

Genesis Devotionals

DEVOTIONALS OUR DAILY BREAD

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GENESIS 1

CREATION:

The Creator deserves all praise from His creation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

By faith we know that the earth came into existence through the creative power of God. Columnist Sydney J. Harris makes this observation: "Suppose, in olden days, you said to a medieval monk, 'The universe is made up of millions of galaxies of incredible size. Not only that, but each galaxy is rushing away from all the others, faster and faster. And the farther they get, the faster they go.' The monk would think you were mad." The point Mr. Harris is making is that either viewpoint we take—the "traditional religious viewpoint" or the "dominant scientific viewpoint"—involves faith. He concludes that a person who can accept the idea of a "black hole" in space, should have no difficulty believing in a "pearly gate" in Heaven.

Some scientists may accuse us of being naive because we believe the creation story as recorded in the book of Genesis. Yet they are inconsistent in making such a charge because they also arrive at their position by faith. But their faith is based on their own limited observation and fallible interpretation. And that puts those who reject God at a disadvantage. The basis of their confidence is faulty and unreliable. As Christians, we have a distinct advantage: we accept what the Creator Himself declares in the Bible. Our faith is based on what He has proclaimed. We need never be ashamed to say that we accept His word by faith. It gives us true understanding. —R W De Haan

Creation is not only more complex than we think it is. It is more complex than we can think.

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GENESIS 1

NOWHERE OR NOW HERE!

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

An unbelieving lawyer had a plaque on his office wall that read: GOD IS NOWHERE. His small daughter, while waiting for him one day, passed the time by copying that motto over and over on a piece of paper. Unintentionally she spaced the letters in a way that completely changed their meaning. Adding a space between the letters W and H, she wrote GOD IS NOW HERE.

The letters on the sign in the attorney's office may be read two different ways, but only one meaning is true. Many people look at God's mighty handiwork in the universe and think that it simply says "wild chance." But others see it as saying "wise Creator." The Bible gives us the right interpretation. Those who see God as NOW HERE instead of NOWHERE are the ones who know how to read the sign.—R W De Haan

Nature is but a name for an effect whose cause is God.—Cowper

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GENESIS 1

THE WATERMELON ILLUSTRATION

Ge 1:9ff Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so

While eating a slice of watermelon, William Jennings Bryan thought of a way to use it as an illustration in one of his speeches. After estimating that the melon was about forty pounds, he collected a number of seeds and weighed them. Applying a little mathematics, he was amazed to find that it took nearly five thousand to make up a pound. Then he sat down at his desk and wrote, "Recently

someone planted just one of those little seeds in the ground. Under the influence of sunshine and shower, it took off its coat and went to work gathering about two hundred thousand times its own weight. It forced all the material through a tiny stem and built a watermelon. On the outside it had a covering of green; within that, a rind of white; and within that, a core of red. Scattered on the inside were more seeds—each capable of doing the same work all over again. What architect drew the plan? Where did that little watermelon seed get its tremendous strength? Where did it find its flavoring extract and its coloring matter?" Bryan then pointed out that until we can explain a watermelon, we dare not underestimate the power of the Almighty. In supplying us with these wonders, which our finite minds cannot understand, the Lord has shown us His infinite wisdom and power.

Viewing the wonders of God, as witnessed by even a single water-melon, we are amazed at His marvelous handiwork. In humble adoration we exclaim with the psalmist, "In wisdom You have made them all." —H G Bosch

The signature of wisdom impressed on the works of God proclaims His glory. —Newton

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GENESIS 3

SOUR NOTES

Genesis 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel"

In his early years, Ansel Adams, the famous landscape photographer, studied piano. Once, while playing Chopin for a friend, he could not get his hands coordinated. The next day the friend gave him a backhanded critique by telling him, "You never missed a wrong note." Although no one knows exactly when or where Adam and Eve sounded the first sour note, people have been playing wrong notes perfectly ever since. The tragic Eden error called sin means missing the mark. The discord that started in God's garden has been heard throughout history. As the New England Primer put it, "In Adam's sin, we sinned all." As Adam and Eve experienced guilt, loneliness, and estrangement, so have all of their offspring.

Without the Fall, death could never have sung the blues' dark song, and lying, hatred, and pride would not have become the funeral march of the masses. The mad sounds of sin would still be humanity's only tune had it not been for God's note of grace—He followed Adam and Eve out of the gate.

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GENESIS 3

DON'T BE DECEIVED

"ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. - Genesis 3:5

One of Satan's most effective tactics down through the ages has been deception. He is a master at making things appear what they are not. A mixture of truth and error seems to serve his purposes much better than total error.

Donald Grey Barnhouse illustrated this forcefully with the following story: "Duveen, the famous English art connoisseur, took his little daughter to the beach one day, but could not get her to go into the chilly water. After persuasion failed, he borrowed a teakettle, built a fire, and heated a little water until it steamed beautifully. With much flourish, he poured it into the ocean. Greatly impressed, his daughter went in without a murmur." Barnhouse then made this application: Satan "dilutes an ocean of unbelief with a steaming teakettle of Christian ethics, and people go wading in, self-satisfied, but unaware that they are bathing in unbelief."

The adversary is delighted when a person turns over a new leaf or engages in good works, just as long as he continues to reject the provision of God's grace in salvation. Somehow the sinner completely ignores the fatal error or not trusting Christ because his life as been tempered with a teakettle of wholesome resolves.

Our Lord's words are very clear: "...he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). Don't be deceived by Satan's clever ploy. You cannot dilute an ocean of cold unbelief with a little warm water of religiosity or good human endeavor. P. R. V.

The devil in his subtle way Will chloroform your soul, If you don't quickly turn to Christ, Whose blood can make you whole.- Lyle

Satan will flood you with truth to float one lie.

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GENESIS 3

LOVE THE FLOWERS, HATE THE WEEDS

"You who love the Lord, hate evil (Psalm 97:10)

God hates sin. In Proverbs 6, the author singled out seven specific transgressions that are an abomination to the Lord. Sin is so horrible that when the Lord Jesus, the perfect Son of God, bore our guilt on the cross, the Father turned His back on His beloved Son. And Christ, in the blackness of that dreadful hour, cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). If sin is so terrible in the sight of God, then we must fear it, hate it, and avoid it.

Johann Peter Lange, the nineteenth century German theologian and author, told a story about a religious leader who was viciously hated by the emperor of his day. Some of the ruler's advisors said to the monarch, "Burn him, confiscate his property, put him in irons, or have him killed." But others disagreed. They said, "You will not gain anything by all this; for in exile he would find a home with his God; . . . he kisses his chains, death opens heaven to him. There is only one way to render him unhappy; force him to sin. He fears nothing in the world but sin" (F. B. Proctor, Treasury of Quotations).

How many people do we know who fear "nothing in the world but sin"? Unfortunately, we often become so comfortable in sin's presence that we practice it rather than fear it. But remember how God views it. May we therefore, as lovers of Him, be haters of sin. —R. W. De Haan

It is not enough for gardeners to love flowers; they must also hate weeds.

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GENESIS 4

Sheep Thief or Saint?

And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. Gen. 4:15

The story is told of two brothers, convicted of stealing sheep, who were branded on the forehead with the letters ST, to indicate "sheep thief." The one couldn't bear the stigma, became bitter, and moved away. Eventually he died and was forgotten. The other brother chose a different course. He said, "I can't run from what I did, so I'll stay here and win back the respect of my neighbors and myself." As the years passed, he built a solid reputation for integrity. One day a stranger saw him, now an old man, with the letters on his forehead. He asked a townsman what they signified. "It happened a long time ago," said the villager. "I've forgotten the particulars, but I think the letters are an abbreviation for 'saint'".

Cain too was a marked man who, like that first brother in the story, never thought beyond the severity of his punishment to the severity of his sin. He didn't realize that his "brand" was a blessing as well as a curse. It held in check the vengeance of his fellowmen so that he wouldn't be killed. God was granting Cain an opportunity to acknowledge his wrong, to plead for mercy, and to wipe out his reputation as a murderer. How tragic that he chose not to!

A bad reputation doesn't have to be permanent. Because Christ died for our sins, His forgiveness wipes the slate clean, and His power enables us to live a new life. If you've never done so, repent and trust Him as your Savior. If you have received Jesus but have since made a mess of your life, return to Him. He'll give you grace and power to build a new reputation. -D. J. De Haan

Once I was foolish, and sin ruled my heart, Causing my footsteps from God to depart; Jesus has found me, happy my case— I now am a sinner saved by grace!- Gray

You may have had a bad start in life, but you need not have a bad ending.

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GENESIS 5

TWO BOOKS

"This is the book of...Adam. Genesis 5:1 [This is] the book of...Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:1

The book of Adam's family tree and the book of the genealogy of Christ form a striking contrast. One is a record of death, the other of life. Genesis 5 has been called the "obituary chapter" of the Bible, for time after time we read the doleful word, "...and he died." On the other hand, Matthew, in giving the genealogy of Jesus, constantly repeats the phrase, "...and [he] begot." Although the people in the line of Christ did eventually die, the word "death" is never mentioned in Matthew, Chapter 1. That suggests to me this application: By our sinful nature we are in Adam's book on death, but by our spiritual "new birth" we appear in Christ's living register

of the redeemed.

You've probably heard the familiar story of the man whose name was printed in the obituary column of a daily paper by mistake. Greatly disturbed, he went to the newspaper office and exclaimed, "This is terrible! Your error will cause me no end of embarrassment and may even mean a loss of business. How could you do such a thing?" The editor expressed regrets, but the man remained angry and unreasonable. Finally the editor said in disgust, "Cheer up, fellow, I'll put your name in the birth column tomorrow and give you a fresh start!" That's what happens when we find new life in Christ.

Are you still registered in Adam's obituary column, or is your name in the Lamb's Book of Life? There are only two books, and you are in one or the other! H. G. Bosch

No man can say he doesn't need Forgiveness from his sin, For all must come to Christ by faith To gain new life within. - Branon

Salvation changes our heritage from a living death to a deathless life.

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GENESIS 6

DETHRONED BY THE PAST

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, "And behold, I Myself am bringing the flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh." Then God remembered Noah . . . And God said . . . "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth" (Genesis 6:5, 17; 8:1; 9:12-13).

Vanessa Williams, the dethroned Miss America, explained on losing her title, "The past just came up and kicked me." Like America's former beauty queen, most people understand that the past can kick us to death. In fact, death is God's ultimate judgment on the past.

Disobedience, irreverence, murder, and pride tarnished Adam, Cain, Lamech, and the Babel bunch. Genesis gives few specifics about what evils stained Noah's neighbors, but God chose to make an example of them. As time melds into eternity, the Flood still stands as a startling symbol of sin's penalty. Except for the eight in Noah's family, God killed a whole generation of people.

We don't like the idea of retribution; floods and crosses leave us in despair. But lest we be hopeless, God sent a rainbow and a resurrection.

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GENESIS 6

UNEXPECTED ERUPTION

Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...So the Lord said, I will destroy man (Genesis 6:5, 7).

It happened again. A mountain in Mexico that had lain dormant for a very long time suddenly came alive, erupting with so much power that it became the world's largest active volcano. The 7300-foot El Chichon giant had been quiet for hundreds of years before its explosive re-awakening. Like the eruption of Mount St. Helens, which broke its long silence in 1980 and transformed its majestic snow-covered peak and placid Spirit Lake into dust and vapor, the explosion was unexpected. The people near the mountains lived in complacency, never anticipating such drastic changes.

These events symbolize all the unexpected changes in history and nature since Noah's day, when God destroyed the wicked. Like the people living near El Chichon and Mount St. Helens, Noah's neighbors lived in complacency. But corruption made their complacency even more foolish—even more deadly. Preoccupied with the pleasures of sin, they thought their evil ways would never catch up with them. But God stepped in unexpectedly.

Sometimes we act as if we believe God is inactive, and that our security is reinforced with concrete and steel. But that's only the way it seems. Time always catches up with us, as it did in Noah's day. Every sinner will someday face a flood or an exploding mountain. Jesus has promised to come back unexpectedly. We should all make sure we are not living in sin's danger zone when He returns. — M. R. De Haan II

Judgment may be delayed, but it is sure.

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GENESIS 11

TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 11:4 "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves"

Michelangelo once overheard some people talking about his sculpture Pieta and mistakenly saying that fellow sculptor Il Gobbo had created it. Deeply hurt, he returned after dark and carved his name on it for all generations.

We all want to make our mark, but the Babel ballyhoo was too much. The Babylonians wanted a great city and name, but they also wanted a tower. And not just another Sears Tower; it was probably a temple for another religion. Such arrogance and defiance invited God's wrath.

Isaiah told the story of the earliest instance of pride (Isa. 14:12-14). Instead of a temple, Satan wanted to build a throne above the stars of God. Satan's scheme and the Babel bigheadedness were both godmaking games—an attempt to make the Creator in the creation's image.

The only cure for pride is to understand the Creator's motives; they are not the same as those of the throne-seekers and tower-builders. God wants all glory, but He deserves it because He always desires the best for us.

In sending His Son to walk among proud people, He knew some would not glorify Him. In giving up our life to Him, we find the true source of pride.

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GENESIS 11

DETERMINED TO MAKE A NAME

Genesis 11:4 "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower...let us make a name for ourselves"

A twenty-five-year-old acrobat gained widespread attention when he climbed the steel and glass surface of the world's tallest building. In seven and one-half hours he scaled Chicago's 1454-foot, 110-story Sears Tower. On the way up, he carried fifty pounds of climbing equipment and fought off forty-mile-an-hour winds. By the time he reached the top, he had made a name for himself—but he was also in trouble. Police greeted him and took him in handcuffs to the city jail, where he was charged with disorderly conduct, trespassing, and damage to property.

That incident reminded me of the people who built the historic skyscraper of Babel mentioned in Genesis 11:1-9. The tower represented an undertaking by a community of citizens determined to make a name for themselves. They meant it to be a magnificent structure symbolizing their unity and opposition to God. They

said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens;... lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." But God was waiting at the top. He stopped their attempt to achieve recognition by breaking down their communication system and thwarting their self-centered, God-defying objectives.

Even though we are Christians, sometimes we get caught up in making a name for ourselves by climbing business, religious, or social towers that deny God His rightful place. If we do, we will eventually be brought down because God is still at the top. —M. R. De Haan II

If you would build high you must remain low.

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GENESIS 13

A Good Reason to Scream

".the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord." Gen. 13:13

There's an old story about a man who tried to save the city of Sodom from destruction by warning the citizens. But the people ignored him. One day someone asked, "Why bother everyone? You can't change them." "Maybe I can't," the man replied, "but I still shout and scream to prevent them from changing me!"

Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7) who should have done some screaming. The record of his life reminds us of how our sense of moral indignation can be dulled by the world. Lot chose to dwell in cities where there was great wickedness (Gen. 13:12, 13). When

Sodom was invaded by hostile kings, he was captured. Even after Abraham rescued Lot, he was still drawn back to that wicked city (Gen. 19:1). And the last chapter of his story is an account of heartache and shame (Gen. 19). What a contrast—this nephew and his uncle! Abraham trusted God, prayed for the righteous, and lived a moral life. But Lot was “oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked” (2 Peter 2:7). Although the sin of his day bothered him, he apparently said little about it.

There's much immorality in today's world—sex before marriage, homosexual behavior, taking the life of the unborn, and pornography. Out of our love for people and a deep concern about the influence of sin on society, we protest! Even if our screaming does little to change society, we do it anyway because we don't want society to change us—and we just may help others.

If we would love what's good and right, We must be pure within; But if we compromise the truth, We lose our sense of sin.- D. J. De Haan

The man who cannot be angry at evil lacks enthusiasm for good.

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GENESIS 15

THE "PUMP" GOD DESIGNED

"Look now toward heaven, and count the stars" (Genesis 15:5).

Nature can nurture faith. God told Abraham to look at the heavens and contemplate the infinite number of stars. Then He said, "So shall your descendants be." God was saying to Abraham that if He could create and maintain all those stars, He'd have no trouble keeping His promise that Abraham would have a son. The patriarch understood, for we read that "he believed in the LORD " (Gen. 15:6).

An Our Daily Bread reader, Mr. T. C. Roddy, Jr., from Rusk, Texas, wrote, "In my front yard are six huge oak trees that must be over 100 years old. . . . I ponder as I look at them and realize that the leaves must have barrels of fresh water each day to stay green. As a retired engineer, I know that no pump ever devised or designed by man could force that amount of water through the dense wooden trunk of these trees. Yet God causes their roots to gather all the water these trees need...To do this, these roots must exert a working pressure of more than 3,000 pounds per square foot just to move the water up to the leaves—not considering the resistance of the wood in the tree trunk. That is just another of God's 'miracles' that occur every day unnoticed."

When we have trouble believing God for the solution to some pressing problem, we can enter the classroom of creation and observe the wonders of nature. Doing so strengthens our faith in the promises found in our textbook, the Bible. —D. J. De Haan

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. —Ralph Waldo Emerson

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GENESIS 17

OLD PROMISES BECOME JOYFUL SURPRISES

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed (Genesis 17:17).

Who wouldn't laugh—a century-old man being told he will become a father, and that his ninety-year-old wife will bear a child? The whole idea must have seemed ridiculous to Abraham. Yet he received the news with great delight. Bowing before God, he expressed his surprise, wonder, and gladness—with no hint of unbelief. In Genesis 18, how-ever, Sarah laughed and God rebuked her. Sarah laughed in unbelief. Abraham laughed in faith.

In a lecture, C. H. Spurgeon said that many Scriptures remain clouded until some trying experience interprets them for us. He told of riding home after a heavy day's work feeling weary and down-hearted. Suddenly 2 Corinthians 12:9 came to his mind, "My grace is sufficient for you." Spurgeon said, "I reached home and looked it up in the original, and at last it came to me in this way. 'My grace is sufficient for YOU.' Said I, 'I should think it is,' and I burst out laughing. I never understood what the holy laughter of Abraham was until then. It seemed to make unbelief so absurd. . . . O brethren, be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your souls."

Our faith grows as we grow in our awareness of God's faithfulness. Old promises become joyful surprises with fresh meaning. We see that the all-powerful, all-sufficient God keeps His Word. Then we, too, can laugh the holy laughter of a faith that considers unbelief absurd. —D. J. De Haan

Faith expects from God what is beyond all human expectation.

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GENESIS 18

NO LAUGHING MATTER

"Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Ge 18:14

The Lord is able to meet all our needs, whatever they may be. Nothing is too difficult for Him. Sarah needed to learn this truth. God's promise to give Abraham a son named Isaac is recorded in Genesis 17:21. In the next chapter that assurance was repeated to the patriarch as he talked outside his tent with three men sent from God. This time Sarah overheard the conversation. To her, having a child at her advanced age was an impossibility, so she "laughed within herself" (v. 12). The Lord then said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (vv. 13-14). God was asking Abraham a rhetorical question to which the obvious answer was no.

As Christians, we have the same assurance. Abraham's God is our God, and He is omnipotent. He's the Creator of the universe. Nothing exceeds His power. No problem intimidates Him. No obstacle is too big for Him. Everything is possible with Him. Our heavenly Father is in control of every situation. What comfort we

can find in this truth! What confidence it gives us!

The all-knowing, everywhere-present, all-powerful Creator and sovereign God can do anything. When we present our petitions to our heavenly Father in prayer, making sure we ask according to His will, He assures us that nothing is too hard for Him. —R W De Haan

We do not prove the resources of God until we trust Him for the impossible.

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GENESIS 21

ISAAC'S BIRTH

Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age (Genesis 21:2).

In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Giant Despair captured Christian and Hopeful and held them as prisoners in Doubting Castle. They escaped when Christian remembered he had the key called Promise.

Like Christian, we forget God's guarantees. We can't imagine a world without wordmongers who write worthless warranties and politicians who separate promise and performance.

God made promises in the garden and after the Flood, but his words to senior citizens Abraham and Sarah make up the opening chapter of God's promise book to Israel. God assured them that they would be proud parents and that from their lone child a great nation would be born.

Isaac and the nation of Israel escaped the womb a long time ago, and it might be easy to dismiss a God who announces his intentions only to those very old and hard of hearing. We might accuse Him of empty promises except for another child of promise—Jesus Christ.

The long-awaited Bethlehem Baby was the official heir to God's kingdom, and He unselfishly passed on the key called Promise.

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GENESIS 22

ABRAHAM OFFERS ISAAC

God tested Abraham, and said to him, ... "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering" Genesis 22:1-2

In Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*, the character Traddles lent his good name to Mr. Micawber's money-making scheme. After Copperfield expressed concern, Traddles reassured himself and Copperfield by saying, "He told me, only the other day, that it was provided for. That was Mr. Micawber's expression, 'Provided for.'"

Like Traddles, we want assurance that we have been provided for. We even rely on slogans like "You're in good hands with Allstate." Somehow these deceive us into believing that someone will provide for us. Our need for reassurance reveals our uncertainty about

whether God can truly meet all our needs.

By providing a ram for the sacrifice, God taught Abraham and future generations that he could provide when life itself was on the line. If God was concerned about one person's lifeblood, then He must take notice of all humanity's lifebeat.

The people of Christ's day missed the point of Isaac on the altar; they could only strengthen their faith when their sacrifice preceded God's provision. They certainly were not going to offer themselves; they wanted the glory and power of an earthly kingdom, not another gruesome sacrifice. But God gave them what they needed, not what they wanted. He put an end to their kingmaking passions by sacrificing the King.

We can be certain that God will freely give His children all good things—in His unexplainable, unexpected, but all-wise way.

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GENESIS 22

GIVE OR TAKE?

"Abraham built an altar...and bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar." Genesis 22:9

What more poignant account can you find in all the Old Testament than the dramatic scene described in today's text? The heart of Abraham must have nearly broken when God said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest,...and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:2). But notice Abraham's response. He quickly arose and traveled 3 days with Isaac until they reached the place of sacrifice. I wonder what thoughts crowded his mind during that long journey. Did he doubt God's wisdom? Surely this question must have raced through his mind: If Isaac, who was born as the result of a miracle, is the son of promise, why is God asking me to slay him? The patriarch, Abraham, however, did not retreat, disobey, or turn aside to avoid making this ultimate sacrifice. Instead, he gave his son back to God. His yieldedness was regarded with these words of divine approval: "...now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me" (Gen. 22:12).

Pastor William Sangster went into a hospital room to visit a little girl who was losing her sight. Fear seemed to grip the youngster as with nearly blind eyes she turned her face toward the preacher. "Oh, Dr. Sangster, God is taking away my sight." God's servant leaned over the trembling child and said tenderly, "Don't let Him take it; give it to Him."

Dear friend, are you struggling with God's will? Is some cherished plan or possession or person being removed from your life? Don't let Him take it; give it to Him. - P. R. V.

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest As you yield Him your body and soul. Hoffman

The Christian's greatest joy and usefulness is found in letting God fully possess His own property.

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GENESIS 22

JEHOVAH JIREH

And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8).

Imagine Abraham's feelings when the Lord told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Think of what went through his mind when they climbed Mount Moriah and Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb?" Yet Abraham had faith that God would provide, and he assured Isaac of his confidence. He was right. God pointed out a ram in the thicket. As a result, Abraham called the place Jehovah-Jireh, which means "the Lord will provide."

In the centuries that have followed, God has continued to demonstrate that He provides for His own. Dr. Robert Schindler and his wife, Marian, founded a mission hospital associated with radio station ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia. In their book *Mission Possible* they wrote,

"For us, it was a continued exercise of faith that we would have the right drugs and supplies at the right time. We recall how much we counted on our X-ray machine, something we take for granted [at home]. We even had the opportunity to get an extra one when a friend of ours, a doctor with the U.S. Embassy, asked if we could use a portable X-ray machine. . . . But then as the months dragged out, we knew it must be lost at sea. Then one day our big X-ray machine stopped working. We found it was a major problem which would take several months to fix. . . . But that very afternoon, the ELWA truck pulled up to the hospital with a huge crate

from port. You guessed it—it was the portable X-ray machine! We plugged it in, and it worked! We didn't lose a day for X-rays."

Lord, thank You for being our Provider. —D. C. Egner

God's provisions are always greater than our problems.

GENESIS 22:8

The Lord Our Provider - And Abraham said, My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. Genesis 22:8 Imagine Abraham's feelings when the Lord told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Think of what was going through his mind as they climbed Mount Moriah and Isaac asked,

"...where is the lamb?" Yet Abraham had faith that God would provide, and he assured Isaac of his confidence. He was right, for soon a ram was made available. As a result, Abraham called the place Jehovah-Jireh, which means "the Lord our provider."

In the centuries that have followed, God has continued to demonstrate that He does provide for His own. Dr. Robert Schindler and his wife Marian founded a mission hospital associated with radio station ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia. In their book Mission Possible they wrote, "For us, it was a continued exercise of faith that we would have the right drugs and supplies at the right time. We recall how much we counted on our X-ray machine, something we take for granted (at home). We even had the opportunity to get an extra one when a friend of ours, a doctor with the U.S. Embassy, asked if we could use a portable X-ray machine...But then as the months dragged out, we knew it must be lost at sea. Then one day our big X-ray machine stopped working....We found it was a major problem which would take several months to fix....But that very afternoon, the ELWA truck pulled up to the hospital with a huge crate from port. You guessed it—it was the portable X-ray machine! We plugged it in, and it worked! We didn't lose a day for X-rays." Lord, thank You for being our Provider. -D. C. Egner.

He cannot fail, your faithful God,
He'll guard you with His mighty power;
Then fear no ill though troubles rise,
His help is sure from hour to hour.

-H. G. Bosch

**God's provisions
are always greater than
Our problems.**

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He Will Provide

Genesis 22:1-14

Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb.. --Genesis 22:8

Pastor Roy S. Nicholson told of a time when he had no money to buy food. Determined to trust God for his needs and not tell anyone, he and his wife presented their case to the Lord in prayer.

The next morning he set the table for breakfast, confident that the Lord would provide something to eat. Just then a boy from their Sunday school came to the house with a sack of flour and some milk. Tears welled up in the pastor's eyes. No sooner had he left than "Granny" Turner appeared at the door carrying a large serving tray loaded with Virginia ham, eggs, grits and gravy, hot biscuits, butter, jelly, and coffee. Nicholson was filled with praise to God.

Abraham faced an even more serious test of faith. God had told him he would become the father of a great nation, but then God asked him to sacrifice his promised son Isaac on the altar. How could Abraham do such a thing? Many years of trusting God for his long-awaited son had taught him that his confidence in God would be fully rewarded. "God will provide for Himself the lamb," he told Isaac.

Faith like that is not born in a day. It's the result of years of seeing God's faithfulness to His promises, and it grows as we daily choose to believe what He says. --D J De Haan

Man's poverty is never a strain on God's provision.

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Genesis 25:27-34

What's Worth Keeping

For one morsel of food [Esau] sold his birthright. - Hebrews 12:16

A story is told of a man who loved old books. He met an acquaintance who had just thrown away a Bible that had been stored in the attic of his ancestral home for generations. "I couldn't read it," the friend explained. "Somebody named Guten- something had printed it." "Not Gutenberg!" the book lover exclaimed in horror. "That Bible was one of the first books ever printed. Why, a copy just sold for over two million dollars!" His friend was unimpressed. "Mine wouldn't have brought a dollar. Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in German."

This man treated as worthless that which was valuable. So did Esau. Although he was a nice fellow who enjoyed hunting and fishing and the great outdoors, Esau was "profane" because he sold his spiritual birthright "for one morsel of food" (Heb. 12:16). Only when it was too late to undo his wretched bargain did Esau realize that he had sacrificed the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

We had better be careful of the "bargains" we make in life.

**Our culture places a high price tag on what is worthless
and throws away as worthless what is of eternal value.**

Ask the Lord to help you discern what's worth keeping and what is best discarded. - H W Robinson

The little choices we must make
Will chart the course of life we take;
We either choose the path of light,
Or wander off in darkest night. - DJD

We pay a high price for cheap living.

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GENESIS 28

GOD IS IN THIS PLACE

"Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Genesis 28:16

When I was overseas during World War II, a chaplain told me that some officers would use vile and profane language in his presence and then in a humorous manner turn to him and say, "Excuse me, Chaplain!" The others would usually laugh as if this were a wonderful joke. Some time later when this happened again, the Chaplain decided it was time to express himself concerning their flippant attitude in regard to taking God's name in vain. Turning upon the offending one he said, "Do not ask me to excuse you! You are displeasing Someone far higher and holier than I. You had better ask Him to forgive you!" Absolute silence reigned in the officers' quarters for a few moments, and from that day forward there was a marked decrease in profane and vulgar language when this Chaplain was near. They respected him and felt it would be wrong to offend this servant of God who took the things of the Lord so seriously.

On several occasions I have walked into a place of business where some men were engaged in conversation, and noticed a strange silence fall upon them. Apparently what they were saying was of such a nature that they didn't want a minister to hear it. How foolish! What about the fact that God hears every word? Have men forgotten about Him?

Dear friend, if what you talk about isn't fit to be said in the presence of a minister, it certainly isn't right to say in God's hearing. Remember, the Lord sees every act, hears every word, and reads every thought that comes into our minds. When the realization of this truth came home to Jacob the morning after he had fled for fear of Esau, and after he had so brazenly and shamelessly deceived his aged father, he felt a deep sense of awe. May the truth that "God is here" also influence our every thought, word, and deed.

Lord, put a seal upon my lips,
Help me to guard with care
The things I say, and swift repeat;
O tongue of mine, beware! — G.W.

Live innocently; God is watching! —Linnaeus

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Genesis 32:1-8, 22-32

WRESTLING WITH GOD

Without Me you can do nothing.-John 15:5

When the board members of George Muller's orphanage told him it was impossible to raise enough money to keep the operation going, Muller rejoiced. He said their sense of helplessness would make them rely more fully on the Lord. They did, and God met their need.

Complete dependence on God is an absolute necessity if we are to enjoy His blessing and power. But we seldom learn this truth apart from bitter experience.

Take Jacob, for example. For many years he had lived by his own schemes. Even though distressed when he heard that his brother Esau, whom he had wronged, was coming with 400 men, Jacob had a plan. He tried to make sure that if he were attacked, half of his family would survive. It was then that a "Man" (God in human form) wrestled with Jacob. Just before dawn, the Man demonstrated His deity by putting Jacob's hip out of joint by a mere touch. All Jacob could do was cling to the Man, pleading for His blessing (Gen. 32:26; Hos. 12:4). This was a turning point in Jacob's life, for he learned that blessing comes only from the Lord.

We too must realize that the only way to experience God's favor and provision is to depend on Him.- H V Lugt

Once we stop our own devising,
Quit the schemes of our own choosing,
Cease from all our fruitless striving --
God steps in with grace and power!--DJD

If we depend wholly on God, we will find Him wholly dependable.

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Genesis 32:22-32

"BOXING OR WRESTLING"

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him.- Genesis 32:24

The president of International Concerts of Prayer, David Bryant, told of arriving in a major city to help conduct a time of prayer. As he entered the building where the meeting was to take place, he noticed that the huge hall was being shared by another event. In one room was the prayer meeting; in the other room there was going to be a boxing match.

Two signs greeted visitors, each with arrows pointing the way. In bold letters, one said BOXING; the other said PRAYER. Bryant said it occurred to him that this was the first time he had ever been in a situation where people had to choose between boxing and wrestling.

Bryant was saying that prayer can be like wrestling, as we see in Genesis 32. When Jacob realized that the Man he was grappling with was God in human form, he asked for a blessing and would not let go of Him until his request was granted. God honored that perseverance. The Lord said to Jacob, "You have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (v.28).

We can't twist God's arm or use Him for our own ends. But we can "wrestle" with Him by persevering in prayer when what we ask for is in His will. Perhaps it's time to do a little more wrestling. -J D Branon

You are coming to a King,
Large petitions therefore bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much. - Newton

You do not have because you do not ask. James 4:2

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Genesis 33:4 READ: Genesis 33:1-11

FOR sixty-one years, piano virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz

refused to visit his native Russia. After fleeing the country in 1925, he declared, "I never want to go back, and I never will." Yet after all those years he changed his mind. Early in 1986, at age eighty-one, Horowitz returned to the Soviet Union and gave a remarkable concert. His willingness to rethink his position led to a memorable musical performance.

When Horowitz reversed his longstanding position, he provided a good example for any of us who have made rash statements that we feel obligated to stand behind. Perhaps we told a parent or child we never wanted to see him or her again. Perhaps we vowed never to forgive someone. Whatever the case, if we were wrong, or if conditions change, we must be willing to change our minds.

Esau was an example of someone who changed his mind for the better. He had every reason to be upset with his younger brother for stealing his blessing. One translation of Genesis 27:41 says that Esau "held a grudge" against Jacob. In fact, he threatened to kill him. Yet when it came time for the brothers to be reunited, Esau had a change of heart. He swallowed his words and did what was right.

We should be willing to do the same.—DDB

Lord, in a moment of anger I said something I did not mean. Forgive me for my selfish outburst and give me the wisdom to know how to repair the relationship I have damaged.

GENESIS 39

SAFE DEPOSIT

"And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand." Genesis 39:6

From the moment Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, left all in Joseph's care, a blessing came upon everything he had. His home, his business, and even his fields prospered! The Christian today also finds that spiritual prosperity comes when he leaves all in the hand of the "Greater Joseph," the Lord Jesus Christ. As you were reading the Scripture (you didn't omit it, did you?), I hope you noticed the words in verse 4, "all that he had he put into his hand." Potiphar made that decision. Attracted to Joseph and persuaded that he was worthy of his trust, he committed all his possessions, interests, and affairs to this faithful Hebrew. Have you definitely given your home, your business, and all your concerns to Christ?

Having put all that he had into Joseph's keeping, he left it there. This is sometimes the most difficult thing to do. Potiphar had a nature similar to ours, and probably worried at times and removed some of his affairs from Joseph's supervision. Perhaps you have surrendered to the Lord some problem or difficulty that plagued you; but when worry again gripped you, you retrieved the burden and removed it from His care, only to be weighed down once more by the load of anxiety. Now the Savior is saying again, "Leave the matter in My hand!"

The Lord Jesus is adequate for every circumstance and problem. He wants us to put all that we have of pain or pleasure, profit or loss, into His keeping. He will forgive the sin, sanctify the life, remove the fear, direct the path, and give assurance.

O wounded soul, there is heavenly balm,
Leaving it all with Jesus;
Then change thy moan to a joyous psalm,
By leaving it all with Jesus. — Gray

Those who see God's hand in everything can best leave every-thing in God's hand.

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GENESIS 41

REMEMBER TO FORGET

"And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget. Genesis 41:51

Some things should be forgotten. Joseph could have wasted his life dwelling on the injustices he suffered. As a youth, his brothers sold him into slavery, and he was forced to live in a hostile land. He had to spend his teenage and adult years away from his beloved father. Joseph even spent time in prison. In spite of all he endured, he harbored no resentment. In fact, he named his son Manasseh, which means "forgetting." He explained, "For God...hath made me forget."

The result of "forgetting" past hurts is illustrated in the life of Pastor William Sangster. A guest who had come to spend the Christmas holidays with Sangster was watching him address the last of his greeting cards. One of the names on the list startled the friend.

"Surely you are not sending a card to him," he said. "Why not?" the preacher asked. "Don't you remember what he said about you just 18 months ago?" Sangster replied that he only remembered a resolution he made at that time. He had determined that with God's help he would forget about the man's cutting remark. The card was sent as planned. Yes, some things need to be dropped from the Christian's memory. He shouldn't harbor wrongs done to him. He mustn't let some unkind word keep him from maturing in Christ as he should. And he should never use another's insensitivity as his excuse for not serving the Lord.

Are there things in your past that you need to forgive and forget? -D. C. Egner

Let me forget the hurt and pain
Found along life's way;
Let me remember kindnesses
Given day by day. ---Berry

It is far better to forgive and forget than to resent and remember.

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GENESIS 43

THE MARVEL OF DESIGN

"And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marveled one at another" (Genesis 43:33).

When creationists calculate the extremely low probability of the chance origin of life, many evolutionists scoff at the calculation, alleging that any one arrangement of the components of a simple living molecule is just as likely as any other arrangement, so it is no great marvel that the components fell into this particular arrangement. This is a puerile argument, of course, quite unworthy of the intelligent scientists who use it, since there is only one (or at best, only a few) arrangements that will contain the organized information necessary for reproduction, compared to "zillions" of arrangements with no information at all.

This fact is beautifully illustrated in our text. Why should Joseph's brothers "marvel" when they were seated in chronological order of birth by a host who (presumably) was entirely unaware of that order? The reason why they marveled was because there could have been over 479 million different ways (calculated by multiplying all the numbers, one through twelve, together) in which the twelve brothers could have been seated! Maybe an evolutionist would not "marvel" that this unique seating arrangement happened by chance, since he somehow believes that far more intricately organized arrangements than this happened by chance to produce our universe and its array of complex systems. Anyone else, however, would immediately have realized this, and so the brothers of Joseph marveled one at another. So also when we behold the wonders of design in the creation, should we "lift up (our) eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things" (Isaiah 40:26). H M M

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Genesis 45:1-15

HOW CAN I FORGIVE?

Forgive, and you will be forgiven.--Luke 6:37

A seminary student earned his way through school driving a bus on Chicago's south side. One day a gang of young thugs boarded the bus and refused to pay the fare. The young man spotted a policeman, stopped the bus, and reported them. The officer made them pay, but then left. After the bus rounded a corner, the thugs beat the driver severely.

The gang members were rounded up, brought to trial, and found guilty. As soon as their sentences were announced, however, the student asked the judge if he could serve their jail terms for them. The judge and gang members were astounded. "It's because I forgive you," he explained. The request was denied, but in the months that followed, the student visited the young men in jail and led several of them to faith in Jesus Christ.

When Joseph's brother stood before him in Egypt asking for food, Joseph faced a great test. Years before, these men had planned to kill him, but they changed their minds and sold him into slavery. Now Joseph was in a position of power and could take revenge, but because he trusted God's sovereignty he offered them forgiveness.

Have you been wronged? Just as you trusted Christ to forgive you, ask Him for grace to forgive others. -H W Robinson

Lord help me be kind and forgiving --
So oft Your forgiveness I've known

For sins I have daily committed;
Lord, grant me a love like Your own. --Anon.

Forgiveness is Christianity in action.

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GENESIS 49:10

Israel's Blindness

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded: (Romans 11:7).

One of the saddest aspects of our world is the blindness of Israel. Even the Orthodox Jews, who strongly affirm their belief in the Old Testament Scriptures, seem unable to see what the Scriptures clearly show, that their Messiah has come and gone. In the first book of the Torah, we read: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:10). Ancient Jewish commentators agreed that Shiloh was another name for Messiah, but this very fact should prove to modern Jewish expositors that Messiah has already come, for the scepter (the symbol of national leadership) did depart from Judah, very soon after Jesus was crucified.

King David was the first descendant of Judah to attain the scepter of leadership among the tribes of Israel, and the divine promises were clear that Messiah would be in David's lineage. That Jesus' legal father, Joseph, and human mother, Mary, were both in that lineage was shown in the genealogies of Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38, respectively, both of which were written when the genealogical records in the Temple were still intact. No one at that time ever questioned their validity, in spite of intense opposition by the Jews to the claims of Jesus and His disciples.

In 70 A.D., the records and the Temple were destroyed, so that no later claimant to the title could ever prove his right to the throne. Messiah had come, and was slain, so the scepter departed from Judah until He comes again. It is certain that Jesus was, indeed, the Jews' promised Messiah, and we should pray that God will soon open their eyes to see and believe. HMM

Messianic Prophecy

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen 49:10).

This is a remarkable Messianic prophecy, given by Jacob 1700 years before the first coming of Christ fulfilled it. Later prophecies would focus on His descent from David and then His birthplace in Bethlehem, but first one of the twelve sons of Jacob must be designated as His progenitor. Remarkably, Jacob did not select either his first born son, Reuben, or his favorite son Joseph. Nor did he choose Benjamin, the son of his favorite wife. He chose instead his fourth son, Judah, by divine direction. Yet it was over 600 years before the tribe of Judah gained ascendancy over the others. The greatest leaders of Israel were from other tribes-Moses and Samuel from Levi, Joshua from Ephraim, Gideon from Manasseh, Samson from Dan, Saul from Benjamin. Finally, David became king, and "the sceptre" was then held by Judah for a thousand years, until Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Jesus' parents were both of Judah, both of the line of David, with both the legal and spiritual right to David's throne. But then, just 70 years after His birth, "the sceptre" (that is leadership over the twelve tribes) departed from Judah, with the worldwide dispersion of Israel, and no man since has ever held that right. It is still retained by Jesus, and will be reclaimed and exercised when He returns. In the meantime, the prophecy stands as an unchallengeable identification of Jesus as the promised Messiah. Ancient Jewish commentators all recognized "Shiloh" as a name for Messiah. Since the sceptre has already departed, Shiloh has already come. When He returns, His people will, indeed, finally be gathered together "unto Him." HMM

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GENESIS 50

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" Genesis 50:19-20

Writing of humanity's limited view of God's sovereignty, John Newton jested: "If you think you see the ark of the Lord falling, you can be sure it is due to a swimming in your head."

In contrast to our finite focus, God sees and knows the when, why, and how of life. And sovereignty means that God controls it all.

He certainly did for Joseph. Thrown into a deep, dark pit and then sold to traders by his jealous brothers, Joseph may have questioned God's sovereign plan. But God saw Joseph even in the shadows. And when the camel caravan arrived in Egypt, God was there to meet him.

On the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Yet three days after Joseph of Arimathea sealed Jesus in a pitch black tomb, God was there to meet Him. The glorious ending of the Joseph story shed a small shaft of light on God's sovereignty, but a brighter and wider beam filled the darkness when an angel said of the seemingly forsaken Christ, "He is not here; for He is risen."

If Jesus struggled with God's plan and then entrusted Himself to the sovereign Ruler of the universe, we can confidently follow Him out of the tomb into the sunshine.

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Genesis 50:15-21

"ON PURPOSE"

All things work together for good... to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, "Have you ever had any accidents?" After a moment's reflection, the applicant responded, "Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle."

"Wouldn't you call those accidents?" replied the puzzled agent. "Naw," the cowboy said, "they did it on purpose!"

That story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God's children. In today's Scripture, we read how Joseph interpreted a difficult experience that had seemed like a great calamity. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later learned that "God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

Are you passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So, patiently trust Him. If you know the Lord, someday you will praise Him for it all! - R W De Haan

What looks like just an accident
When viewed through human eyes,
Is really God at work in us -
His blessing in disguise. - Sper

God transforms trials into triumphs.

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GENESIS 50:20

SETBACKS

"You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" Genesis 50:20

I am thankful and reassured that God is so wise and so powerful that nothing, absolutely nothing, can cause His purposes to fail. In fact, He is able to take even those things meant for evil and make them work for good.

Joseph's brothers hated him so much that they plotted his murder. Instead, they sold him as a slave to some Ishmaelite traders. In Egypt he gained the favor of Pharaoh, who gave him a position of responsibility second only to that of the king. During a famine, his brothers came to him for food, not realizing who he was. When Joseph finally identified himself, he spoke this assuring word to them: "Do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). Later he said to his brothers, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about, as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

To me, that's both exciting and encouraging. I am reassured to realize that no matter what someone might do to harm me, the Lord is able to turn it into my benefit and His glory.

When we are discouraged because of distressing circumstances, we can rejoice in God's wisdom, power, and sovereignty. Romans

8:28 is still true. God is working all things for our good. —R W De Haan

Setbacks pave the way for comebacks.