

## THE SOWING AND THE REAPING

– *MAY 18.* – *GENESIS 42.* –

**"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."  
– Galatians 6:7.**

THE STORY of Joseph and his brethren continues. Today's lesson illustrates how the remembrance of their cruelty toward their brother Joseph, inspired by envy, continued to harass the evil-doers many long years after. Our Golden Text seems to lay down a general principle, applicable not only to the consecrated people of God, but to mankind in general. Whatsoever anybody sows wilfully, intelligently, will bring a harvest, a reaping, of similarly good or evil kind.

The famine was general throughout that region of the world. It included Palestine as well as Egypt. The word spread that there was no lack of food in Egypt, that there was corn there, sold at moderate prices, and that it belonged to the old stock. Jacob directed his sons, who were men of families themselves, to go down to Egypt and make purchases of wheat.

As strangers, they were directed to Joseph, who doubtless was on the lookout for them. He spoke to them through an interpreter, asking if they were not spies, coming to see how much wheat was in Egypt, that they might bring an army to steal it. They explained their situation truthfully. Joseph then inquired about his father and his younger brother Benjamin. Finally he put one of them into prison, and sent all the others home with corn, with the understanding that they would need more corn and might have plenty of it, as long as the famine lasted, provided that they should prove that they were not spies by bringing their youngest brother along with them. Meantime, Simeon would be held as hostage.

The guilty consciences of the brethren began to connect up these various experiences with their own wrong course in the past. They said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, when we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." They knew not that Joseph understood them, but he withdrew and wept. His heart was not hard. He was merely giving them a lesson that would be profitable for them in coming years.

The Scriptures represent that when the Messianic Kingdom will begin to shed its blessings abroad, the antitypical Joseph, Messiah, will likewise speak roughly to the people in a time of trouble, and cause them great vexation and worry as to what the outcome will be. But all the while the Lord's heart will be full of love and sympathy for the poor groaning creation, for whom He already has died, and in whose interest His Kingdom will be established. The time of trouble upon the world in the beginning of Messiah's reign will evidently be for the very purpose of preparing the hearts of mankind for the blessings which the Lord is so willing to bestow.

### **MANY STRIPES AND FEW STRIPES**

When Jacob's ten sons arrived with their wheat, they told the whole story of their experience to their father. They explained why Simeon was not with them – that he was kept as a hostage. Moreover, they were perplexed to find that no money had been charged them for the wheat. The money they had paid for it was returned in each sack. Everything seemed strange to them, and the minds of the brethren continually adverted to the crime of years ago, in connection with their brother Joseph. Many times during those intervening years they had reaped crops of sorrow and fearful surmisings respecting what the providence of a just God might ultimately exact from them in the nature of trouble, similar to that which they had brought upon their brother.

How advantageous it would be to the whole world if this principle were generally recognized – if all realized the truthfulness of God's Word that every trespass must receive a just recompense of reward! We have lost such an appreciation of justice, and such a looking for a righteous retribution, in the fog of a very false doctrine, which has become prevalent. That false doctrine ascribes only the one punishment for every sin, and that an unthinkable one; viz., everlasting torture. In the first place, how few there are that really believe that doctrine or are really influenced by it! Its monstrosity makes it unbelievable, and turns the mind away from the proper view of the real punishments which God has foretold.

Added to this first inconsistency and its evil effect, we mention another, which associates itself thus: Our Catholic friends claim that by membership in the church they will escape eternal torment and get some lesser torment. And that theory seems so much more logical than the Protestant one that many accept it as the lesser evil of the two. Then comes our Protestant theory that a man or a woman, the moment before death, may say, "God forgive me!" and immediately pass into Paradise, and escape all punishment for sins. These theories, we claim, are all injurious, as well as inconsistent. The Scriptural theory, we are sure, would be found the more effective, if it were preached, if it were believed.

That Scriptural theory is expressed in our Golden Text: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If he sows a desire for cruelty, words of deceit, injustice, selfishness, evil speaking, slander, he will surely have a reaping time, and will gather rewards in harmony with his desire.

It is impossible for humanity to improve upon the Divine arrangement. Hence all Christian people should begin afresh to tell the world both of the Justice and the Love of God – that God's just penalty against sin is death, but that He has made provision through Christ for a release from that penalty, during Christ's Messianic

reign of a thousand years. Then every member of Adam's race will be granted a full opportunity of reconciliation with God and of restoration to the image and likeness of God, lost for all by Father Adam's sin.

But meantime, each individual has a responsibility in respect to his every word and act and thought. To whatever extent he sins against light, knowledge and the Golden Rule, to the same extent he degrades his character, and thus makes his opportunity for return to the image and likeness of God the more difficult. He whose conscience becomes the most degraded will find the way for retracing his course the most difficult and steep.

According to this Divine rule, the Millennium may find heathen people more ready to go up on the Highway of Holiness than people of so-called Christian lands. The latter, having had more light, more privilege, more opportunity and sinning against greater knowledge, have seared their consciences more deeply. Of some such Jesus exclaimed, "How can ye escape the condemnation of Gehenna!" – the Second Death.

### **JACOB'S GRAY HAIRS FOR SHEOL**

When poor old Jacob heard that Benjamin would be required to go on the next expedition for wheat, he demurred and declared that it must never be. Joseph was **[R5226 : page 126]** gone, and if now he should lose his youngest son, Benjamin, the grief would bring down his gray hairs quickly to Sheol – the tomb – the state of death.

In our common version English Bible this word Sheol is repeatedly translated Hell, Pit, and Grave. In olden times, these three English words were synonymous in meaning. As for instance, a man, speaking of burying so many bushels of potatoes in a pit, would call it helling the potatoes. And when this term was used in respect to humanity, sometimes the word grave was used.

Altogether, the word Sheol occurs sixty-six times, and more than one-half of these times it is translated pit and grave.

When the Revised Version was in preparation, the learned men charged with that work refused any longer to translate the word Sheol by the word Hell, because in the intervening centuries that word had gradually lost its original meaning and had come to have the significance of a place of fire and of torture. Since no such meaning attaches to the word Sheol in the Hebrew, these scholars refused to so translate it into English. To these facts they all agreed, but then came a dispute as to how it should be translated. Some would not agree to translate Sheol uniformly by the English word grave, or tomb, fearing that this would appear very radical to some Christian people.

Finally, as a compromise to settle the question, it was concluded that in all places where Sheol and the corresponding Greek word Hades had been translated Hell in our Common Version, the Hebrew word Sheol or the Greek word Hades should be substituted, and left without translation. If any of the people found out their meaning, it would be all right. If they did not find out, they might remain in ignorance, and still think of Hades and Sheol as signifying a place of torture. Our Baptist friends have recently met with a similar difficulty and have given the translation of Sheol and Hades as "the Underworld." Of course the grave, the tomb, the state of death, may be thus indicated, and no one can find fault.

It is needless to say that when Jacob spoke of his gray hairs as going down to Sheol, he did not mean his sons to understand that he expected to go to eternal torment. What he did mean is evident. He meant, "My sons, I am now old and gray-headed, and to lose this youngest son would hasten my death" – "bring down my gray hairs to Sheol, to the tomb." No one need question where Jacob's gray hairs would go. They did go to Sheol eventually, but not because of

grief. Jacob's old age was made very happy by the fellowship of his sons, and by the realization that God had highly exalted Joseph to the rulership of Egypt.

### **OUR GOLDEN TEXT LESSON**

Although St. Paul, as we have seen, made a general observation to the effect that whatsoever any man sows, that shall he also reap, nevertheless, he evidently used these words with particular reference to the experiences of the Church. The context makes such an application. The context applies these words directly to the consecrated people of God, assuring them that a consecration to be dead with Christ is not sufficient. On the contrary, God cannot be mocked, cannot be deceived, cannot be trifled with. If God has entered into a covenant with us, nothing else than our agreement will stand.

Then the Apostle recites the agreement which Christians covenant with the Lord. They covenant to sacrifice all earthly interests, aims, hopes, that thereby they may be pleasing and acceptable to God, and become heirs with Jesus of the incorruptible things to be attained on the other side the veil, as spirit beings, as New Creatures in Christ. He says, "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." By this he means that if any Christian who has entered into this covenant with God to become dead to the will of the flesh and alive to the will of God, shall live after the flesh – according to its desires, its promptings, its leadings, its appetites – the end of that man's way will be death – the Second Death, symbolized by the Gehenna fire, which destroyed the offal outside the City of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, if any man sow to the spirit, if he live according to the New Creature, by living in harmony with his covenant of consecration – not merely making a start in the right direction – this would decide the matter in his favor. Some of the best people who have ever lived have made more or less serious

blunders, under the temptations of the flesh. But stumbling into sin would not be living after the flesh – it would merely be a start to so live. The soul, rightly exercised by his sin, by the weakness, may recover itself, and come back to the Throne of Heavenly Grace, and in the name of Jesus obtain mercy and find grace to help for further time of need. But if these opportunities and privileges were not used, and if the course of living after the flesh were pursued, the result would be death.

So, on the other hand, to make a start to live a righteous, self-sacrificing life would not be sufficient; and to return to a righteous course, after having been overtaken in a fault and shedding some tears of penitence, would not be sufficient to recover him. But if we live after the Spirit, if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, then we shall gain the eternal life on the spirit plane which God has promised to all the faithful. But this matter of living after the Spirit is a great contract, and one that needs continual watchfulness and prayer, lest we be overtaken in a fault – lest we let these precious things of God's promise slip from us – lest we become overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches – lest our faith become weak and we faint by the way.

We need to have this thought definitely before our minds: While each act and word and thought has its bearing upon the ultimate results in every Christian's life, nevertheless no one thought, no one word, and no one deed carries the deciding weight, either for good or for evil. The more loyal we are, the more faithful we are, the fewer slips we shall make, the more like our Redeemer we shall be, and the brighter will be our reward, for as the Apostle declares, "As star differeth from star in glory, so also is The Resurrection of the Dead."

Those, then, who are of the world may know that every good and every evil act of theirs will have a weight and influence in respect to their trial for life or death under the Messianic Kingdom

arrangements. And every Christian who has entered into a covenant to become dead with Christ that he may also live with Him, to suffer with Christ that he may also reign with Him – all such should know that every word, every thought, every act, has a bearing upon the great results. Hence, as the Apostle says, all such should walk through life circumspectly, wisely, seeking to know and to do the things pleasing to God, and to attain the highest reward.

