

Transforming Daily
“... *mercy* ...”
Genesis 43:14

Israel, referred to in the text, is Joseph’s father Jacob. The name change was part of the blessing from the Man that Joseph wrestled with and prevailed against in Genesis 32:28. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, “Prince with God.” Jacob’s whole life was one of struggle and deception, even from the womb and with his brother Esau, but Jacob also was never without the mercy of God. I don’t think Jacob was fully discerning of that reality. Jacob seemed to think that everything was against him (42:36-38, 43:11, 14).

In this case, the food that his nine sons had returned home with was gone and they needed more food because the famine was not only bad, the Bible says that it was severe. Jacob didn’t want to send his sons back to Egypt because Joseph (his identity still unknown to Jacob and his sons) required the presence of Benjamin, the youngest brother, in order for the other brothers to be able to trade in Egypt. From a human perspective, the outcome looked hopeless. Jacob’s family needed food, and all of Canaan for that matter, so Jacob would have to submit to the demands of the “lord of the land” (Joseph) by sending his sons back to Egypt with Benjamin.

What Israel didn’t understand was that he had, and was presently, experiencing the mercy of God. However, in the midst of the turmoil and with the prospect of losing another son (supposing that he had already lost Joseph and Simeon) everything looked bleak to Jacob. He was looking through the eyes of the natural man rather than the eyes of the spiritual man. Israel was leaning on his own understanding rather than that of God’s. Subsequently, Israel, the nation, would do the same thing as Israel, the man, and it would cost them dearly (and still is costing them dearly to this day).

But before anyone judges Jacob (and the nation of Israel) too harshly, let them (and the church) consider their own ways. There are few people who can withstand trouble and travail without getting into the flesh. It is of great spiritual discipline to think with the mind of Christ before one engages his or her natural manner of reasoning and reaction. Believers are no exception to calamity, nor the natural reaction to it. The first response is usually one of immediate physical action rather than poised, wise discernment, especially when significant loss is in the balance such as losing a loved one, or total loss of one’s possessions, or terminal illness, etc. However, we are not without hope!

God’s mercy endures forever, and has been lavishly poured out on mankind (John 3:16)! The present circumstances may seem bleak or without escape, but it only seems that way. The Bible instructs us to lean not on our own understanding, but on the understanding of the Lord. Be encouraged and turn your eyes upon Jesus! Trust in the Lord with your whole heart.

Are you going through a rough patch of life right now? Do you feel alone and with no support? Does it feel like everyone is against you and there is no end in sight for the pain and trouble? Believe it or not, God knows what you’re experiencing and cares. As a matter of fact, if you’re a believer, He is right there with you and He will never leave you nor forsake you. His love knows no end. As you grow in the beauty and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, may God almighty continue to give you mercy!