

**The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter**  
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**Editorial**

**God Never Lets Us Down**

Greetings to you all.

Life is often full of disappointments, so many times we feel let down. There are times we are let down by people, sometimes even our friends and family.

This hurts very much and can cause us to feel lost, sad and alone. That feeling of total disappointment, and it goes round and round in our minds.

We feel that the person we had trust in, who we believed loved us enough to be there to honour the relationship; be true to their word; has really not shown this by the let-down, by the lack of thought and therefore, as we feel it, the lack of love.

As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:7; Love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and God is love, who will do exactly what He says He will do.” If we know this love, we can indeed rise above bitterness regarding the failings of others. We do, because God is kindly towards us in our own failings – ‘Forgive me my trespass and I would forgive those who trespass against me’ - is indeed a reflection of that very attitude that we can forgive others, who, like us, are not perfect, when they let us down.

Our Father in Heaven will watch over us, and will always keep His word, He is faithful and righteous, never to slip, as we often do.

For He has not spurned or disdained  
the misery of this poor wretch,  
Did not turn away [hide His face] from me,  
but heard me when I cried out. (Psalm 22:25)

The valiant one whose steps are guided by the Lord,  
who will delight in His way,  
May stumble, but he will never fall,  
for the Lord holds his hand. (Psalm 37:23-24)

We must always do our best to be trustworthy, not only to God, but to our fellows, all of them!!; keeping our word is not optional, it is set in stone!!!

“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:16-19)

The lord knows our frailty, knows the faults in our character (we all have some), yet will work with us, to hold our hand, if we but ask

Finally, we must know that we are weak in our flesh/human nature, yet God is above all of that, and will always be trustworthy.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.(Psalm 118:8)

Love to you all, Julian.

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### **A Hymn to God, The Father.**

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,  
Which was my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,  
And do run still, though still I do deplore?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won  
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?  
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun  
A year or two, but wallowed in, a score?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun  
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;  
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;  
And, having done that, thou hast done;  
I fear no more.

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### **Isaiah 55:1 to 5.**

“1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.”

## **Comments on a letter from a Christadelphian**

Having been shown a letter from a Christadelphian, Brother Ernest Brady made the following observations :-

The Christadelphian quotes Jesus' question to the scribes: "Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'thy sins he forgiven thee' or to say, 'Arise and take up thy bed and walk.'" And the Christadelphian comments: "I have always previously thought that this passage meant that sickness and disease was the direct result of sin at the beginning. What do you think?"

I don't know what Brother Pearce answered, but when I wrote I said I thought these words of Jesus were intended, like many others of His questions, both to reveal and conceal; to make things plain to those who were willing to see, and to make them difficult for those who were wilfully blind. The power of healing which Jesus used was not an end in itself, otherwise He would have made it His main purpose to find and heal the sick wherever they were. It was a sign, evidence of His authority and origin, and He used it for that purpose. His power to heal was proof of His authority to forgive sins. Thus, when He was faced by hostile scribes it was immaterial whether He said, "Thy sins be forgiven," or "Arise and walk." The words and the result of the one were no more difficult than of the other - but the effect of the healing was evident, whereas no one can see when a man's sins are forgiven. On another occasion they asked Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They also thought that sin was always the cause of disease. Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

I think that the chapter from which this passage comes (John 9) contains some of the very few instances in Scripture where there is an element of humour - the encounter between the man whose sight had been restored and the Pharisees. They knew that Jesus had healed the man, but they dare not face the meaning of it. They tried to find a loophole by questioning his parents, but they were wary - "He is of age - ask him." Then they tried to overawe the man himself, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." (Does this attitude of the Pharisees remind you of anyone?). But the little man had a stout heart, and was not to be terrified by their pomposity, and used his common-sense. "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." After some further questioning and illogical reasoning they got sick of the whole thing and concluded, "As for this fellow we know not whence he is." But the little man had not yet finished - another dash of cold common-sense. "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.. With these and a few other biting cracks, which make as entertaining a bit of reading as there can be anywhere in literature, he showed that his mental eyes were as wide open as his literal eyes, and utterly exposed the foolish self-importance and arrogance of the Pharisees. Their last word put the finishing touch to their own defeat. "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

Their descendants are with us today. In spite of what Jesus says they still tell us that we are altogether born in sins. And when they cannot stand up to logical reasoning and the evidence of common sense, they follow the example of the Pharisees - and cast us out. Here is one of the gems of that chapter which is worth recalling again; "now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." This is good enough proof for the poor blind, man that Jesus was not a sinner, and I vote Brothers and Sisters, that is good enough for us.

With Sincere and Affectionate Greetings, Your Brother, Ernest Brady.

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### **He That Hath Received His Testimony Hath Set To His Seal That God Is True**

**John 3:33.**

When we study the word of God with minds eager for light and truth we oftentimes come upon some treasure which had evaded us before. I found this to be so when reading the words of the Master Teacher in John 4:32. The disciples had requested Him to eat and Jesus replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . ."

. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” We might ask, “When did God's work begin, and what stage of that work was Jesus referring to?” It could not be the time when He will have subdued the nations and given up the Kingdom to His Father, Jesus knew this, and retrospectively we know it, but the twelve disciples did not. Yet those disciples were immediately concerned with the Father's work which Jesus makes clear, in John 17, in declaring that He had given them the word of the true God and manifested His Name unto them and glorified it.

This was the work Jesus spoke of and which He had finished; yes, the Father's work from the beginning and up to that time; but there remained yet another work, that of Jesus Himself - to drink the cup God had given Him, without compulsion to drink it. It was not God's work to drink of this cup. He was not of human nature whereby life-blood could be shed as the equivalent for the life lost by Adamic sin, therefore this was the work of Jesus alone, for as He said before His crucifixion, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” On the strength of such a statement by Jesus Himself can it even be suggested or accepted that a compulsory death on the Cross of Calvary was incorporated as a condition of righteousness, with failure to comply making Jesus a sinner? Could Jesus have made such a statement with such apparent injustice in mind? Could Jesus glorify and rightly declare the Name of the Father, the attributes of which were declared to Moses? How indeed could He be able to manifest such a Name to those who believed in Justice, Mercy and Truth, but above all, Love? Yet this is the work His Father had given Him to do and of which He said He had finished.

Now this does not mean that the redemption of mankind was not the work of God. It most definitely was, and the bringing into the world of His only begotten Son was an important part of that work, and if we cannot grasp the reason for the virgin-birth we will never grasp the true reason for the redemption obtained by Christ's sacrificial death, for without the virgin-birth there could be no sacrificial death.

Thus, Jesus having maintained His integrity as the Son of God and having glorified and manifested His Father's Name and finished that particular assignment, as a co-worker with Him, as He willingly allowed Himself to be lifted up and crucified, with His last breath He could cry out concerning His own work in the vineyard of witness and suffering, “It is finished.”

I have spoken of two stages, but a third stage is still in progress which is found in Isaiah 53:10, “He shall see of his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” (See also Romans 5:18).

Continuing Isaiah 53, verse 12, the prophet says and implies that though numbered with transgressors He was not a transgressor but made intercession for those who were, in the fact of causing His death by false accusation and through envy and ignorance. They killed the Prince of Life. This was His status by birth, but this status alone could not impart Life to others, but as Prince of Life He could say, “I am come that ye might have life and have it more abundantly.”

He was free from Adamic alienation and bondage to “Sin” personified as a Master, having been begotten under the constitution of Righteousness, therefore free to give the equivalent natural life lost by Adam's disobedience, and yet retain His birthright as Son of God and Heir Apparent. The difficulty people have in understanding this is found in not following the words of the Great Preacher in John 4:35, where, if you would read to verse 38, He speaks of other men who have laboured and the disciples having entered into their labours. The obvious teaching of Jesus for the disciples and all who entered and laboured in God's vineyard was to be sure about the men whose labours you were entering into. Who, then, were these men who had laboured and to whom Jesus gave God's seal of approval? Peter gives the answer in Acts 10:42,43, “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” That which the prophets had witnessed to was heard and believed by both Jew and Gentile while the degree of their faith and understanding was qualified and accepted by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the speaking with tongues and the glorifying of God being signs to the believing Jews of the circumcision that the Gentiles were also accepted under the new covenant in the blood of Christ. “To him give all the prophets witness.” “To him give all the Apostles witness.” For they entered into the labours of these other men of whom the writer to the Hebrews (Chapter 11) speaks in commendable words saying, in verse 32, that the time would fail him to tell of Gideon, of Barak, Samson, Jephtha; of David also, and Samuel, and of the

prophets. “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure.”

Jesus tells us through His disciples (John 4) that the field as far as we are concerned is already ripe for harvest, “And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true. One soweth and another reapeth.” The Apostle Paul takes up this very theme and enlightens us on the meaning of the words of Jesus, “And he that reapeth receiveth wages.” Here Paul speaks of a reward irrespective of eternal life, for this latter is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, and not something earned as wages. So, in 1 Corinthians 3:5, he exhorts those who had preference of one Apostle from another saying, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollus, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollus watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planted anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: i.e. the Apostles (See Ephesians 2:20) “Ye are God's husbandry (tillage), ye are God's building.”

Paul continues a declaration of fact and also a very grave warning, “I have laid the foundation (Jesus Christ) and another buildeth thereon, but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon - for every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”

The writer to the Hebrews commences his discourse with a reference to the wise Master Builder whose plan and foundation was incorporated by His Spirit Word in the prophets and in His Son the chief cornerstone. “God who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” Hebrews 1:1. God spoke to the prophets, not to us. God spoke to His Son, not to us. His Son spoke to the Apostles, not to us. The Apostles entered into the labours of the prophets and Jesus, and we have the written words of God through them all.

Our belief and faith must be based on God's words through them, and we cannot say, We are of this man's doctrine, or that man's doctrine; far too many professions of holding the Truth of God have been made and forced upon people through misunderstanding, misinterpretation and direction to out of context Bible references and no concrete proof of the truth professed, and no sound basis of truth – merely quicksand. Let us then beware that the other men who have laboured, built on the true foundation (Jesus Christ), otherwise entering into their labours will be of little use to us if it does not abide the fire. We can only test it by the written Spirit Word of God as workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, for if we make the mistake of following men who have confused the physical with the legal, we fall into the ditch with them.

“I am the light of the world”, says Jesus, “follow me, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

May the Lord bless you all and direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ, and to know that our labours will not be in vain in the Lord.

Brother Phil Parry.

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## **Words of Encouragement**

“O my brother, lose not thy confidence of making progress in godliness; there is yet time, the hour is not yet past. Why wilt thou put off thy good purpose from day to day?”

Arise and begin at this very instant, and say: Now is the time to be doing, now is the time to be striving, now is the fit time to amend thyself, the accepted time, the day of salvation.” (Romans 13:11-13).

When thou art ill at ease with thyself and much troubled, then is the hour of victory. Thou must pass through fire and water (Psalm 46:12) before thou come to the place of refreshing.

Unless thou dost earnestly exert thyself, thou shall never get the victory over sin.”

So long as we carry about with us this frail body of ours, we can never be without sin, or live without weariness and pain.

We would gladly be quiet and freed from all misery, but seeing that by sin we have lost our innocency, we have with that also lost true happiness (Romans 7:24). Therefore it becomes us to have patience, and to wait for the mercy of God, until this iniquity pass away and “mortality he swallowed up of life” (2 Corinthians 5:4).

O how great is human frailty, which is always prone to evil. To-day thou confessest thy sins, and tomorrow thou committest the very same thou hast confessed.

Now thou art resolved to “take heed unto thy ways” (Psalm 29:1), and after a while thou so behavest thyself as though thou hadst never any such purpose at all.

Good cause have we therefore to humble ourselves (2 Maccabees 9:11), and never to have any great opinion of ourselves: since we are so weak and so inconstant. Besides, that may be quickly lost by our own negligence, which, by the Grace of God, with much labour we have scarcely attained.

Thomas A’Kempis.

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## **Crucified Through Weakness**

### **2 Corinthians 13:4**

**“For though he (Jesus) was crucified through weakness,  
yet he liveth by the power of God”**

As we have previously mentioned, persons with the preconceived idea and in accordance with the Church of England 9<sup>th</sup> Article, think this verse proves that Jesus was weak, sinful flesh, and only fit for crucifying and destruction.

There is nothing here to prove that it was Jesus' flesh that was weak. We will admit for the sake of those who think so, that we may examine it more than just surface reading. We shall find that according to context and other scriptures (plain to babes) that the very opposite is the case and directly opposite to the false teaching.

Only twice have I seen this passage used to prove the idea (of what it does not say) that Jesus' flesh was weak. The first place is in “The Slain Lamb,” page 6; the second is by A.T.Abbotts, in a Review of this book

We made the following remarks:-

“Crucified through weakness ” - In concluding this paragraph Robert Roberts says that Jesus was made in all things like to His brethren, of Adam’s fallen stock, and finally crucified through weakness (2 Corinthians 13:4).

This, of course, on the assumption that the fall was a physical one though he, Robert Roberts, had previously contended in his own writings that the change was a Moral one – one of Relationship.

Jesus did not bring any sorrow, etc., upon Himself - it was by wicked men; His crying was not for Himself - but for others. What was the weakness through which He was crucified? He was crucified through OUR weakness; it was all for US, as Isaiah 53 proves and not for Himself. He was made strong for us (Psalm 80:15-17). He was the “ARM of the Lord”, extended through love (John 3:16); He, in love to God and us, willingly laid down His life for Adam and all in him as the price paid for our redemption, so that our release from sin may be accomplished.

We now make a few additions to this extract for the sake of others. No other person but Jesus could pay the price to Sin. Why? Because there was not any sinful flesh about? How was Jesus rich and became poor,



that we poor ones might be made rich? While we were without strength (weak) in due time Christ died for the ungodly

We read, “because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men... God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, strong.”

Paul says, “We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ, we are weak, but ye are strong;” (1 Corinthians 4:10) and “To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak (1 Corinthians 9:22) and from 2 Corinthians 12:9, and God “said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Ever since the Crucifixion it has been a stumbling block, and to professing Christians at that. The people at the cross said He saved others, if He is the Son of God let Him come down from the cross.

This would have been to their liking. When He did not do so as they wished, to them it was “proof” that He was not the Son of God.

What people, Jew and Gentile, think is weakness and foolishness is the power and strength of God. Christ said, “I lay down my life of myself. No man taketh it from Me.” He made Himself of no reputation, and took on the form of a servant, and made in the likeness of men, being found in fashion as a man. He humbled Himself and became obedient, unto death, even the death of the cross.

Is this humility “weakness”? Faith overcometh the world. It is recorded of Jesus that He set His face like a flint. The Joy that was set before Him, not only knowing of the Glory and Honour, but the tasting of death for all so as to bring many sons to Glory.

All this points to His strong, firm, and determined purpose to do the will of God.

Brother F.J.Pearce

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## **The Book of Psalms**

Loving Greetings in Jesus Name.’

I think the Book of Psalms is very beautiful reading. Nowhere in the world can we find such beautiful reasoning, admonition, advice, and wonderful comfort as in this portion of the Word of God.

It always seems to me, when reading the Scriptures that so few words cover such a multitude of our troubles and trials. Surely, the writers were inspired, for no man of the world could write like these men.

David was a man much like ourselves; he experienced all kinds or emotions; he had all the troubles and trials that we experience, and felt sometimes almost hopeless - yet he never once lost faith in his God.

No one knew better than David, that “in God he lived, moved, and had his being,” and he never once looked elsewhere. He knew that no matter what condition he was in, or whatever the seemingly hopeless situation was, his God could and would put things right, so long as he believed and put his trust in Him.

We, too, are like David: we have our trials and troubles, sickness, and disappointments. When we are beset by these things let us, too, look to our Heavenly Father, as David did, and have the same solid faith. To Him, to whom we look, and pray, nothing is impossible.

Your Brother in Christ, A Hodges.

## **The Federal Principle**

### **The First Principle of the Oracles of God.**

All are agreed that according to Romans 5 alone, the posterity of Adam are all involved in the Sin of Adam, and in the Death Sentence incurred by him, on account of what is known as the “Federal Principle” being employed by God, but regarding the manner of its application there is a variety of opinions.

The ‘majority’ understand it to be visited upon us through our physical organism which, if such procedure were attempted by mankind, would bring down the righteous anger of every son upon the “Unjust Judge.” Moreover, they would realise in it the dastardly and horrible process of “killing by slow poisoning,” and again, the crown of sufferers would pounce upon the “Unjust Judge” and consider themselves “Justified” in putting Him out of existence as positively unfit to live.

Shall we, then, accept such a horrible story in connection with the procedure of the Just God who “so loved” that He gave His “Own” Beloved Son to save the unfortunate trespasser from his merited punishment, even though He knew that he wilfully transgressed?

Would it not be more consistent with the attributes of a Just God if He, on account of the Federal Principle under which we, the members, are accounted parts of the Federal Body of which Adam is the Federal Head, included us under the sentence of death for Adam’s sin when we became enlightened, and from which we can instantly become extricated by rendering obedience to the appointed form of doctrine for our participation in the redemption therefrom, effected typically in Eden, Antotypically on Calvary? (Genesis 3:21, Revelation 13:8, 1 Peter 1:18, Revelation 5:9.)

This understanding of it excuses the unenlightened, leaving then in the natural sphere; to die as do the beasts (Ecclesiastes 3:19) from physical exhaustion... and is decidedly a more just procedure than the “Slow Poisoning” assumption, is it not?

The reason for God introducing this Federal Principle seems to have been for the exercise of our faith in His promise to provide a Ransom Price (Genesis 22:8) and to incite our love toward Him for His merciful act and wonderful love toward Adam, but for which we had never come into existence at all, because had Adam been slain instead of the Lamb in Eden, we had perished in Adam.

Understanding and applying this Federal Principle in this manner shows plainly why only one random sacrifice was requisite to extricate the One Adam (ie) (body) from the effects of the One Sin committed in Eden, and why “without the shedding of (Christ's) Blood” no remission - and reveals a perfectly Just and gracious God, a loving “Father,” and exonerates Him, also accounting for the One literal participant in the redemption effected thereby, and the many symbolical participations therein, does it not?

Brother A. Wilson

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## **The Personification of Sin**

Those who scoff at the idea of the personification of sin ought to remember that this is the Divine appointment to enable people to perceive more readily the operation of the Federal Principle and to realise the absolute necessity of understanding the system of redemption.

Having become by transgression ‘the servant of sin,’ sold by his own act into bondage, Adam became sin’s possession. No provision for reprieve or remission was made in the Edenic Law and Adam could do nothing to obtain it. Repentance, sorrow, tears, would all be unavailing apart from a merciful intervention from the one whom he had disobeyed.



Having become the lawful possession of another (sin) there was no honourable means by which he could be released from this bondage except by redemption, necessitating that the equivalent price of what he had lost (life) be paid for his freedom.

How could this be done in a way to uphold justice and in harmony with the attributes of the Almighty is a problem none of us could ever have thought of, but it is worked out for us in the coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Of one flesh and nature with all other men, tried and tempted as they have been, subjected to evil and persecution, yet proving by a life of perfection that Adam could have obeyed, and ought to obey, and when we sin and displease God it is because we do not try hard enough - as hard as Jesus did - to do what we know to be right.

When we speak of the ransom effected by Jesus in His death, as the purchase of man back to God by the payment of the exact price forfeited in Eden, some are apt to poke fun at the idea of such a commercial view. Let them get on with it. When they can get away from the principle of purchase and redemption in scripture, and when they can put forward an explanation which meets the facts on any other basis, we will take notice of them. Till then we prefer the teaching of scripture,

Brother Ernest Brady

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## **Young People's Pages**

Hello again everyone! It's Dawn here! I do hope and pray that you are all well, and safe, and that if you are, you are thanking Yahweh for it - because a lot of young people in parts of this world are not safe at all! You may have heard how a lot of them have been killed or injured, in the war between the Israelites and the Palestinians, in other wars, or earthquakes! It's very very sad!

Anyway, to continue with the story of the Israelites, we will pick up where we left off, last time.

Genesis 37:- Jacob was now living in Hebron, in the land of Canaan. This is where Abraham, his Grandfather had once lived, after Yahweh had made promises to him, about the land of Canaan, and he had built an altar here.

Jacobs sons were all growing older. Joseph, one the youngest, was now 17 The only brother who was younger, was Benjamin. All the brothers were shepherds. Joseph though, was Jacobs favourite son, because he and his younger brother Benjamin, were the only two sons of Rachel, Jacobs favourite wife, and because Jacob was quite old now, having a teenage son was special to him! In fact, he loved him so much more than all the others, that he made him a special coat. It looked as though Jacob was making Joseph more important than all his older brothers! And guess what - his brothers didn't like it one bit!

Joseph didn't do much to help things either. He ran and told tales to his Dad, of what the others were doing! "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all of them, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him." (Genesis 37:4). They were jealous!

Have you ever felt jealous of anyone? If so, you will know what a horrible feeling it is!

One night, Joseph had a dream. It was so strange, and vivid, that he couldn't help telling his brothers about it. In the dream, he said, they were all binding sheaves of corn in the field with him, when suddenly his sheaf stood upright, all by itself - and his brothers sheaves all bowed down to his sheaf! The older brothers were furious because they thought it meant that Joseph considered himself so superior to them, that they should bow down to him! And they hated him even more!

But Joseph didn't learn his lesson! He had yet another, similar dream, and instead of keeping his mouth shut, he told his brothers again! He told them "This time, the sun, the moon, (his Step-Mum and Dad) and the eleven stars (his brothers) bowed down to me!" Even his Dad was angry this time, as well, and asked, "Shall your Mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?!?"

Joseph's brothers were even more envious than before - but although Jacob was angry, he wondered what the dreams might really mean. Were these dreams from Yahweh? Was He telling Joseph something? Remember that Jacob himself had had some very strange dreams in the past, that had pointed to something real, Genesis 28:12 and 31:11. And these dreams had been sent by Yahweh. What do YOU think? We shall find out later!

Not long after, Joseph's brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem, (Gen 37:12). One day, Jacob asked Joseph to go and visit them to make sure everything was alright, and then come back with the news. Remember that in those days there were no phones! So Joseph hurried off, and went to the field that he thought they were in - but there was no sign of them! Then he saw a man walking, and asked him if he had seen them. Yes - he had seen them, and had heard them say that they were going to Dothan. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

BUT - even before he got near them, THEY spotted him coming! They quickly hatched a wicked plan - because they had been keeping jealousy and hate in their hearts for too long! Now, it all came out, and all they could think of was killing him! That is the trouble with keeping evil thoughts in our hearts. Very soon they turn into evil actions - and this is what Yahweh doesn't like! "Let's see what becomes of his dreams now!" they scoffed.

Poor Joseph! He wasn't really a bad boy, and he didn't deserve that! It wasn't his fault that his father favoured him! Most of the brothers were in favour of killing him and throwing him into a pit. Then they would tell their father that Joseph must have been attacked and killed by a wild animal. But Reuben the eldest, persuaded them not to kill him - just throw him into a pit and leave him there. Secretly, Reuben planned to come back alone later, and rescue Joseph. So, as soon as Joseph arrived, they grabbed poor Joseph, pulled his lovely coat off, and roughly pushed him into a pit that he couldn't climb out of!

Poor Joseph was crying out, and very upset! But his brothers had no pity. They quite calmly sat down and started eating their lunch - as though nothing had happened! They ignored poor Joseph's cries for help! What a hard hearted bunch!

Just then, the brothers spied a group of Ishmaelites (descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's other son. Remember, he had had two sons - Isaac, the son of Rebekah, and Ishmael, the son of her servant, Hagar) - the Ishmaelites were traders, leading camels loaded with goods, and were on their way to sell them in Egypt.

Judah, had a wicked idea. "Let's get Joseph up out of the pit and sell him to these Ishmaelites! Then we'll be rid of him - and get a bit of money for us too! Reuben had gone off for a bit, and so had no idea what they were planning. So they pulled Joseph up, and asked the Midianites to buy him. They thought he looked young and fit, and would fetch a good price as a slave, in Egypt! So they paid the brothers twenty shekels of silver, and left, with Joseph, and they disappeared into the distance.

Poor Joseph! Just a short time ago, he was the most favoured son in the family. Now he was to be sold as a common slave! Taken against his will, far away to a land he didn't know - far away from his father and family - all alone - except for Yahweh! Only 17! How sad and scared he must have been. But Yahweh was watching everything!

When Reuben came back later, to carry out his plan to get Joseph up out of the pit - he was horrified to find him gone! He was also certain that their father would blame him if anything had happened to Joseph, as he was the eldest, and should have been looking after everyone! So after speaking to the others, they decided that the best thing to do, would be to tear Joseph's lovely coat, and dip it in some goats blood and then tell their father that they had just found it like that, and that Joseph must have been killed by a wild animal! They never once, stopped to think about the effect this would have on their poor old father - thinking that his favourite son whom he loved so much, had been torn to pieces and killed by a wild animal!

So that is what they did. They took the coat home and even pretended that they didn't know whether it was Joseph's coat or not! They asked their father to confirm whether or not it was Joseph's. Of course, Jacob recognised it immediately - and was absolutely filled with grief and horror! "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." Jacob was absolutely inconsolable, and mourned for Joseph many days. All his family tried to comfort him - but he could not be comforted! "I shall go down to my grave mourning for my son" he said. Poor Jacob! His heart was absolutely broken! What a wicked thing Joseph's brothers had done! But Yahweh had been watching all the time!

By now, the Midianites had reached Egypt and had sold Joseph to Potiphar, who was an officer and captain of the guard of Pharaoh - the ruler of Egypt! In those days, people could be bought and sold as slaves - and belong to whoever bought them. Slaves were made to work hard, and they had to do as they were told. Yahweh was with

Joseph (Gen 39:2) and as Joseph worked hard, Yahweh made him successful in everything he did. Very soon, Potiphar could see that Joseph was very good at everything he did, and could be trusted completely. Potiphar decided to make Joseph the Manager of his whole estate, which was a position of great trust. Joseph had also grown into a very handsome young man, (v 6). Things were looking up for Joseph, and life wasn't so bad after all.

Suddenly though, everything changed very quickly! Potiphar's wife had had her eye on Joseph, and wanted him for herself. One day, while Potiphar was away, she tried to tempt Joseph into having an affair with her, while no one was watching! Joseph was horrified! He told her, "Your husband Potiphar has trusted me with everything - but you are not mine to take! You belong to him! I will not do anything like this behind his back! Most importantly, it would also mean sinning against Yahweh!" Potiphar's wife was not used to being rejected! And she considered that a slave should do as he was told! Day after day, she kept trying to tempt Joseph - but Joseph stayed strong, and continued to say No.

Joseph had been brought up by his father and mother to know Yahweh and the kind of behaviour that pleased Him. And Yahweh was pleased that Joseph wanted to be obedient to Him. Yahweh had great things planned for Joseph - as long as he stayed obedient!

One day, when no one else was watching, Potiphar's wife tried to grab Joseph, but he managed to break free, leaving her holding just his jacket. He quickly ran outside, and left her in the house. But unfortunately, Potiphar's wife was not a nice person. She immediately called to some of the workmen employed by Potiphar and told them a lie. She pretended that Joseph had tried to attack her, and that when she had screamed, he had run off, and left his jacket behind! She also told Potiphar the same story, when he came home!

Potiphar believed his wife, especially when he saw Joseph's jacket, and he was very angry! He had Joseph thrown into prison - the prison where all the Kings prisoners were kept. Poor Joseph! Once again, it seemed things had gone wrong for him! Now here he was - a prisoner in Egypt, even though he had done nothing wrong - all alone - no friends or family! But WHO had been watching all the time? That's right - Yahweh! He was with Joseph still - and He blessed him even in the prison, showing Joseph mercy and causing the Keeper of the prison to look on him favourably. Very soon, the prison Keeper was allowing Joseph to take charge of all the other prisoners and whatever they did. He trusted Joseph completely. Everything was now under Joseph's authority! "And Yahweh was with him, and whatever he did, Yahweh made it prosper." (v 23).

Next time, we will hear what happened to Joseph in the prison, and how he was finally released!

You might be thinking to yourselves, How unfair! Why did Yahweh allow Joseph to be treated so badly - twice now - when he was such a well behaved and obedient person?!? But, Yahweh had plans for Joseph - great plans - which we will learn about later. Yahweh was preparing Joseph's character, and making his faith in Him stronger, by testing it. Even things in our lives that we think are bad, painful, and horrible, can be used by Yahweh to prepare us for a much better future - and we must trust that HE knows what He is doing! It's easier to have faith when things are going well! It's when things are not going well that we find out how weak or strong our faith really is!

Firstly we are told that "the eyes of Yahweh are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Proverbs 15:3.

We are also told that "When a man's (anyone's) ways please Yahweh, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7.

We are also told that ".all things work together for good to those who love Yahweh" (Romans 8:28). Notice it says ALL things. This includes things which are unpleasant as well as pleasant. When we allow Yahweh to be in charge of our lives and try to do what pleases Him, we can be sure that whatever happens to us, is being allowed by Him for our good - even if we don't see it straight away. He is always in control - just as he was in the life of Joseph! We can look at the story of Joseph now, and know how everything turned out. But when Joseph was thrown into that pit, sold as a slave, and then later, thrown into prison, he did NOT know what would happen next! That is where he needed to continue having faith in Yahweh - in the bad times. And Yahweh rewarded him for that!

Many other people, put into situations like that, would say things like, "if Yahweh is a God of love, how could He let this happen?" And then they get angry and turn away from Yahweh! This proves that their faith was not real, because it was only there when things were good. This makes Yahweh sad.

So, until next time, Yahweh be with you all, and keep you in His good care!

Your friend, Dawn.