall see Him when He comes, or when we die," or do we say "*I will go and see Him before I die.*" Do you know what it is to seek His company, and taste the joy of His presence before we die?

In order to reach Joseph, Israel had to take his journey (Gen. 46: 1). He had to leave the scene of all his natural affections. And so with ourselves, if we are to reach Christ where He is, we must forget the things that are behind. Thus Israel comes into the new land — the land of Goshen, and there meets with his son Joseph, and Joseph "presented himself unto him" (v. 29). If on the one hand Israel longs for the company of his son, Joseph on his side is delighted to present himself to Israel. Are we set for the company of Christ, we shall find that Christ is delighted to reveal Himself to us. Do we seek like the two disciples of John 1 to know Christ in His own dwelling, we shall be welcomed by the gracious words of the Lord, "Come and see" (John 1: 38, 39).

THE REMOVAL OF FEAR

Then Israel can say, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive" (v. 30). The man who had always been speaking of death and dreading the grave has now no more fear of

death because Joseph is alive. It is as we see that Christ is risen, and as we gaze upon His face and learn His love, our souls will be delivered from the fear of death.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD

Thus Israel and all that he had came to Joseph in exaltation. God's purposes as set forth in Joseph's dreams, are brought to pass. What follows will show how Joseph uses his place of universal supremacy For the blessing of those who submit to him.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF GRACE

It is deeply instructive to trace the hand of God in every step of Joseph's path, from the days of his youth when feeding the flock in Canaan, to the day of his glory when set over all the land of Egypt. The varied characters that crossed his path — the father that loved him, the brethren that hated him, the merchants that carried him to Egypt, the captain that promoted him, the woman that traduced him, the jailer that showed him favour, the butler by whom he was forgotten, and the king by whom he was exalted — all were the unconscious instruments to carry out God's purpose for him.

THE WAY OF PREPARATION

So, too, the changing scenes of his life — the fields of Dothan, the empty pit, the house of Potiphar, the prison and the palace — were all stages on his way to glory, even as his varied pursuits, as shepherd, slave, overseer of Potiphar's house, and keeper of Pharaoh's prison, prepared him for the use of glory.

THE POSITION OF GLORY

It is this use of glory — the way he uses his place of supreme power — that comes before us so strikingly in this portion of Joseph's story. We see this mighty power put forth in a threefold way —

First, Joseph uses his position of supremacy to bring everything into absolute subjection to himself. All the wealth of Egypt passes into his hands: "Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan" (vv. 13, 14). Then when the money failed, Joseph claims their cattle. He said, "Give your cattle," and we read, "They brought their cattle unto Joseph" (vv. 15-17). Then, the money spent, the cattle gone, they say there is nothing left but "our bodies and our lands" and so they add "buy *us* and our *land* for bread." So we read Joseph "bought all the land of Egypt," and "as [or the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof" (vv. 19, 20) .

THE SUBJECTION OF THE EARTH

Thus all passes under the absolute control of Joseph — money, cattle, the land, and finally the people themselves. The words of Pharaoh are literally fulfilled: "Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41: 44). Joseph uses his power to bring all into subjection. Never, before or since, have such claims been made by any earthly king. Apart from its typical teaching, the historical fact is without parallel in the history of the world. Many a potentate has made crushing claims, but not one has ever dared to claim all after the manner of Joseph. Moreover, those who have made large claims upon their subjects have been unable to make good their claims; or in the

attempt to do so have provoked rebellion and revolution. Joseph, however, not only makes unheard of claims, but he makes good his claims without a voice being raised in rebellion.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE THRONE

Furthermore, a second great fact is noticeable, that in claiming all, Joseph does so for Pharaoh. If Joseph gathers up all the money, we read he "brought the money into Pharaoh's house" (v. 14); again, if the land comes under Joseph's sway, we read he "bought all the land of Egypt *for Pharaoh*" (v. 20). So, too of the people Joseph can say, "I have bought you this day and your land *for Pharaoh*." Thus Joseph uses his supreme power, not for his own advancement, but for the glory of Pharaoh.

THE SATISFACTION OF THE PEOPLE

Finally, a third striking fact remains to be noticed. If on the one hand Joseph's power is used to subdue all for Pharaoh, on the other hand his universal supremacy is used *for the blessing of the people*. If Pharaoh's glory is maintained the people's blessing is secured, but only as they unreservedly submit to Joseph.

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

In all this Joseph is a striking type of Christ in exaltation. If we are to be saved from the present power of evil, nothing can be of greater importance than to realize that Christ is in the place of supreme power, and to submit to Him. There are great powers in heaven — angels, principalities and powers; there are great powers in the world — kings and all that are in authority; there are great powers in the lower world — the devil and his angels; but the Lord Jesus is set in a place of absolute supremacy over every power. He is set "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come." But if the Father has glorified the Son, it is that the Son may glorify the Father, as the Lord can say in His great prayer, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee" (John 17: 1). Moreover if the Father is glorified, His people are blessed. So we read, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." The glory which the Father has given to the Son is used for the glory of the Father and the blessing of His people.

THE DAY OF POWER

Nor will it be otherwise in the day to come, when Christ will put forth His subduing power, as King of kings and Lord of lords for the glory of God and the blessing of men under His Millennial reign. And so finally "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be annulled is death." "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." This will introduce the new heavens and the new earth, where God will dwell and men be blessed.

Whether we think of the present day of grace, the Millennium for which earth waits, or the new heavens and the new earth that stretch far into eternity, all depends upon the supreme glory and power of the One who was once rejected of man.

THE CENTRE OF PRAISE

And the One who has secured all for the glory of God and the blessing of man will be the centre of heaven's praise. As in the days of old, those who had been blessed by Joseph come to Joseph saying, "*Thou hast saved our lives*" (Gen. 47: 25). They recognize that they owe everything to Joseph. So, too, the great throng of the redeemed delight to say, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

THE BLESSING OF SAINTS

But not only were people saved by Joseph, but they prospered under Joseph. This we see set forth in the history of Israel and his sons. The Lord Jesus does a great deal more for His people than save them from the world's famine. He brings us into a good land, a heavenly country, and blesses us with spiritual blessings and as we enter into those spiritual blessings we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Trembling, we had hoped for mercy —
Some lone place within the door;
But the crown, the throne, the mansion,
All were ready long before.
And in past and distant ages,
In those courts so bright and fair,
Ere we were, was He rejoicing,
All He won with us to share.

Mrs. Bevan

10 The Vision of Faith Genesis 50: 15-26

The last two scenes in the history of Joseph present a striking contrast between the unbelief of the brethren and the dying faith of Joseph. If the first scene, described in verses 15 to 21, presents a sorrowful picture of unbelief of the brethren, it also brings into display the perfect grace of Joseph. A crisis in the history of the brethren makes manifest that they had no true knowledge of the heart of Joseph and therefore no real confidence in him.

THE PAST REVIEWED

Joseph had saved their lives with a great deliverance (Gen. 45: 7); he had put them in possession of "the best of the land" of Egypt, and he had nourished them with bread (Gen. 47: 12). For seventeen years they had been the recipients of Joseph's bounty, and the special objects of his loving care, and yet — when a crisis arises — it becomes manifest that they have no personal knowledge of Joseph. They know something of his greatness and glory; they know the great work he has accomplished, they know that every blessing they enjoy is owing to his position and work, but they had no personal acquaintance with his mind and heart. It is as if they said, "*WE know what he has done for us, but we do not know how he feels about us.*"

And not knowing his mind, when the crisis arises it becomes manifest that they have *no confidence* in him, with the result that they conclude that he will think and act towards them according to the way they had thought and acted towards him.

THE HEART REVEALED

They remember that when Joseph was but a lad of seventeen "they hated him and could not speak peaceably unto him," and now they conclude, "Joseph will peradventure hate us." Conscience recalls how wickedly they had acted in regard to Joseph, and now they say, "[He] will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." They judge of his thoughts by their thoughts, of his heart by their hearts, and of his acts by their acts.

THE CONDITION REALIZED

Alas! are not we Christians today oftentimes like Joseph's brethren of old? We know something of the glory of the Person of Christ, we know something of the efficacy of His work, we enjoy the benefits that flow from His finished work on the cross and His present service in the glory, but when some little crisis arises in our history it becomes manifest how little we know of His heart, and therefore what little confidence we have in Himself. We lack that personal intimate acquaintance with Christ, by which alone His mind is learned in such fashion that we can say not only "I know what He has done for me," but "*I know how He feels about me.*" The result is that in the presence of some special trial we are, like Joseph's brethren, greatly distressed in soul. One has truly said, "Nothing has contributed more to the present distraction of saints than the lack of personal intercourse with the Lord. There has been a great and increased zeal to acquire knowledge of the Scriptures, but personal acquaintance with the Lord has not been correspondingly sought after."

THE KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE

The brethren of Joseph had heard the gracious words of Joseph when alone with him, but, not knowing his heart, they had little entered into the full, deep meaning of his words. So with ourselves it is possible to have great knowledge of the words of Scripture and yet be ignorant of the great truths the words convey. A true understanding can only be obtained by the knowledge of Christ. Hence the apostle prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *knowledge of Him.*" The knowledge of the schools — the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew — however useful in its place, will never give us *the spirit* of wisdom and revelation. Such knowledge may give In understanding of the letter of revelation, but not the spirit of revelation. We must know the mind of Christ to understand the words of Christ.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Scripture speaks of external knowledge which a person may acquire by hearsay or sight, and also of conscious knowledge - that personal acquaintance by which we can know a person's mind. It is of this latter knowledge Paul speaks, when he says, "That I may know Him," and it is this knowledge we so often lack. We know and rejoice in the glorious things He has done, but do we know the heart of the One who has done so much for us, in such fashion that we can say, "I know how He feels about me"?

THE LACK OF CONFIDENCE

The lack of true knowledge of Joseph's heart, and the consequent lack of confidence in Joseph is revealed in the message that his brethren sent to him. And worse, they attempt to hide their own unbelief and mistrust of Joseph, by pretending they are only carrying out the dying commands of Joseph's father. It is impossible to believe that Jacob left any such command. In total forgetfulness of Joseph's forgiveness of all their sad past they now pray to be forgiven. In spite of all the manifested grace and love of Joseph their uneasy conscience leads them to harbour the thought that Joseph still has something against them. And even so, if not living in nearness to Christ — if we have not made acquaintance with His heart — we may, through sin, failure, and a careless walk, still think, when conscience begins to work, that Christ is against us for something we have done, and, like Joseph's brethren, ask for forgiveness. And yet however great the failure of a true believer, Scripture never suggests that he should plead for forgiveness as if that question were not fully and eternally settled, but rather he is exhorted to *confess* his sin that communion may be restored.

THE BRETHREN REASSURED

This lack of confidence, after all the love that had been lavished upon them, broke the heart of Joseph. He "wept when they spake unto him" (v. 17). The saddest thing in all this sad world is unrequited love. But though his tears showed how deeply he felt he utters no word of reproach. The very tears would surely be sufficient to wither up their unbelief. But Joseph leads them into personal acquaintance with himself by letting them know *there is nothing but love in his heart towards them, though he fully knows the evil of their hearts towards him.*

THE FEAR REMOVED

"As for you," he can say, "ye thought evil against me," but he can add, "Fear ye not." He says as it were, "I know all the evil of your hearts toward me, but there is nothing to fear, for there is nothing but love in my heart toward you." And thus once again he removes all fear as to the past and all anxiety as to the future, for he adds, "I will nourish you and your little ones. Thus It was "he comforted them and spake to their hearts" (margin). Perfect love casts out all fear.

THE CONFIDENCE RESTORED

What a difference this interview must have made to these brethren. After this did any one seek to cast a doubt upon Joseph's love they would surely say, "We have been in his presence, we have made personal acquaintance with himself, we know his mind. We not only know what he has done for us, but we know how he feels towards us.

THE FAITH RISING

In the final scene between Joseph and his brethren, the faith of Joseph rises above all the glories of this passing world and looks on to a better and brighter world that is yet to come. He thinks and speaks no more of the things that he had suffered, the power he had wielded, or the good he may have done. He forgets the things that are behind and reaches out to the things that are before.

THE THINGS TO COME

Isaac, in his day, when he "was old and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see," looked on with faith's clear vision to another world and spake "concerning things to come." Jacob at a later day, when dying, with like faith catches a glimpse of the glories on before, and worships, leaning upon the top of his staff. And now Joseph, about to take the passage through the valley, catches sight of the hills that are beyond, and rising above all passing things, lays hold by faith of the world to come.

THE END REACHED

And God is not slow to mark His approval of the faith of these dying saints, shining in its greatest strength in the moment of nature's greatest weakness. It is not the great deeds they may have wrought in the course of their active lives, but the faith, shining amid the feebleness of age and the weakness of their lying moments, that has secured them a place in God's list of worthies of other days. The faith of other saints may shine in overcoming the difficulties of the way, in escaping the snares of the enemy, and triumphing over the temptations of the world, but the faith of these three saints is distinguished in that it forgets all seen and passing things, be they good or bad, great or small, and *looks on to another world*. And this is the more striking in the case of Joseph, seeing he had filled a place of such vast importance before the world in his day and generation. He realizes that all the glory of Egypt ends at last in a coffin in Egypt. He had worthily filled a place of great power and glory in this world, such as no man before or since has ever had, but the end of all Egypt's glory is reached in these significant words, "*He was put in a coffin in Egypt.*"

THE LIVING GOD

Thus it is he speaks no more of man, and man's small world, but of God — the living God, of the faithfulness of God, of the power of God, and the land of God. "I die," says Joseph. The life of the man who had saved other lives by a great deliverance (Gen. 15: 7) is fast slipping away, but if Joseph dies, God lives; if Joseph departs, God remains. And into the lands of the living and unchanging God he commends his brethren. Though he may be taken from them, yet he can say with the utmost assurance of faith, "God will surely visit you." The living God is their unfailing resource in the presence of the dying Joseph.

THE CLEAR VISION

Furthermore, God will act in mighty power on behalf of His people, for, says Joseph, He will "bring you out of this land." Joseph had been long in Egypt; he saw Ephraim's children of the third generation (v. 23). They were thoroughly established in the land of Egypt. To nature nothing looked more unlikely than that a time would ever come when they would leave the land of Egypt for a land they had never seen, but faith, rising above things seen, and refusing to reason according to the mind of nature, sees with clear vision that, though the people of God may sojourn for a time in the land of Egypt, yet it is not the land of rest that God has promised for His people. Strangership in the land of Egypt may form part of God's ways with His people, but it has no place in God's purpose for His people.

THE FAITHFUL GOD

Thus the faith of Joseph passes on to the land of promise. As surely as God will visit His people in grace to bring them out of Egypt, so surely He will stretch out His hand in mighty delivering power to bring them into the land of His purpose — "a good land and a large . . . a land flowing with milk and honey." Moreover this good land, with all its blessing and glory, which is unrolled before the faith of the dying Joseph, is secured by the unconditional promise of God, made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph is dying, but no shadows darken the hour of his passing, for he sees in faith that all blessing to a far future rests upon the faithfulness and power of the living God.

A DEATH REMEMBERED

So it comes to pass in the power of faith's vision of the living God he gives directions concerning his bones. They are not to be left in Egypt. What a witness to the Israelites must the coffin of Joseph have been through the long centuries, forever reminding them that not even death itself can hinder the living God from fulfilling all His pleasure, and carrying out His purpose for His people. So in accord with the oath made to Joseph, when at last they leave the land of Egypt, "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him" (Ex. 13: 19), still to be a witness to faith in God, throughout the forty years of wilderness journeyings. And when at last they reach the land of promise, his body is buried in the "parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor" (Joshua 24: 32), there to sleep in the dust of the earth until he awakes to everlasting life and stands in his lot at the end of days.

THE SAVIOUR RISEN

Nor is it otherwise with the people of God today. Faith still looks beyond the valley of the shadow of death, to the home of God's eternal purpose. In the presence of death faith, as of old, still rests on the God of resurrection, but with yet clearer vision, for we see Christ risen from among the dead, seated at God's right hand of power, holding in His hand the keys of death and the grave. As our faith looks up to the risen Man in the glory, may the passing glories of this dying world become small in our esteem so that, forgetting the things that are behind, we reach out to the things that are before, while waiting for the moment when the Lord will surely visit His people — when He "Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Thus while to sight all may seem to end in a coffin in Egypt, faith has in view that glorious moment when we shall be caught up together to be forever with the Lord. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

THE END