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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Evening, August 7. 1983.

Lesson. Genesis 37. vv. 23-36. & 45.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob.

Genesis 49. vv. 22-24.

It appeared to me in the case of the beloved Joseph we have a beautiful, wonderful demonstration of the branch in Christ that beareth fruit and 'he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' So we have a demonstration of the text of the day relative to a fruitful branch that abides by grace and faith and immutable love in the Lord Jesus. I hope the matter that will be delivered to you by the Spirit, as I hope, will be instructive, edifying, confirming, comforting, cheering, reviving, because you may be in the section that is joined to great blessing; the experience of archers with bows and arrows. They had a target, poor dear Joseph. If so, and no child of God escapes Christian warfare and the experience of tribulation in following our blessed Redeemer, may this portion be a great strength and consolation, also a manual of divine instruction to you as to your stance and behaviour and attitude in your painful path, as it may well be. There will be a good issue. That is why I gathered together two portions as one Lesson, so you could see both sides. Shining forth as a sunbeam from Heaven the Spirit and nature of Christ and the love of God in the heart and spirit and attitude, and the manifestation of the attitude of Joseph to his murderous, belligerent brethren, as many of them were. He is one of the lively types of Christ. We may read the sweet blessing and see in it a greater than Joseph, our blessed Lord Himself. No one can ever assess the dimensions of the sovereign, immutable, boundless, everlasting love manifested by the Saviour when He was crucified on yonder tree at Mount Calvary. The first words from His sacred lips were "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

"Hark! how He prays, (the ^{air} charming sound
Dwells on His dying lips,) 'Forgive!'
And every groan and gaping wound
Cries, 'Father, let the rebels live!'"

This will break your heart to pieces. It does not matter where you are, child of God, in the Sanctuary, in the home, or away for a day or two, or at work, what you will pray for is the priority; to feel the presence of the Lord Jesus. Once you get this it will melt, break, soften your heart, and you will be satisfied concerning your interest in the atonement, in the Covenant of Grace, in the great heart of God, in His love, in the work of intercession, advocacy, mediation now. You will want to turn aside and weep awhile under the sweet sense of mercy that flows into your soul.

I will turn for the continuity of the discourse to the auspices concerning Joseph. The divine auspices concerning the Lord's son and servant Joseph are marked, blessed, encouraging. I hope they may find an echo in the breasts of the many children of God present. I will tabulate five things beloved Rachel knew in the gift and birth of the dear Christ-like child and man as he became by grace. What are they? We might go back and say concerning important things in your life, or things of life that affect you deeply now, are the auspices good? Are there a number of indications of divine favour and blessing resting on the event, or time, or occasion? I go aside to say, take the solemnisation of holy matrimony, or the triumphant Home call of a child of God, a blissful funeral service which is like a wedding; one simple thing is, it may be dark, stormy, windy, inclement weather. Presently as the time approaches the sun penetrates the clouds, as though one can feel that God is smiling on what is taking place and indicating where His people are. There are times when this is marked. It is so conspicuous; not only is the sun penetrating the clouds, but the Sun of Righteousness is shining into our soul and theirs. There may be a rainbow envelops all, as though God who controls all things is smiling. The auspices are good. Wonderful if God smiles on an important event or occasion as He has done through the years. The auspices are so wonderful from God in relation to the entrance of Joseph into the world. "God remembered Rachel." There is everything in that. God remembers you.

He never forgets His dear people. There is special significance to it, expressed by, "The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great." The Lord remembered Rachel, and He remembers you in your low estate. He remembers where you live, the trial you are in, the difficulties, the sorrows you feel, the prayers you offer in His Name. He didn't leave her in trouble. Dear younger friends, the Lord remembered Rachel. I do not want you to think as you go to work that the Lord has no interest in you. The Lord remembers you. He knows the things that are a priority in your life, what you need the Lord to do for you, the difficulties of your position, the dilemmas you are in, and He knows the dear desire of your heart. The Lord remembered Rachel, and He remembers all His dear people. It is a significant indication that the Lord will appear for you, bless you, hear your petitions and favour you. When you get that at work think concerning this, every yard of the road, every mile the Lord remembers you. Remembrance is indicative of covering, protection, beneath the shadow of His wings. Ruth was favoured. "under whose wings thou art come to trust." The Lord remembered Rachel. You want the dear Lord to remember you, and to remember where you live, all concerning your case, your afflictions, anxieties, your children and dear ones. So there is everything in this.

Second, "And God hearkened to her," listened to her prayer. Praying, living souls, blessed souls pray. They may say they can't. They do, more than they think, in groans, tears, sighs. And there are specific things in your prayer. Mr Covell prayed that his dear son who was sorely afflicted, might not come to a violent end. The Lord hearkened to him and he died peacefully, The Lord hearkened to Rachel. What are you praying for, dear friends? I can judge you pray for your immortal souls and the souls of dear ones. Are there specific things you pray for? It is a lovely word. He hearkened to her, listened. You may say, "Will He hearken to me?" If it is the prayer of faith under the influence of the Spirit He will. There are times when you lose your load, the Lord has hearkened to you. It may be it is a crowning blessing you are seeking of God. The Lord hearkened to Rachel. He knows how to. Some of

you have abundantly expressed in your testimony your desire to prove the reality of the eternal Being. Would He perform something to confirm your faith in Him, and the Lord hearkened to you. What encouragement to pray on! I have prayed for many things for twenty, twenty-five years but the Lord has answered. Sometimes He answers quickly. "and God hearkened to her," listened to her prayer. "and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son." The third thing is she received a very great blessing from God, a favour, a mercy. A wonderful blessing is a gift from God.

The fourth is another remarkable thing. I wonder if it fits you? She said, "God hath taken away my reproach." There are souls under reproach, and Churches are. Not until a month ago did I hear it expressed in public. A man praying said, "Lord, take away our reproach" in a Church manner. There are souls under reproach and it is hard to bear. I wonder how many of you feel this is the blessing you seek, that the Lord will take away your reproach? This is a helpful word to me. I have been reproached, walked in it, lived in it, and God has taken it away. I cast this blessed truth before ^{you} for your comfort. As He did it for Rachel He can for all who feel they are under reproach. It is a lovely experience to walk on the earth and know your reproach is removed. It can break your heart. The Psalmist said in prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus, "Reproach hath broken my heart."

Then the fifth, "And she called his name Joseph." There is special significance in the name. "The Lord shall add to me." As to the application of the word I leave it with the Lord. "The Lord shall add to me another son." It is wonderful for pastors, praying souls that are pillars of the Church if they are able to say, "The Lord shall ^{add} to me another son." There are auspices. Israel says in his prophetic blessing "Joseph is a fruitful bough." A bough is a large branch. "Joseph is a fruitful bough." How do I see it? In relation to his spirit; the wonderful exemplary likeness to His blessed Lord and Master that he bore. It was brought out in all its glory and beauty in the second part of our Lesson, because his murderous brethren he forgave and kissed. There was no retribution, he freely kissed them all. "Come near to me." If there was ever the fruit of love there it is; the Spirit of Christ.

If some said concerning you, "Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him," how would you feel? The spirit of murder is in the heart of man. After a number of years he kisses them all and forgives them. "Joseph is a fruitful bough." The sweet Spirit of Christ was operative in him. He said, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither."

I will remind you of three things in the text of the day; three things in fruitfulness. The first is cleansing. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." There is no fruitfulness without cleansing. The second is, abiding in Him, in His love and by precious faith and the actings of faith on Him, and learning of Him. Third, keeping His commandments. I wonder if in reading the subject you arrived at the commandment? It was, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you," with limitless love. There is no fruitfulness without these three conditions. If we are defiled we are not fruitful. If we are cleansed by the blood of Christ we are in a wonderful condition for fruitfulness. Abiding in Him, learning of Him, receiving His Spirit, keeping His commandments, loving one another. "Joseph is a fruitful bough." He was cleansed, and he abode in the Lord Jesus. There is no greater love in the Lord's Church than this. He produces it in our souls by His Spirit. I have known for the weapons of revenge to fall from my hand. I have completely lost enmity, bitterness, revenge, and in place of it I have felt a special dispensation of grace in prayer.

So "Joseph is a fruitful bough." Look at the love, tenderness, compassion. He would feed his father and brethren and their little ones, and go on feeding them. That is what love does. There is nothing without love. You must allow me a personal word: this has gone on for years. Many of you do not remember the Chapel at Ripe. In the early days I remember casting my eyes over the congregation, broken-hearted in love to the flock and in receiving them from the hand of God. If you want to prosper ask the Lord to shed abroad His love in your heart by the Holy Ghost. What an influence love has! The odour of the ointment fills the house. Joseph has a secret; he is a fruitful bough by a well. If you see a tree prolific for growth and fruitfulness, it

is where there is much water. Water stands for the Holy Spirit. Are your roots in the well so divine unction and virtue constantly flow to your branch? No wonder there is a fruitful bough, to feel the divine, sweet, heavenly unction of the Spirit! Some have said concerning the ministry, it is an ever-flowing stream because of the well. It is never stale, it never dries up. O my friends, beg of the Lord to grant that your roots may be in the deep sweet well of His Spirit.

"Whose branches run over the wall." A wall is for support, and it is synonymous with the foundation, the Lord Jesus. The branch clings to Christ. It is supported by Christ, sustained by Christ, made beautiful and prolific by Christ. Look at the branch for beauty and fruitfulness. The secret is it is a branch over a wall, for divine support, wonderful protection. You will be amazed in God's ~~in God~~ Creation what things cling to. The soul clings to Christ. I do not know all you feel or are in. You cling to Christ, my dear friends. Your branch runs over the wall. He is your support. You will never fail.

"The archers", devilish soldiers with their equipment for war, bows and arrows. You have got some inside you. Your wicked heart holds archers; the devil and his agents. "The archers have sorely grieved him." I wonder if you are in that place? They shot at and hated him. You are shot at by your wicked heart. But Joseph's brethren hated him. At every opportunity they used weapons of war and shot at him. They sorely grieved him. It is a path to tread. I am not telling you you will live in the extremity of it all your days. You will be brought out of it. But for a time you are a target. Poor soul, but you have got your secret. I could say to you, you have got your weapon. I will call it an instrument. Joseph had a bow. We do not read of arrows for him. The bow is living faith. "And the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The muscles that control the hands are the arm muscles. God does it by His strength, skill, wisdom. You take your bow. "His bow abode in strength. Send your cries, tears, prayers, groans to Heaven. Faith does that. Put in your bow your prayers, tears, groans, sighs and send it to Heaven, to the dear Redeemer. His bow abode in strength and he prevailed. Love always prevails. The Lord prevails over all His enemies, and His people know

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what it is to prevail.....Was there battle when Joseph kissed all his brethren? Was there when he sent messages and the wagons for his father? when Jacob said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."? No. There was sweet love, reunion, peace, tranquility, holiness, righteousness. It was a glorious event. The Lord bless you dear ones, all of you, that your bow may abide in strength. One day you will see, we shall, the King's beauty and no more go out. Amen.