

Beacons of the Bible

Joseph's Brethren

By [Henry Law](#)

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They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Genesis 42:21

Sin is altogether vile. Its mildest look is loathesomness. It always frowns a hideous monster. Its weakest breath is poison. Its feeblest step treads down God's lovely law. But guilt has shades. Iniquity has diversities of stature. In some sins we see the crimson dye--the giant form--the condensation of all evil. They seem the cage, in which all foul birds flutter--the field, in which all weeds rankle. In this class are ranked the violations of nature's ties--transgressions against domestic bonds. Such enormity is full-grown in Cain. His hands are stained with the blood of his mother's son. It frightfully reappears in Joseph's brethren.

Reader! we must not shun this hateful picture. But it is sweetly relieved. A halo of Gospel-light surrounds it. Joseph suffers cruelly. Sin acts its direst part. But at every turn Jesus shines forth. We loathe the evil, while bright foreshadowings of salvation's scheme intermingle holiest delight. In this study faith weeps and joys. The Beacon saddens, while the interwoven Gospel cheers.

The opening story names Joseph as his father's dear delight. "Now Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children." Genesis 37:3. He was the first-born of Rachel--his heart's joy. The birth was late, when hope had almost ceased to hope. Attractive qualities, also, made the youth more dear. The pious love commands all praise. But its display was ill-considered. In fallen nature passions soon lose just balance.

The brothers mark this *partiality*. The sight is wormwood to their suspicious minds. The parent's preference kindles their jealousy. Dry leaves flare when a slight spark falls.

They hate him, also, because their vicious conduct finds no congeniality in him. He shuns their evil and complains.

Instantly the type shows Jesus. The Father's voice from heaven proclaims, "This

is my beloved Son." Matt. 3:17. The Spirit witnesses, "Your holy child Jesus." Acts 4:27. "You love righteousness and hate iniquity." Ps. 45:7.

Reader! it is well to treasure up each indication of our Lord--"the chief of ten thousand, the altogether lovely One." He sparkles throughout Scripture, as stars in the clear skies.

Soon a fond act augments the discontent. The father decks him in a coat of many colors. They err not, who discern a mystic meaning in this robe. Reuben had vilely sinned. The birthright was revoked. Jacob's desire gives it to his Rachel's first-born. The robe--the emblem of the first-born's privilege--seems to announce this. In it the brothers saw the pre-eminence of the younger--Their aversion strengthens. Their tones--their words--betray their spite. "They could not speak peaceably unto him." Genesis 37:4. Behold our High Priest appears in His priestly garb! "In the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man clothed with a garment down to the foot." Rev. 1:13. "All your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Ps. 45:8.

Next, in the visions of the night a marvel is revealed. While reaping with his brothers, his sheaf exalts its head--their sheaves make lowly reverence. He relates this dream. The obvious meaning embitters the previous enmity. They reply, "Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" Genesis 37:8. The waters of bitterness rise higher. Again, we see our blessed Jesus--we hear the adversaries' proud rejection, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Luke 19:14.

Another vision quickly follows. The foreshadowing is the same. The colors are more clear. The sun--the moon--and the eleven stars bow before him. This also he divulges. The breach is widened. The envy maddens.

Soon the evil passions find vent. The brothers remove their flocks to distant pasture. Jacob sends Joseph to bring tidings of their welfare. He is directed to their tents at Dothan. He there hastens. They discern him afar off. They perceive their opportunity. Satan, also, knew his time. He enters mightily into their ready hearts. He suggests. They yield. They plot to slay him. Thus the Jews took counsel to put Jesus to death. They exclaim, "Behold this dreamer comes?" Again the antitype appears, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." Matt. 21:38. They resolve to cast him into some pit. They jeer, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." The counterpart is seen at Calvary. "You that destroy the temple, and build it in three days, save yourself." Matt. 27:40. "If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross." verse 42. "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." verse 49. They plan a murder to defeat the dreams. Their sin promotes fulfillment. The Jews thus purposed Christ's destruction. They murder, and thus verify the types--the prophecies--and the final triumph.

Reuben desires to save him. He resists not openly. He suggests expedient to

deliver. Pilate similarly knew that the Chief Priests had delivered Him for envy, and weakly strove to rescue. They strip Joseph of his coat. So the crude soldiers take Christ's garments. In vain the youth beseeches. Keen is the anguish of his heart. They pitilessly disregard. He implores. They are obdurate, and cast him barbarously into the pit.

Again we hear the voice of Jesus. "You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the deeps." Ps. 88:6. Again we see deliverance. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit." Ps. 40:2. Through the good hand of God the pit is dry. Thus instant death is averted. The heartless brothers sit down to eat and drink. The cruel Jews, in hard unconcern, "sitting down watched him there." Matt. 27:36.

Now merchants appear journeying towards Egypt. Judah reasons, our brother dying in the pit is gainless. His blood, also, will accuse. To sell him is a present profit and less guilt. He will live, and we, unstained by blood, shall be enriched. Consent is ready. The bargain is soon made. Twenty silver coins are paid. Joseph is carried down to Egypt. Who can see Judah's covetous desire, and not discern the traitor Judas!

They, who cared little for the tears of Joseph, next hasten to agonize their father. They dip the coat in blood. They carry it to Jacob. They bid him mark the stains, and to conclude a probable event. How hardening is sin! How downhill is its rapid course! The guilty brothers are more guilty sons. Unmoved at Joseph's misery, they are callous at their parent's woe. They will add patricide to their guilt. They care not to bring down Jacob's aged hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Let the sequel of the youthful exile rapidly be marked. In his afflictions God extends His overruling hand. Jesus, also, shows His ever-present image. Egypt is reached. A sale is readily effected. An officer of the king becomes possessor of the captive. It soon appears that he is rich in heavenly favor. Prosperity, as a shadow, follows his steps. Hence, to trust him is his master's wisdom.

Faith is ever sorely tried. He is solicited to vile iniquity. But Satan pierces not his grace-armed heart. Revengeful criminations follow. Into the dungeon he is cast. Here the blessed Jesus appears "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His pure blamelessness scares not the tempter. Every Satanic art is tried. But still the pure Conqueror is defamed, as a "tax-collector and sinner." "They laid to my charge things that I knew not." Ps. 35:11.

In the prison God deserts not His servant. Blessings can visit dungeons. Mercy can enter, when bolts and bars impede. Among the prisoners there are two of note--servants of the royal household. Each dreams a dream in the same night. Joseph interprets. In accordance, one is hanged, the other is restored to honor in the court. Is not Jesus thus "numbered with transgressors?" Is he not uplifted between two culprits?--one dies in hardened guilt--the other--wondrous trophy of

the Cross--is snatched from perdition, and borne in triumph to the kingdom.

God sends a dream to Pharaoh. He is greatly troubled. The wise men of the land are baffled. They find not the meaning. Joseph's skill is now remembered. He is summoned. He unfolds the mystery of the night vision. He tells of coming plenty, and succeeding famine. He wisely counsels, let stores be gathered, and provision made. Pharaoh perceives his vast endowments. He exclaims, "Can we find such a one as this is--a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" Genesis 41:38. Of Jesus we read, "God gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him." John 3:34.

Joseph is raised to loftiest pre-eminence. The scepter of the realm is in his hands. The king makes him "Lord over all his house, and ruler over all his substance." Ps. 105:21. He sits in the highest seat. All knees must bow before him. Thus Jesus passes from the prison and the grave to the right hand of the Majesty on high. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." Is. 9:6. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2:6. He proclaims, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28:18. The Spirit teaches, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:10-11.

Pharaoh divests not himself of all authority. "Only in the throne will I be greater than you." Genesis 41:40. Here we see the glorious consummation. The mediatorial kingdom will have a close. The purposes of grace will be completely accomplished. "Then comes the end and he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. 15:28.

Happy for Egypt that Joseph ruled! Happy, thrice happy for the Church, that Jesus holds the scepter. On His throne He orders all things for supremest benefit. The earthly scene often seems perplexed. Confusion and disorder weave a tangled web. But the rule is in a mighty hand. He guides all providences to accomplish good. No sparrow falls, but by His will; and soon adoring lips will gratefully proclaim, "He has done all things well." Mark 7:37.

Joseph's especial work is to distribute food. When famine grimly stalks throughout the land--when the staff of life is broken--when means of relief all fail--the royal mandate is, "Go unto Joseph--what he says to you, do." Genesis 41:55.

Thus Jesus feeds His flock. His open treasure-house fills the hungry with good things. He cries. "Eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. 55:2.

He provides all viands for the needy. It is far easier to count the ocean's sands, than to calculate the never-failing plenty of His table. Pre-eminently He gives Himself--"My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." John 6:55. Faith

is the eye which sees this nourishment--the hand which takes it--the palate which digests it. Away with the monstrous figment of imagination--that carnal lips press divine substance. The very thought is childish superstition. Let reason, scripture, and experience speak. They all reject such pitiful absurdity. Faith only knows the mystery of the God-man's body broken on the cross--the God-man's blood shed to atone. The new-born soul feasts spiritually, and is strengthened. Thus the true Joseph deals out celestial stores. "I am that Bread of Life." John 6:48.

Crowds hasten to Egypt's one store-house. But though earth teems with need, few will apply to Jesus. In Joseph's day, the way is long, and the journey is beset with perils. But hunger impels, and they delay not. To famished sinners the feast is spread before their very door. Still they will not stir and take. The food in Egypt must be bought. The Gospel-feast is "without money and without price." The invitation sounds, "Eat, O friends, drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." Song 5:1.

The famine spreads beyond the Egyptian confines. It enters the tents of Jacob. Ghastly hunger sits at his table. The tidings come that grain abounds in Egypt. Jacob, retaining his Benjamin, sends forth his sons. They are suppliants to Joseph. He recognizes them, though they discern him not. Thus Jesus knows and ever knew his own. His eye yearns over them in love, while they are ignorant of Him. Joseph deals roughly with them. Jesus oftentimes seems hard and harsh, while mercy is His real design. They are accused. They are immured in prison for three days. Their awakened consciences now sting. In their punishment, they read their former crime. Their sin finds them out. It grasps them with giant's grasp. They say one to another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." Genesis 42:21.

Reader! see how past sins revive, and burst their long-closed tombs, and shake accusing heads, and tell their frightful tale, and prove that they are linked to everlasting wrath.

The marvelous story ends marvelously. Jacob, and Benjamin, and all the patriarch's house stand humbly before Joseph. They see in the outcast youth the savior of their race. The dreams are true. There is no failure in all God's wondrous design. Egypt becomes a refuge. Thus Jesus brings the children of His love to a sure shelter. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower." Beneath the cross is everlasting safety. Goshen is, also, a school of discipline. Thus by wise trials saints are fitted for their glorious home. Hard service prepares them for the crown.

Reader! turn not from this story without loathing--hating--abhorring sin. Touch it not. It stains like pitch. Once done, it will pursue and hunt you down. But adhere to Jesus. See Him resplendent throughout the warning of this Beacon. Adore Him as all grace--all mercy--all compassion--all love--all righteousness--and all

salvation. He, and He only, can make clean--He, and He only, can give pardon--
He, and He only, can upraise to heaven.

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