

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No.301 Jan/Feb/Mar 2023

In this Issue:

Page 1. Editorial	Brother Julian Shipley
Page 3. Psalm 122	
Page 3. I Will Make My Holy Name Known in The Midst of My People.	Brother O.E.H.Gregory
Page 6. Veritas and His Friends	Brother J. Chamberlin
Page 13. Romans 7 verses 14 to 21	Dr Adam Clarke
Page 13. A Wresting of Scripture	Brother Phil Parry
Page 15. Listen Attentively to Your Opponents	Anon.
Page 16. Young People's Pages	Brother Russell Gregory

Editorial

Greetings to you all our readers.

It has been a cold winter here in the UK, and with it all the cold and flu viruses going about; but now we are looking forward to the springtime of fresh new growth.

The world we see around us has not improved, and most of us are struggling with the problems due to the rising cost of living. There is a lot of fear, distress and uncertainty in the world, with Russia and China becoming more and more threatening. We know there are many lying to one another and many who are profiteering through warfare, while many wicked people are dictating these events and manipulating them. All around the world, there is instability, and we must pray for peace and an end to war.

Whatever each of us is dealing with, we can be assured that God knows about it, and He is there to guide and comforter in our walk in life before Him.

Let us turn to Psalm 27, verses 13 and 14, where David says, "I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

Throughout our troubles and fears, can we say the same? It is not easy, dealing with fear, and finding a positive outlook, when all around us seems so hopeless. We are weak, and we depend upon the strength that comes from God.

Think on these words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, verses 28 to 30, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

It's all about holding on in there, to stand firm in our faith. It always has been, and always will be, until the return of Jesus.

Paul continues in Romans 8;37 "... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So let us keep the faith, and hold fast to that which is good, knowing that we shall be brought to glory, through the Lord Jesus Christ. That day will come, and is ever nearer.

May God's blessings be with us all.

Love in Jesus, Julian.

Psalm 122

“1. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. 2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.”

“I will make My Holy Name known in the midst of My People Israel”

One of the greatest events the world will ever experience is shortly to occur, and there are good reasons to expect it to happen in our lifetime - the invasion of Palestine by Russia and confederates.

God has a very great purpose in allowing this to happen, in fact He has even declared that He will bring the northern confederacy against His land, and He has given us His reason why. Here are some extracts from Ezekiel 38, starting at verse 4: - “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: ⁴ and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: ⁶ Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. ⁷ Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee ... in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel which is ... brought forth out of the nations ... ⁹ Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. ¹⁰ Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: ¹¹ And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, ¹² to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.”

“I will bring thee forth and all thine army ... and I will bring thee against My land ... and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand ... and I will give thee unto ... the beasts of the field to be devoured ... For I have spoken it saith The Lord. ... So will I make My Holy Name known in the midst of My people Israel; ... and the heathen shall know that I am The Lord, the Holy One in Israel” ... This is “the day whereof I have spoken” saith God. “It shall be to Israel a renown; the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God.”

And why is all this and more to happen? It is so that God may set “His Glory among the heathen” and “they shall see His judgments that He will have executed, and His hand that He has laid upon them”, “so shall the house of Israel know that I am The Lord their God from that day and forward”. Ezekiel 39 continues the story.

The above events are recorded in great detail in the 38th: and the 39th: chapters of the prophet Ezekiel; and though this was written about 2600 years ago, its fulfilment is about due for it is to occur soon after the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles terminates. Signs of this have already commenced, for in 1967 ,Jerusalem fell to the Jews and they now have control over their city, hence we may soon expect as Christ has promised, that there will soon follow “distress of nations with perplexity, men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth.” This is to be, according to Jesus the major indication of the nearness of His return. What are we asked to do about it?

“Be ye also ready”, said Christ, “for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh,” and with His coming will come the kingdom of God upon earth. This He has asked us to pray for and this is among the reasons for His return to this earth. He will then reign over the house of Israel, also the whole world and then will be fulfilled the words of the psalmist, saying in the seventy second Psalm - “He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment ... He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.. In His days shall the righteous flourish, and. abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. His name shall endure for ever:

His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.” “In that day the Lord alone shall be exalted in the earth” and so will be fulfilled God’s promise that “The desire of all nations shall come.“

Brother O.E.H. Gregory (1972)

Micah 6:6 to 8

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Continued...Part 10

VERITAS AND HIS FRIENDS.

It was hardly possible but that Dubitas, who had been closely scanning John 3:13 in the new light which Veritas had thrown upon it, should, when his eyes were at liberty, fall upon the first chapter containing the discussion of “the word.”

He waited patiently till Pietas had subsided into reflection, which he usually did after a few ineffectual struggles with the exposition of Veritas, and then drew attention to the opening words of John’s testimony.

“Yes,” said Veritas, “if you will bear in mind the Scripture representation of this “word,” scattered up and down the book, you will have no difficulty with this verse, nor in seeing that Jesus was not in any partnership of Deity. But let me ask, first, what is a word, in the general sense of the term?”

The quiet and unobtrusive Mentor replied to this question by saying that a “word” was a written or spoken symbol of our thought.

“Yes,” said Veritas; “it is that which makes (for purposes of communion) thought vocal or visible. Now, with this in our mind, let us see what the Scriptures have to say about ‘the word of God.’”

Veritas turned to 1 Sam. 3:21, and read, “And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.” “I need not tell you,” said Veritas, “that this ‘word of the Lord’ was that which was the source of all revelation and instruction to all the prophets; the oft-repeated expressions. ‘And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying’ - will be well in your memory. Now the question is whether this ‘word’ which revealed God to man, was ‘the son,’ or whether it was the spirit of God?”

Pietas broke in by saying that it was that which “was made flesh.”

“True; but not too fast,” answered Veritas; “it does not say, the son of God was made flesh, it says the ‘word,’ and now we are enquiring whether this ‘word’ was what you call ‘God, the son,’ or what the Scripture speaks of as the ‘spirit’ of God. That it was not the son, is proved by Hebrews 1:1, where God, having spoken to us by his son, is restricted to ‘these last days.’ This passage proves that God did not speak ‘in time past’ by his son, and so the son was not what the Scripture intends by the ‘word’ of God.”

Dubitas looked baffled.

“Now we are told that the spirit which was in Christ ‘without measure,’ and which constituted him the Christ, and made him the light of men, was the spirit which rested on the prophets of old, communicating to them the mind of God. In 1 Peter 1:11, this spirit (which is called the spirit of Christ, because it was the very same spirit that made Christ what he was) is said to be ‘in’ the prophets. We are expressly told (2 Ephesians 1:21) that the prophets spake ‘moved by holy spirit.’

“Then, do you understand,” asked Pietas, “that John is here speaking of holy spirit when he makes such frequent mention of the ‘word?’”

“Yes ; the ‘word’ is that which reveals the Father, just as to us a word is a symbol or expression of thought; now that which reveals the father is every where spoken of as the ‘spirit’ of God, which invested the prophets in measure and the son of God ‘without measure.’”

“Then you make Jesus to be the spirit of God,” said Dubitas, evidently hard-up for an observation.

“I make Jesus, when he was Christed by the spirit, to be the human embodiment of the divine power, wisdom, and grace; so that he could truly say to Philip, He that hath seen me hath seen the father’.”

Dubitas lightly flung away the book.

“Nay, nay;” said Veritas, warmly, “fling away your old ideas and accept the teaching of the book. What is it that offends you?”

“Offended?” replied Dubitas, mistaking his friend’s meaning. “Not I, mystified, old fellow; mystified. Who could be offended with you? I like” (with a tone of unusual sincerity) “to look at your earnest eyes and hear your voice tremble now and then, as you plead for what you think true, but I can’t understand you, much less believe with you.”

“Well, can you understand the orthodox contention, which makes Jesus to exist as a Christ before he is born; which makes an office into a person, and a purpose into an accomplished fact; which now amalgamates its ‘trinity’ and then divides it; which gives the ‘personal’ name of son to two ‘natures,’ but affirms there is but one person; which says the ‘son of God’ was one person, existing before Jesus was

born, and that another person, the 'son of man' began to exist when Jesus was born, but that the union of these produced but one person: is this the kind of thing you can understand?"

"It is all a hopeless muddle to me," said Dubitas

"But is it the same hopeless muddle to say that the spirit of God, which is the personal power of God the Father, was in the man Jesus, who became thereby the Christ, and that this spirit which became flesh, was the 'word' spoken of by John?"

"I cannot understand spirit being made flesh or the divine being embodied in the human," was the reply.

"You may not be able to comprehend the process" answered Veritas, "but there is nothing incredible in the fact; nothing incredible, I mean, arising from the fact contradicting that which you already know. The facts of nature elude your understanding, as Christ pointed out to Nicodemus, but that argues nothing against them; they are not therefore incredible. You cannot understand how vitality lays hold of dead things and transmutes them into living. If I have told you of earthly things and ye believe not, how will ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"

"But I can verify the earthly things, whereas I cannot verify what you call heavenly things," Dubitas remarked.

"Can you not?" asked Veritas. "Does not Christ stand before you to be verified? You said something a little while ago about your reverence for his character: what was it that created this reverence? A myth; a fictitious story, or a wondrous life that has filled the centuries with its aroma? What is 'verification,' pray, but the assigning of some seen result to an adequate producing cause?"

"Yes; that would be sound verification, I admit."

"Well, then, is it not more natural and easy to explain the Christ by a divine spirit resting upon him or dwelling in him, than by assuming that he had no more connection with God than you or I have?"

"As a hypothesis, I admit it might be easier," said Dubitas, "but a faith such as yours requires something more than a hypothesis to rest upon?" "Yes," said Veritas, "but remember that this hypothesis does not stand alone, but fits in with many others until a whole circle is completed, which circle becomes more than a hypothesis, even a belt of strong reason, which gives unyielding support to faith."

Here Pietas entered again into the conversation by asking how it was, if the 'word' were the spirit of God, that it could be written as in verse 1, "and the word was with God," and again in verse 2, "the same was in the beginning with God." "This," said he, "looks very much like the idea of co-partnership." "Remember," said Veritas, "though I have said the 'word' here is the spirit, I am not saying it would be suitable to substitute 'spirit' for 'word,' and it is only by such substitution that your difficulty exists. In this verse, though the underlying and, indeed, pervading idea of 'word' is 'spirit,' it is as a revealing spirit that it becomes truly the 'word.' A word is a sound, but it only becomes a word as it is an expression of thought; so the spirit is the 'word,' but it only becomes the 'word' as it contains (whether spoken or on the divine lip) a revelation of God. Now it is to this fact of revelation that the expression glances, when it says, 'the word was with God.' The revelation, as a thought or a purpose, or a mystery of his will (his good pleasure purposed in himself), was with God from the beginning, as several testimonies will prove. So that it is not as abstract spirit that the 'word' is said to have been 'with God,' but as charged with a revelation, holding and hiding a purpose, which purpose was with him from the beginning.

"Then, I understand you to believe," said Pietas, "that Jesus was constituted God to us, though you do not think he was God by nature?"

“Yes; ‘God manifest in the flesh,’ by virtue of the spirit of the Father resting upon him.” Mentor observed that the only fault he found with this view was, that it shewed too much of an effort to put into the exactness of a formulated definition, what was the unfathomable consciousness of a great and good man.

“But that ‘consciousness’ must have had some explanation, must it not?” asked Veritas.

“Oh, no doubt,” replied Mentor; “but who can tell how God manifested himself in Jesus? He may have manifested himself in others besides Jesus; in fact, I am inclined to think that in all great religious movements there have been men who have been the media of a divine communication to mankind.”

“I used to think so myself, once,” said Veritas, “but I have since changed my mind. I admit (to go back to the point) that it would be useless to speculate how God manifested himself (some of my inquisitive friends err in this direction, I know, going to the length of indecency in their babblings); but this does not make it improper for us to take what is written on the question, especially as it hangs together so well.”

“I must say,” said Pietas, “that I admire your habit of rigidly confining yourself to what is written. I admit that most of us are guilty of eking the thing out, in the course of which we invent and introduce a good deal.”

“I am glad to hear you make that admission,” Veritas replied. “ Well, then, if we are permitted to take what is written, we shall believe that in some real sense the Father dwelt in the man Jesus by his spirit, which constituted him the Christ, and which made it that it could be written, ‘All are-yours; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is GOD’S’ (1 Corinthians 3:22); and in another place, “The head of the woman is the man ; and the HEAD of Christ is GOD” (11:3).

“Your teaching simplifies the matter very much,” said Pietas, as he stroked his beard; “but, dear me, how can the clergy and learned men have gone astray through all the centuries on these things? And why has providence permitted sincere and truth-loving men to be misled so?”

“We have already talked of this, you remember, last night,” said Veritas, “and I doubt whether it would be wise in me to push my views any further on that point. I will just remind you that the Scriptures foretell the very fact which seems so incredible to you; also, that the gross perversions of theology are not the findings of a free, present-day investigation, but things which had their origin in an age when interpretation was nowhere; when the truth was living in adultery with philosophy; when the greatest nonsense that ever caused laughter to hold both its sides was being written by the sages of the ‘church,’ that these perversions have been embalmed and worshipped through centuries of ignorant tradition, and that now men generally fear to touch them; and, lastly, there is not a single error but what, at one time or another, has been protested against, and exposed with as much learning as has ever been displayed in support of it. As for your ‘sincere and truth-loving men’ whom providence permits to be misled, I confess that (present company always excepted) I don’t believe the article is often to be found. We are a bedevilled race; passion sits upon us like fate; and if a solitary instance can be found of a heroic heart, willing, prepared to bleed out its life upon a cross rather than forsake the truth, that man is known throughout a world, and is quoted for evermore; ‘he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man.’”

The words were spoken with that strong, low tone of conviction which always most successfully leaves impression on the mind. The speaker was beginning again, when, observing the late hour (it was far into the night) he, and then the others rose, and after a renewed invitation to meet again on the following evening, they parted.

To be continued.

One can't beat reading God's book and asking Him to give the appropriate insights. Works every time. Other people opinions are just other people's opinions. Jesus said, I am The Truth. Bro. Mike Hearn

Comment on Romans 7:14-21

“It is difficult to conceive how the opinion could have crept into the church, or prevailed there, that the apostle speaks here of his regenerate state; and that what was, in such a state, true of himself, must be true of all others in the same state. This opinion has, most pitifully and most shamefully not only lowered the standard of Christianity, but destroyed its influence and disgraced its character. It requires but little knowledge of the spirit of the Gospel, and of the scope of this Epistle, to see that the Apostle is here either personating a Jew, under the Law and without the Gospel, or showing what his own state was... while without Christ.”

Dr. A. Clarke

A Wresting of Scripture

It would surprise many Christadelphians to know that they have much in common with the false theories of the Roman Catholics and the Church of England; but an example of this wresting is found in their theory of Isaiah 53:4 to 6.

This theory is that Jesus took on our sinful-nature, and through dying abrogated the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him (Clause 8 of the Constitution). “The miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabled him to bear our condemnation, and at the same time to be a sinless bearer thereof and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God” (clause 9). Contradiction upon contradiction and confusion worse confounded. If the condemnation was the physical flesh, then Christ did not destroy it or the condemnation for Christadelphians believe and teach that He rose mortal and still unclean, and until God changed that mortality to immortality his condemnation was still upon him. Thank God this is not the teaching of the prophets or the Holy apostles, otherwise we would all be yet in our sins.

Let us face facts. When did Christ become the sinless bearer of Adamic condemnation? What is Adamic condemnation? Adamic condemnation was his transgression of God’s Law. Therefore it was sin. The wages of sin is death. In Adam’s case it should have been inflicted death. But a substitute was provided in God’s Son who was foreshadowed first in Eden (Revelation 15:6); then from Eden linked to the Mosaic economy, thus including faithful men such as Abel, Seth, Enoch, the Patriarchs, and those who under the Law until the first advent of Christ.

How was such a death typified or foreshadowed? By the Law of Sacrifice, which was first introduced in Eden. The sinner, not an unenlightened person, by the Law is the knowledge of sin, brought the animal for his sin offering to the High Priest, and he laid his hand upon the head of the animal and confessed over it his sin; then the High Priest killed it and afterwards pronounced his forgiveness. In this manner the sin of the man was laid upon the animal, and the animal slain in his stead.

If Jesus were unclean, then the animals were not typical of him. But truly in the words of Isaiah 53 “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” yes, the sin of the world (Adam’s sin) was laid on him at his crucifixion, and that is how Jesus took it away. “He made him to be a sin offering for us, even He who knew no sin”. Jesus Christ was not unclean. Yet another quotation wrested by Christadelphians to their own destruction.

Notice Clause 9; “Jesus suffered the death required by the righteousness of God” (Inflicted Death). Did Adam die that kind of death? The answer is ‘No.’ Adam did not. Did sin-offerings die by natural causes? ‘No.’ Can you see it now? Or do you still maintain you have sin in your flesh? “If I had not come and spoken unto you, you had not had sin, but now you say you see therefore your sin remaineth.” How can you get rid of it? “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Be crucified with Christ and buried with Him by baptism, and rise with him a new creature bought with a price from Lord Sin to serve the Lord Christ.

Brother Phil Parry

Listen Attentively To Your Opponents

We say to all who would know the truth on any question: attend to what your opponent says as well as to the opinions of your friends. You may probably know one side of a question pretty well: listen to them, and then you will be acquainted with the other. After that your conclusions will be doubly sure.

It was the spirit of suppression that kept the Bible out of circulation for centuries; it is the spirit of enquiry after truth, on the basis of the supreme authority of the Word of God that has scattered hundreds of millions of Bibles over the world, and in hundreds of languages. It is the unfettered search of modern times that has brought to light the grand foundations of truths of the Scriptures: the nature of man - the promise of life - the inheritance of the earth - and the government of the world by Christ.

It is this untrammelled search that has revealed, and is still revealing, the rotten foundations of many religious beliefs; it is the spirit of Popery which says you shall read this, but you shall not read that. "O," but the inquisitors cry, "evil communications corrupt good manners." Verily that saying is a wise saying; but whoever had his good manners corrupted by an earnest examination of earnest views of the Bible?

As of yore, the inquisitor is always gentle and has a tender conscience: he could gag your mouth; smash your pen; burn your writings; forbid the world to read them, or even to look thereon; then light a fire for your own special purgation and refinement, while from his chair he devoutly assured you of his mental sufferings through your "crooked ways" and that he should ever "preserve for you a tender spot in his heart."

But enough! Works rather than words: deeds rather than creeds! "By their fruits ye shall know them."
"Faith without works is dead"

Anon

Young People's Pages.

Hello everyone, I pray you are all well.

Our story today begins when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, and he called Esau, his oldest son, and he said to him, "My son, Look, I am old now and I do not know the day of my death. Now, therefore, I ask you to take your quiver and your bow and go out into the countryside and hunt me game and make me savoury meat of the sort I like, and bring it to me so that I can eat, so that I myself might bless you before I die."

This was the custom in those days – for father and son to share a meal before the father gives his son a blessing.

So Esau went out to hunt for a wild animal such as a deer and bring it in and prepare a meal of venison for his father. But Rebekah, Esau's mother over-heard all that was said and she had a different plan.

Do you remember that Esau and Jacob were twin brothers yet one was considered to be older than the other even though they were born on the same day. Esau was the older and he was to be given this special blessing – the Birthright - in which he became head of the family when his father died, as well as being given twice as much inheritance as Jacob his twin. However, Rebekah wanted Jacob to receive this special blessing, not Esau, so she went to Jacob saying, "I heard your father speak to Esau, your brother, saying, bring me game and make me savoury meat that I may eat and bless you in front of Yahweh before my death. So now my son, go now to the flock and fetch me from there two kids of the best goats, and I will prepare them as savoury meat for your father of the sort he likes, and bring it in to your father, so that he can eat, and so that he might bless you before his death."

Jacob was doubtful at first and said to his mother, Rebekah, "See now, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am smooth. It might be that my father will feel me, and I will seem to him as a deceiver, and I will

bring on myself a curse and not a blessing.” And his mother said to him, “Let your curse be upon me, my son. Only obey my voice and fetch the young goats for me.”

And he went and fetched them, and he brought them to his mother, and his mother made savoury meat of the sort his father liked. And Rebekah took the costly garments of her oldest son Esau that were with her in the house, and she clothed her younger son Jacob, and she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth of his neck, and she gave the savoury meat and the bread that she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob. Then he went to his father and said, “My father,” and he said, “Here I am, and who are you, my son?” And Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you ordered me. Rise up, I ask you. Sit and eat from my game, so that you yourself might bless me.” And Isaac said to his son, “How have you found it so quickly my son.” And he said, “Because The Lord brought it to me.”

And Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near, I ask you, and let me feel you, whether you are Esau, my son of not.” And Jacob drew near to Isaac, his father, and he felt him, and he said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” And he did not discern who he was because his hands were hairy like the hands of his brother Esau. And he said again, “Are you my own son Esau?” And Jacob said, “I am.” And he said, “Bring the food to me and I will eat of my son’s venison so that I myself might bless you.”

And Jacob took it to him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank. And his father Isaac said to him “Now come and kiss me my son. And he drew near and he kissed him, and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and he blessed him and said; “Now, the smell of my son is like the smell of the field that Yahweh has blessed. May The Lord give to you from the dew of the skies and the fatness of the ground and abundant corn and wine. Let peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. Be ruler over your brothers, and let the sons of your mother bow down to you and may every-one be cursed who curses you and may he be blessed that blesses you.”

And it came about, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, that his brother Esau came in from his hunting, and having prepared savoury meat, he brought it to his father, and he said to his father, “Let my father rise, and eat of his son’s venison so that you yourself might bless me.”

And Isaac his father said to him, “Who are you?” And he said, “I am your firstborn, Esau.” And Isaac trembled violently, and he said, “Then who was he who hunted the game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I blessed him, and he will indeed be blessed.”

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he called out with a strong and exceedingly bitter cry, and he said to his father, “Bless me also my father.”

And he said, “Your brother came with craftiness, and he has taken away your blessing.”

And he said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has out witted me these two times. He took away by birthright and, look, now he has taken away my blessing, and he said, have you not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered, and he said to Esau, “see now, I have made him a mighty man over you, and I have given all **your** brothers to him for servants, and I have sustained him with corn and wine. And for you, then what can I do, my son?” And Esau said to his father, “Is there but one blessing from you, my father? Bless me, me also my father”. And Esau raised his voice and wept. And his father Isaac answered, and he said to him: “See now, away from the fertility of the ground will be your dwelling and away from the dew of the skies above; and by your sword you will live and your brother you will serve and it will come to pass when you fight that you will break his yoke from your neck.”

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing his father blessed him with, and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then I will kill my brother Jacob.

And these words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah, and she sent word and called Jacob, her younger son, and she said to him, "Listen, your brother Esau is going to avenge himself on you, to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and rise up. Flee to Laban my brother to Haran. And stay there for a few days until your brother's fury turns away. Until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send word and fetch you from there. Why should I also be bereaved of you both in one day?"

And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these from the daughters of the land, what is my life to me?"

And Isaac called Jacob, and he blessed him, and he instructed him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Rise up, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take a wife from there, from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. And may El Shaddai bless you, and make you fruitful, so that you might become a company of peoples, and may He give you the blessing of Abraham to you, and to your seed with you, and that you might inherit the land of your travels that The Lord gave to Abraham." And Isaac sent Jacob on his way. And he went to Padan Aram, to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. And here he stayed for many years.

You can find today's story in Genesis chapter 27 and the first few verses of chapter 28. And next time we will talk about Jacob's adventures in Padan Aram

But before we finish today let us see what we can say about this sad story; the family were so divided and unhappy. Deceiving one another with Jacob telling lies to his father, Isaac, while Isaac favoured Esau, the first born, and Rebekah, their mother, favours Jacob the younger twin. Yet for all this, we see that Isaac and Rebekah, the twins parents were quickly reconciled and accepted that God was in control of events and all things fitted in with God's purpose for the future.

So let's see what we have been told - Do you remember from our last lesson that while the twins were still in Rebekah's womb she wondered why they seemed to be struggling together and so she asked why this should be and the Lord God told her that there were two nations in her womb who in time would grow from her twins and those of her older child would serve the younger? This was a prophecy which came to pass in time but in their lifetimes the hate of Esau for his younger brother Jacob quietened down and they both became very prosperous with large families. In time they became two nations and it was these two nations who quarrelled and fought each other for many hundreds of years!

The other thing we should remember is that Esau had already given his Birthright blessing which was due to him as the firstborn son to Jacob in a moment of weakness. This also God foreknew

We have seen too how their father Isaac though disappointed that the blessing he meant for his elder son Esau he seems to have realised was meant for Jacob and he agreed with Rebekah that Jacob should go to Haran and find a wife from there. At no time did Esau serve Jacob and we learn from history this servitude did not apply to the brothers Esau and Jacob but it eventually applied to their descendants.

Till next time, love and blessings in Jesus Christ to one and all,

Russell

* * * * *

