

A BROTHER'S SACRIFICE

(A True Story)

How often it has been proved that fact is stranger to the mind than fiction. The following story may appear to some readers to be one such instance; but it is not this that makes it worth the telling. Rather does its value lie in its analogous property to a far greater, more glorious story recorded in the inspired pages of man's treasured possession the Bible. It has been well said that a sermon without illustration is like a house without windows; and therefore this story is penned as an illustration of the Gospel Message.

The elder twin of a wealthy Greek was a sober living man acknowledged by all to be a devout Christian. In contrast his younger brother, the black sheep of the family, could be characterised as a popular man of fashion.

The elder brother sought opportunities for commending Christ to his twin, warning him of the dangers of persistent loose living and blasphemous speaking. Wearying of this frequent 'preaching' the young man besought his brother to desist, adding:-

"I respect your attitude to these things, but I am not in the least interested." This terminated their last conversation on the subject.

Invited to some coming of age celebrations the younger man was found one evening among his drinking friends. Under this influence he reopened a quarrel with a man to whom he had become reconciled. They were soon fighting furiously, until the foolish aggressor, getting the worst of it, drew a knife and mortally wounded his antagonist. Sobered by the fright of the realisation of what he had done he fled, and, after a mad journey through lashing rain, reached his home, crying out as he entered: "I have killed a man! The police are chasing me!"

The elder brother, roused by this outburst, enquired what had happened. Upon hearing the story he ordered him to go to his room, remove his muddy blood stained clothes, and hand them out to him. Thus they exchanged clothes, and, while the exhausted murderer remained silent in his room, the elder twin donned the soiled garments so becoming, to all appearances, identical with his headstrong brother. He then descended to the hall in time to be met there by the police who immediately took him into custody.

In due course he was tried and found guilty. Before the death sentence was pronounced he was asked if he had anything to say. He replied: "You have condemned me for this crime. I am prepared to suffer the consequences."

Prior to his execution a request was granted, allowing him to write a letter which was delivered unopened to his younger brother. It read:-

"I stand today wearing your clothes, condemned for crime you committed. You stand wearing my clothes, a free man. You asked me never to 'preach at you' again, but you will allow this last word from me. This is just what my Lord did in dying for me. Goodbye."

The letter so touched his heart that in great grief and shame he fell to the ground begging God in His mercy to look upon him. God honoured the prayers of the saintly brother and from that day the young man found in Jesus a Saviour and Lord.

Time passed, but it soon became rumoured that the wrong man had been punished. The rumours became so insistent that an enquiry was made. But while this committee of enquiry established the truth, it also ruled that the law could not strike twice for one offence. The claims of the law had been met; therefore the law could not punish again. By his brother's death, this man was justified in the sight of the law. He lived for some years in obscurity and poverty, having placed the whole of his fortune into the hands of lawyers who formed a trust, through which children of the poor were helped to a good education. Before he died he asked that his body may be dressed again in the clean clothes his brother gave him on that memorable day.

Friend, do you not see, in this simple tale, a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for those who trust in Him. The Lord Jesus, Who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

It was for the crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree
Amazing pity, grace unknown
And love beyond degree.

Just as this saintly young man died to liberate his brother, so Jesus became flesh, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and bore our sins in His body on the tree. There at His crucifixion Jesus suffered the penalty of our sins. Thus Paul, an apostle, was able to write to the saints that in Christ Jesus they who had been far off from God by their sin, were made nigh by the blood of Jesus.

Guilty, vile and helpless we,
Spotless Son of God was He.

Yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

Will you not accept this great salvation? Everything necessary for reconciliation to God has been accomplished by Christ. As a sinner, you must trust in Christ, relying wholly upon what He has done. Then, clothed in His righteousness, you will have eternal life and will one day pass from earth to heaven, where Jesus is now glorified having been raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand.

Can you afford to let such a message from God your Judge go unheeded? Remember:-

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3.36