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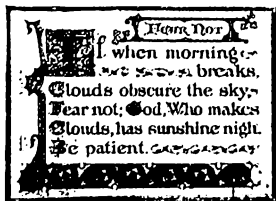
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JOSEPH.

A TYPE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER III.

REVEALED AND REVERED.

THE closing verses of Genesis, chapter 44, record a most pathetic pleading on the part of Judah concerning Benjamin. Twice in this memorable address Joseph is assumed to be dead (v.v. 20 and 28). This fact is particularly interesting in view of the never-to-be-forgotten revelation of himself which Joseph was about to make to his brethren.

It ought not to be difficult for us to imagine how Joseph's soul was stirred to its depths as he heard passage after passage relative to the grief of his aged father when he (Jacob) so reluctantly relinquished Benjamin (v. 29), and the serious state of things which would inevitably transpire if his sons returned to Canaan without the lad (see v.v. 31 and 34).

This brings us to the commencement of one of the most extraordinary chapters in the Bible (Gen. 45), which is so wonderfully worded that as one reads the chapter carefully and thoughtfully, the entire scene is re-enacted before one's mind.

The opening sentence has a peculiar interest:—"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him." These words imply that

for a long time Joseph had been anxious to divulge his identity, though he understood perfectly that all which had previously happened was but a necessary preliminary to this great event which might aptly be termed a "climax" in his eventful life.

The closing words of the verse are as interesting as the opening sentence: **"And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren."** In other words, it was a **private revelation**. Every Egyptian, everybody unrelated to Joseph, was **outside**. **NO MAN STOOD WITH HIM**. No wonder he wept aloud. It was indeed a critical period. Not a sound could be heard apart from the sobs of Joseph. His brethren were in a state of agitated suspense, wondering what it all meant.

At last the silence was broken. Joseph was the first to speak, and his opening words were, **"I AM JOSEPH."** This startling statement took his brethren altogether by surprise. They were completely nonplussed, and quite unable to answer him—"they were troubled at his presence."

When Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, the blasphemer, the great hater of the early Christians, was nigh to the city of Damascus, he was suddenly arrested by divine interposition, and as he lay on the ground, helpless and astonished, he heard the words from heaven **"I AM JESUS."** It was a wonderful revelation—a revelation which completely revolutionised his life and conduct.

When the Lord Jesus revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene (John 20), it was a **private revelation**. The world was outside; not a single stranger was present. **There stood no man with Him while He made Himself known unto that lonely soul, whose**

love to Him was so real that she would fain have kept Him down here indefinitely.

Again, when He revealed Himself to the two disconsolate disciples "as they walked, and went into the country," that revelation was quite **personal and private**. As they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further, but, happily, they constrained Him to abide with them. As they partook of the evening meal together, suddenly their eyes were opened, **and they knew Him**. But no stranger was present. Shut in with the Lord Himself, secluded from the outside world, **there stood no man with Him as He made Himself known unto Cleopas and his fellow-disciple**.

Yet once more, when the Lord revealed Himself to the eleven "as they sat at meat" in that historical upper room, when He so graciously uttered the words "Peace be unto you," and gladdened their sorrowing hearts, no stranger was there—only His loved ones were present—**there stood no man with Him while He made Himself known unto those unbelieving disciples**.

My reader may wonder why the last sentence has been emphasised so persistently. The reason is because of its unique importance in its present application to ourselves. Just as the Lord made Himself known to those early disciples, so He desires to reveal Himself in an increasing measure to us. This is, however, an **individual matter**, and is dependent upon our implicit obedience to His will (see John 14. 21). There was a time in our life when it pleased God to reveal His Son in us, and the Lord Jesus is still willing and waiting to manifest Himself to us increasingly as He does not and cannot unto the world (John 14. 22),

To return to Joseph. As his brethren stood in his presence, confused and terrified, Joseph said unto them "Come near unto me, I pray you." What astounding grace! **They** had made merchandise of him by selling him for a slave, and now, instead of manifesting any ill-will, **he** insists that they shall come close to him in order to prove the reality of his welcome, and the greatness of his love.

Surely this was one of the greatest desires the Lord Jesus had when He brought us to Himself. He wanted us to be **near unto Him**, as the Apostle puts it so beautifully in that wonderful chapter of contrasts, Ephesians 2:—"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off **are made nigh** by the blood of Christ" (v. 13).

When Joseph's brethren accepted the invitation and came near unto him, they heard for the second time the words "I AM JOSEPH," though on this occasion certain words of significance were added: "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." This was the only reference Joseph made to the past, **and this was merely for the purpose of identification.** So far as Joseph was concerned the past was forgiven, freely and willingly, and he actually followed up that statement by telling them not to be angry with themselves that they had sold him, thus, because God's gracious hand had been directing and overruling everything for their permanent blessing.

When we first trusted in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, what was said regarding our past? **Nothing.** It was all forgiven **and forgotten.** When the prodigal son returned from his wanderings in the far country, not a word was said as to his previous behaviour. The moment he confessed his sinfulness and unwor-

thiness, he was forgiven. So with ourselves. We were received with opened arms by the very One against Whom we had so grievously sinned; the whole of our previous life was **banished from His memory**; and we were constituted a NEW CREATION in Christ Jesus.

Not only did Joseph enjoin his brethren not to be grieved because they had sold him, but he also conveyed to them the remarkable information that God had sent him before them to **preserve life**. In other words, **their rejection of Joseph meant their salvation**.

One great reason why the Lord came from heaven was that we might have LIFE, and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10. 10). All believers have **life** through faith in Him, but not all believers have **life more abundantly**. It is possible for us to evidence this more abundant life. If we are seeking those things which are above; if we know the power of His resurrection in our daily experience; if our lives are radiating that tenderness, gentleness, lowliness, and forgiveness which were seen so perfectly in Him; if we are Christ-centred rather than self-centred—all these spiritual activities are evidences that we possess that **more abundant life** which He came to impart.

The fact that Joseph was "sent before" his brethren is mentioned again in verse 7, only this latter passage states a further reason, viz., **to save their lives by a great deliverance**. And what an extraordinary deliverance it was! The famine had already been in the land two years, and there were still five, long trying years to go. Yet, notwithstanding the dreadful conditions which existed dur-

ing that terrible period, Joseph's brethren were marvellously preserved through the instrumentality of their once despised, but now exalted brother.

But **ours** has been a more extraordinary deliverance still. No emancipation has ever exceeded in greatness or grandeur that wherewith Christ hath set us free. He has rescued us from an eternity of despair; He has delivered us from our sins; from ourselves, from our enemies, from the powers of darkness; from this present evil age; and, I trust, from **modernism** and the various fanciful religious extravagances which beset us on every hand.

Joseph then commissioned his brethren to return to their father with this amazing message:—"Thus saith thy son Joseph. God hath made me lord over all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not." This was followed by the promise that his brethren and their father should dwell in the land of Goshen (where there would be ample pasture for their flocks) in order that they might be near unto him, and that there he would nourish them, lest they should come to poverty. Then came a repetition of the message to their father Jacob concerning his exalted position in Egypt:—"And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen."

We have already noticed that one of the first sentences Joseph uttered in the presence of his brethren was "Come near unto me." He now selects Goshen as their future home because he desired that that **nearness to himself** might be continued.

In like manner the Lord Jesus desires us to be in constant touch with Himself—to be "near unto Him" every day and all the day. So shall we reflect His likeness in our very countenance, just as

Moses reflected the glory of God when He came forth from the divine presence.

But let us observe very particularly how careful Joseph was to enjoin his brethren to tell their father everything about HIMSELF—all that their own eyes had witnessed—his exaltation, his glory, his authority, and his honour. They were not to speak of themselves—they were to speak of Joseph. He was to be the sum and substance of their conversation.

It is quite clear that we can, and should, unburden our desires before God, and plead for those things of which we have need. It is also true that we can, and should, express our thankfulness for all that He does for us and gives to us. But what can we say to Him concerning **ourselves**, i.e., our faithfulness, or goodness, or consistency of life? NOTHING. On the other hand, what can we say to Him concerning Christ, i.e., His faithfulness, His goodness, and His unchangeableness? EVERYTHING. There is nothing that rejoices God's heart more than when we, His redeemed ones, remind Him of the glories and worthiness of His beloved Son, and express our thanks accordingly. **This is real worship**, reminding us, as it does, of Paul's spontaneous outburst of praise when He said **"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"** (2 Cor. 9. 15).

By this time Joseph's emotions had reached high-water mark. He fell on Benjamin's neck, and kissed him, while Benjamin fell on his neck and reciprocated that love which meant infinitely more than words could express. Thus we see Joseph and his youngest brother locked in the embrace of real

and abiding brotherly affection. Following this we read that Joseph kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them, "and after that his brethren talked with him."

At last the time arrived for the return journey to Canaan, and what a journey it was! Joseph's brethren were simply laden with provisions for the way, whilst for Jacob were sent ten asses packed with the good things of Egypt, and ten others loaded with corn, besides bread and meat, **and all this in the midst of a period of grievous famine.**

But there was something which these men took back to Canaan which was infinitely more important than the provisions, viz., **the news concerning Joseph.** Their first words to Jacob were: "JOSEPH IS YET ALIVE, AND IS GOVERNOR OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT." Little wonder that the old man was on the point of collapse. The message seemed too good to be true. But when he saw the wagons piled up with the good things of Egypt, his spirit revived, and he said, **"It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."**

What a tremendous inspiration this wonderful picture brings to us. When things go wrong from a human point of view; when we are stricken down with sickness; when we pass through a time of bereavement; when we are sorely tempted; when we are right down in the valley as far as we can get; when we think that everything is contrary to us, let us remember that **JESUS IS YET ALIVE; AND IS GOVERNOR.** All authority has been granted unto Him in heaven and on earth, and He has pledged Himself **to be with us** every day, every hour, every second.

By this time the famine in and around Egypt had reached an acuteness which can best be understood by the following graphic description:—"And there was no bread in all the land, for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt, and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine." Consequently the people came to Joseph with all the money they possessed to buy bread, so that all the money in the land found its way into the hands of Joseph. But those supplies only lasted a comparatively short period, and the people, in their extremity, came back, saying, "Give us bread; for why should we die in thy presence? For the money faileth."

Joseph suggested that they should give their cattle; and accordingly the people brought their horses, their flocks, and their herds, and Joseph gave them bread for that year.

And now came the climax. At the end of the year the people were in such a plight that they returned once more, saying, "There is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our land **buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh.**" Thus the land and the people became the property of the king, according to Joseph's royal proclamation, "Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh; lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land" (Gen. 47. 13—23).

Notice the order: first their money; then their cattle; then their land **and themselves**. This was the price which the people paid for bread during those terrible days of famine. Only thus could they sow the land—only thus could they be sustained.

We might well ask—What does the Lord Jesus demand of us now that we are His? There can only be one answer. **He claims all we have and are—**our possessions, our time, our money, and **OURSELVES.** If we live for the gratification of our own personal interests, our lives will be lived in vain. If we live “unto Him who died for us, and rose again,” our lives will be literally packed with joy and blessing and usefulness.

There is a tremendous principle underlying the words “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 10. 39). To **find** my life in the sense in which the Lord Jesus uses the expression, means to place **myself** first; and thus be carnally minded. It conveys the idea of loving and living for this present world, so that at the end of the course I shall find myself defeated rather than victorious; barren rather than fruitful; and finally failing to secure that reward which would otherwise have been mine. Therefore to **find** my life is to **lose** it.

Contrariwise, to **lose** my life for Christ’s sake means to place Him first, and thus be spiritually minded. It conveys the idea of living for **ETERNITY**, so that at the end of the journey I shall be victorious, and finally experience **an abundant entrance** into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore to **lose** my life **FOR HIS SAKE** is to find it.

There is only space for one final reference to Joseph. His father, Jacob, had passed away, and his brethren, remembering their former attitude toward their brother, said one to another, “Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will requite us all the evil which we did unto him.”

How little they understood their brother. After shewing his brethren all the kindness and long-suffering grace of his large heart since their first never-to-be-forgotten visit to Egypt, he will not turn against them now by handling them severely.

However, his brethren, still unable to understand the depth of their brother's love, despatch to him an urgent message imploring his forgiveness, after which they themselves approach him, and FOR THE FIFTH TIME "fell down before his face." Joseph's answer was characteristic of the whole of his beautiful life. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good . . . now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Gen. 50. 20 and 21). Had his heart changed towards them? Had his love abated? Was he the sort of man to take advantage of his father's death in order to effect a terrible retribution for past cruelty? Nay! His love was as great as ever, and he reminded them yet once more of the overruling hand of an all-wise God in bringing abiding good out of misguided evil. Joseph further manifested the kindness of his heart in that he promised to nourish them continually, whilst there is something exceedingly beautiful in the fact that he both **comforted** them, and **spoke kindly** unto them.

All this forms one of the most charming pictures of the Lord Jesus that could possibly be imagined. Many years have passed over the heads of not a few of us since we first knew Him. Has His interest in us abated? Has His love grown less? No. **Is He still the same?** Yes. "THE SAME, YESTER-DAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER."

Thus we see Joseph REVEALED AND REVERED—truly an honoured servant of God, and one of the most perfect types of the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere to be found within the compass of divine revelation.

ERNEST BARKER.

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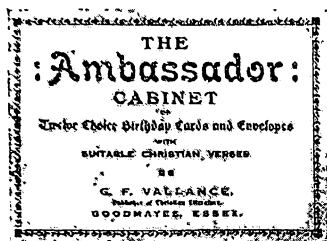
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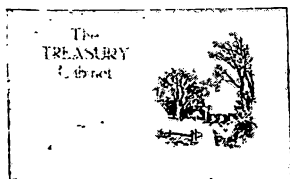
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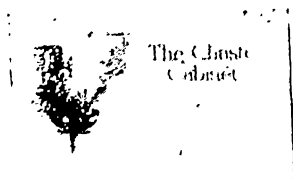


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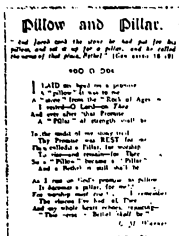
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