

MERCY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

– JUNE 8. – GENESIS 45:1 – 46:7. –

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" – Psalm 133:1.

WHEN Joseph beheld how changed were his brethren, he sympathized with them. When he saw that their hearts went back to their wrong course in his own case, and that they realized the Divine disapproval and were sorry, he pitied them. When he saw their interest in his aged father and their unwillingness to hasten his death by an unkind act or word he was full of pity. He wished, however, that the disclosure of his identity should not be witnessed by the Egyptians. Realizing that his emotions were getting the better of him, he hastily cried out, ordering all the Egyptians to leave the room. Then he made himself known, saying, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

We can well imagine the consternation of the brethren. It had appeared to them that their trials and difficulties were multiplied, and that somehow or other Joseph had been identified with all their troubles. Now, to be in his presence, to hear him speak to them, no longer through an interpreter, but directly in their own language, telling them that he was Joseph, we can imagine how they felt – stunned.

But Joseph, full of true sympathy and pity, hastened to set them at their ease. He did not cruelly threaten them, nor cause them to suffer punishment for their wrong-doing. He did not even chide them for the wrong. Instead, realizing that sin had already brought them a punishment, Joseph consoled them, saying, "Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you, to preserve life...to preserve you a posterity in the

earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

How beautiful the revenge! Joseph heaped upon his brethren unasked forgiveness and expressions of sympathy. Alas, how few Christians under similar circumstances would have been so noble! And yet Christians have much advantage every way over Joseph, in that they have been begotten of the Holy Spirit and have the instructions of the Scriptures. How beautifully Joseph represented in type Christ and His Spirit. How evidently our creeds of the Dark Ages misled us when they taught us to believe that all the Jews, the brethren of Christ, were to be eternally tormented because they had crucified Jesus instead of accepting Him and becoming His disciples!

Now in the better light shining from one page to another of the Bible, God's people are seeing that instead of Messiah's purposing the eternal torture of the Jews, He purposes the contrary – that they shall obtain Divine mercy and forgiveness. This mercy will be extended to them very shortly, after Messiah's Kingdom shall have been established, as St. Paul points out in Romans 11:25-33: "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." The same thought is expressed by the Prophet, saying of Israel, "They shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and shall mourn for Him." (Zechariah 12:10.) Theirs will be a mourning of true sorrow, as they shall realize the grievous wrong committed more than eighteen centuries ago. But instead of their being punished with an eternity of torture, the Lord will be gracious to them, as He declares, "And I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplication." How beautiful, and how much in harmony with our typical lesson of today! Joseph's ten brethren apparently typified Israel, as the Egyptians typified the Gentiles, as Benjamin typified the Great Company, and as Joseph himself typified the Messianic class, the Elect, of whom Jesus is the Head, and the overcoming Church, the members of His Body.

"SPEAK COMFORTABLY TO JERUSALEM"

All along, the Bible record has been consistent with itself and with the Divine character. Our trouble has arisen from giving heed to the creeds of the Dark Ages. The Bible indeed does tell that no one can become a member of Spiritual Israel except by believing in Jesus as the Son of God, and becoming associated with Him in the self-denials and sufferings of this present time, that they may have joint-heirship in the coming Kingdom. Our mistake was in adding to that simple Message, and telling the world, the Jews included, that the fate of all others is eternal torment.

Quite to the contrary, now we see that what Spiritual Israel gains is the Kingdom, and that Natural Israel and the world lose, in the sense of failing to attain that highest glory and blessing. But we see also that God's object in arranging for such a Kingdom is that it may bestow the needed blessings upon Natural Israel and through them ultimately upon all people.

This is the general lesson taught by the full forgiveness of Joseph's brethren. The assurance given them that they merely carried out the Divine Program corresponds well with the message that shall ultimately come to the Jews; viz., that their crucifixion of Messiah was merely a carrying out of the Divine Purpose, through which the blessing of God is made available to all the families of the earth. To this agree the words of St. Peter at Pentecost. Addressing some of the repentant Jews he explained this matter fully, saying, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." (Acts 3:17.) St. Paul says, "For if they had known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." – I Cor. 2:8.

God's attitude toward the Jews, Joseph's brethren in antitype, is clearly presented in the prophecy of Isaiah. (40:1,2.) That prophecy is especially located at the end of this Gospel Age. We believe that it is the message due to the Jews at the present time. It says not one word about their eternal torture, but on the contrary, it is in full

agreement with St. Paul's statement that with the end of this Age God's favor will return to the Jews, and they shall obtain mercy through Spiritual Israel – the Messianic Body, of which Jesus is the Head. We read, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. **[R5235 : page 141]** Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double [the second portion] for all her sins."

Israel has indeed been obliged to drink the cup of ignominy and shame and sorrow, during the nearly nineteen centuries since she sold her Redeemer to the Romans, to be put to death. Sorry we are that so much of this affliction has come to her at the hands of those who mistakenly have professed to be the followers of Jesus! Sorry we are that the Jews have thus had so much reason for failing to understand the Spirit of Christ! They can understand this only by remembering that as there are true Jews and false Jews, so likewise there are true Christians and false Christians. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

JOSEPH WAS LONG MISUNDERSTOOD

Joseph's brethren failed to understand him – so great was the difference between their characters and his. Even after they had become more sympathetic and tenderhearted, they had still a sufficiency of bitterness of spirit and of animosity that, if they had been in Joseph's place, they would have seen to it that somehow or other future punishments would have been meted out. They were, therefore, surprised by Joseph's words of brotherly kindness and sympathy, and unable to believe that he meant it all. They concluded that he was dealing graciously with them for his father Jacob's sake.

So we find that years afterwards, when Jacob died, these ten brethren were in great trepidation lest Joseph should then wreak his vengeance upon them. They went to him again, asking for a continuance of his forgiveness. But Joseph said unto them, "Fear

not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." – Genesis 50:19-21.

JOSEPH WAS TAUGHT OF GOD

However he learned the lesson, it is most manifest that Joseph was taught of God. Vengeance against his brethren he had none. Whatever punishment would come to them for their sin would be not his to inflict, but God's. And that punishment they evidently did receive in the mental torture, fears and forebodings of many years. Joseph had nothing to do with regulating the Divine arrangements whereby Justice always metes out punishment for every wrong. It was his to be generous, loving, kind, an exemplification of the great Redeemer and His Messianic Kingdom.

It was the same in respect to his own experiences. We note with astonishment that a man with so few opportunities had such a comprehensive grasp of the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ. We who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, and who have the example of the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the history of all past ages, may still sit at Joseph's feet, and be amazed to perceive how thoroughly he learned of God, and may apply similar lessons to ourselves. Never a murmur, never a word of repining, against the bitter lot that had been his! In every word, in everything, he testifies to God's Goodness, Wisdom, Love and Power. He realized that to have made a single change or alteration in the experiences that had come to him would have been to do injury to the Plan as a whole, and he would have failed to learn some of the lessons of life which he needed.

Oh, how much all the followers of Jesus need to look unto the Lord in respect to all their trying experiences! How much we all need to have and to exercise faith in God – that he knows, He sees

and He is able and willing to make all things work together for good to us, because we love Him, because we have been called according to His Purpose, because we are seeking to make that calling and that election sure by the development of a character which will make us "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and for joint-heirship with our Redeemer!

JACOB IN EGYPT

Joseph planned that for the five remaining years of the famine, at least, his father Jacob and indeed the entire family should come into Egypt. He thought of the district styled Goshen as very suitable for their purposes, being a cattle-grazing locality. Pharaoh, heartily in accord with Joseph, his prime minister, and pleased with the prosperity of affairs under his management, gave full consent, and suggested that Egyptian wagons be sent to fetch the old man Jacob and the women and children, not so able to ride upon the asses, camels, etc. Joseph prepared delicacies for the journey and little presents, indicative of his love. He sent a special message to his father, "Tell my father of my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste to bring down my father hither." Then he kissed them all goodbye, saying:

"FALL NOT OUT BY THE WAY"

Evidently Joseph was a keen observer of human nature. Many would have thought it unnecessary to caution the brethren against disputes under all the circumstances. Many would have said, "They will be so overjoyed with the blessings of God in the outcome of their experiences that love will prevail amongst them, and no disputes." The contrary, however, is often true. When prosperity comes, there are opportunities to quarrel over the spoils, to feel more or less of envy and selfishness.

Under former conditions, the brethren would have felt jealous of Benjamin, because of the greater attention which he received

from Joseph and because of the present of three hundred pieces of silver given to him. They might have queried as to how much liberty they would have in the land of Goshen. The suggestion might have come to some that they would then be under the thumb of Joseph, and that he would favor Benjamin, etc. Evidently Joseph's warning, "Fall not out by the way," was timely.

We have known matters to go similarly with the Lord's brethren. When in tribulation, their hearts were crying to the Lord, but in prosperity they were disposed to grudge one against another, and to be envious and jealous of each other's opportunities, blessings and privileges. What a great mistake! Each should remember that the Master's eye is noting his progress in Christlikeness. Each should remember that brotherly love is one of the tests of character.

It is all the more true because sometimes brethren in Christ can make more trouble for us than any others. The very closeness of our relationship, the very knowledge of each other, give to each of us opportunities for criticism and evil surmisings that might not arise as respects others. Well it is that all of God's people should accept Joseph's words, "See that ye fall not out one with another by the way." It is the way planned for us by the Lord. It is a narrow and difficult way, full of adversities to the flesh, and trials and tests to the spirit. Proportionately, there should be love and sympathy, co-operation and helpfulness. The words of the Psalmist used as our Golden Text in this lesson, were evidently prophetically written as respects the Church, the Lord's brethren: **[R5235 : page 142]** "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The Psalmist proceeds to compare this unity of the brethren, the Church, with the precious ointment poured upon the head of the king and of the high priest on their induction into office. The significance of the illustration evidently is that the anointing oil typified the Holy Spirit, and that as it ran down the high priest's beard, and even to the

skirts of his garment, it anointed the entire body of the priest. That priest typifies Melchizedek, the Royal Priest – Jesus the Head, and the Church His Body. Throughout this Gospel Age the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which came to the Church, the Body of Christ, at Pentecost, has continued, and gives an unction, or anointing, to all of His true members. And by this anointing these members may be recognized as one with Christ, "For by one Spirit ye were all anointed into one Body." – I Corinthians 12:13.

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