

Our Blood Brother, **PAUL**

“The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people and say, you will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.’ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them. Therefore, I want you to know that **God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!**” (Acts 28:25-28)

She stood aghast with her hand pressed against her lips, she followed him as he stomped passed.

Tethered to Roman soldiers, he led them away in a huff mumbling to the ground, “those—obstinate, self-righteous brothers who shepherd my people into falsehood... religious ignorance—”

“Paul,” she called out. “Hey, Paul!”

He stopped and winced straining back. “Who are you?”

“I want to say thanks—for sticking up for us!”

“Who is *us*?”

“I’m one from the house of Israel!”

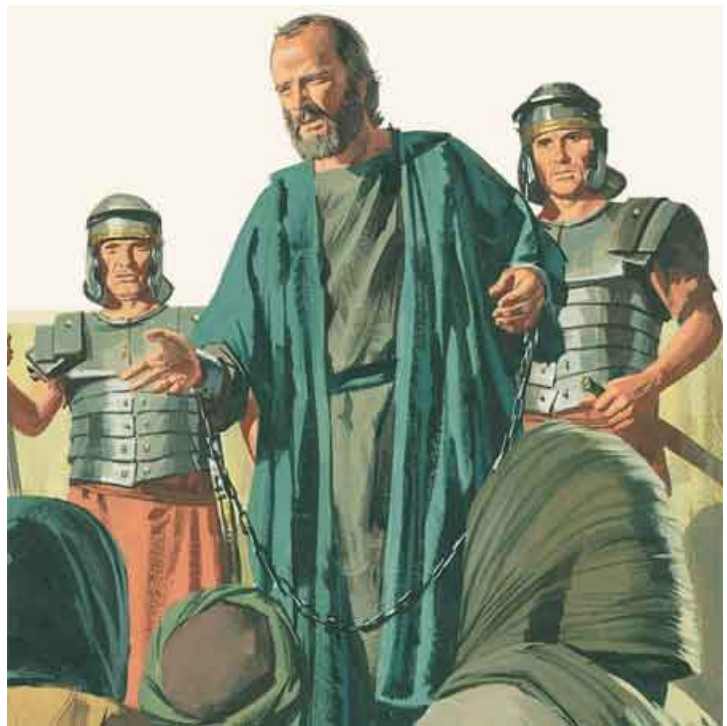
“Ah! What a breath of fresh air!”

“Who? Us?” she looked around unsure he was talking to her. “We’re but dogs to you! Divorced, hated, cut off!”

“That’s not so, my sister—from the house of Joseph. Yes?”

She nodded.

“Look at me—the reason for these chains is because **I preach the hope of Israel!** (Acts 28:20). You are no longer adulterers, no longer cut off. Christ died on the cross to **save the house of Joseph and to strengthen the house of Judah!** (Zechariah 10:6). You are now again—a virgin! Remember the words of Jeremiah, ‘You will be built up again, my virgin Israel’ (Jeremiah 31:4). My sister, I preach



<https://www.lds.org/manual/new-testament-stories/chapter-63-paul-finishes-his-mission?lang=fra>

the death of our Saviour, which made possible the **saving of a once-divorced house of Israel** and His death makes **redemption** available for **ALL of mankind!** Through His resurrection, I preach of **our resurrection**; He is the first of the resurrected.”

“I know! We are grateful,” she responded with radiant smile.

“It was a **great mystery** at one time,” Paul added.

“A mystery?” she echoed.

“Our ancestors wondered for hundreds of years what would become of the divorced house of Israel. It was thought that you would be forever cut off. I don’t want you to be ignorant of this mystery—Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles, that is, you once-divorced, cut off Gentiles have come in. And, so **ALL of Israel will be saved**, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; **he will turn godlessness away from Jacob**. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins’. **You are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.**”

“Loved” she echoed, “—on account of the patriarchs... irrevocable.”

Paul scouted for any spies and whispered, “Yes, irrevocable. You have received mercy—grace. And—now my house has become disobedient, but soon we too, will understand grace. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. No one will be conceited in their own righteousness” (Romans 11:25-32).



Then Jesus said to the woman, "I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

“Mercy—grace?” Her voice dropped out of the whisper and she exclaimed, “That is good news—the good news!”

He reached towards her, the chains pulled against him as he strained to wipe her cheek, smearing her tears into a dirty outline of his fingers.

“Christ told us to go to **you** and give **you** the good news.”

She smiled and her wet eyes twinkling in the sunlight. “Amazing—grace! He saved us!”

He reached up again smearing the other side into a full handprint. “You’re saved! You know that it is written, ‘These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: *Do not go onto the road of the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’* (Matthew 10:6). So, it is my honor and great pleasure to come to *you*, my brothers and sisters who were once dead and far away, but now you have been saved and he is bringing you close again. O house of Joseph, you are my blood brother and I will *not* fail you. Our mother, Rachel weeps for your return, really the return of all who repent.”

He drew her into a clumsy embrace. The chains that bound his hands and his feet were held by a motley gang of brutes, dragged behind him along a worn-out street. A heavy-set boxy shaped soldier approached and pushed against Paul breaking their re-union. He pulled away and the soldier returned a long sharp stare.

Paul whispered, “Dear sister, remember to *do all that Moses taught.*”

Bright eyed, she nodded.

“Keep the commandments, God’s ordinances, and judgements. All that was given to Moses was for our benefit. Remember the Sabbaths—all of them. He loves you! Our God set his affection on our forefathers and loved them, and he chose them and their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the Lord **our God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, all mighty and awesome**” (Deuteronomy 10:15-17).

“I will,” she whispered, peering ever so slightly through the corner of her eye, she added, “And I want to get you out of these chains.”

“Don’t mind me.” He brushed her chin and their eyes locked. “My journey is bitter sweet. You—sweet sister, I do not press you to change everything all at once. I have given the house of Israel leniency with the hope that in time, you will purge yourself of the pagan traditions that you have adopted as you wandered through the nations.”

“Traditions,” she coughed, then cleared her throat. “We may disappoint you—”

“Disappoint? Never!” He tried brushing her hair from her eyes—but the bulky interference only made matters worse. “I missed you, dear house of Joseph. You wanted to be like the nations (Ezekiel 20:32). Do you worry about your past?”



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She nodded.

“Leave your mistakes in the past—those rebellious days living like the Gentiles,” he said.

“But—Paul, oh, so much has happened since you came to teach us. Years have gone by. We today, are still chasing power and might, striving for status, battling for political and economic control, stealing from nations not only their resources, but by creating financial products of mass destruction.”

She leaned away whispering, “There was a time when Ephraim spoke, people trembled; he was exalted in Israel, but he became guilty of Baal worship and died (Hosea 13:1). Is there really hope for us?”

His voice soft and mellow, he said, “Stand at the crossroads and look; **ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls** (Jeremiah 6:16). God desires a **humble people relying on Him**—a people who **willingly obey Him**. His ways are good; they bring peace, justice, and an end to suffering. O house of Israel he wants you to come home!”

“Paul, my dear brother—loyal and true.” She closed her eyes releasing a heavy sigh and gasped, “My people are stuck. **You** traveled far and wide teaching us what we had forgotten and spreading the good news of our redemption.” She stopped abruptly, pressing her lips together and locking them shut.

“Is there something wrong?” he asked leaning in, taking her hand, searching her eyes.

“Well—we did take the gospel to the world. We did that! That was good.”

He smiled nodding his head.

Her voice fell into a whisper, “Oh! We took the gospel to the whole world along with our traditions that we did not root out.”

She pressed her hand against her mouth again, her eyes teared. “Things became mixed—pagan traditions—mixed up. The whole nation celebrates sun worship and those baked raisin cakes to the goddess Ishtar. They have ‘Christianized’ those traditions. Constantine contributed to the corruption of the original ancient paths and we often walk in darkness.”

“Oh!” His hands folded one in the other, he squeezed them, wringing them until they were white. “No—how is it that you turned again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Galatians 4:8-11).

She caressed his hands bringing back a healthy pink.

“Paul—you said that we battle not against flesh and blood but against principals in heavenly places. They beguiled many like a powerful spell.” Kissing his hands, she pleaded. “They keep many believers and non-believers living life—without a single thought to ask the simplest of questions. Paul, Constantine at the Council of Nicea, he made many changes—not all good.”

“Constantine?” He released a heavy sigh.

Behind them a regiment of soldiers marched lifting street dirt into a cloud, yet business continued as usual. Surveillance in the form of pesky humans dressed like plastic action figures looked rather like a collection on a shelf than a strategic display of power. The two soldiers fastened to Paul’s chains moved into his space and stood at attention with their hand on their sword.

“Excuse me,” she said, pushing against the guards. “Stand down!”

They stood their ground, as she stood back realizing they had not likely washed for a long time.

“Relax!” She ordered. “You’re way overdressed in your warrior attire. We won’t be voting for you in the future and if you know anything about democracy, you will quickly learn that *you* need to *please* the people!” She flung her arms around pointing to an obscure place for them and their military friends to huddle around a weathered rock resting against an old tale-bearing tree. She gave them her eagle eye and an unbreakable stare that left them perplexed and disorientated.

She turned to Paul. “Now—I see what you had to deal with—every day. It’s any wonder that the house of Judah so badly wanted Christ to overthrow these Romans back then. They must have gone mad seeking freedom from these thugs. That’s probably why they rebelled in 70 A.D. isn’t it?” She looked up with an iron glare. The soldiers responded with a quick head drop towards the ground.

She sighed. “We know it wasn’t Christ’s plan to rescue you then. I’m sorry, the house of Judah in Jerusalem suffered immensely during those times, but as you said earlier, He came first to **save**. Ignoring the fact that the religious leaders of Judah loved relishing in self-glory and refused to change, another consideration to why the Jews rejected Christ as their Messiah, may have been that they were delirious for freedom from the—”

She stood up and shouted, “barbaric” then dropped her voice, “Romans, but our brothers will come to see Him as their Savior in the near future. ‘God will pour out the spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first-born son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon’ (Zechariah 12:10-11). Paul—”

He leaned into her and she took his cupped hands and gently caressed them.

“Paul—Christ has extended us, the house of



Israel—grace and soon your house, the house of Judah will ask for grace too, when they acknowledge our Savior. I know you understand that we need both the law and grace—together.”

“Who taught you that?” He asked.

“It’s all in the Book of Acts and Romans—your story!”

“Amazing, I—the *least* of all the Apostles—”

She nudged him with her elbow. “You’re *not* the least! You’re an expert on the law, like your brothers, the Jews. When grace was offered to us, we accepted it immediately and we cherished it—to this day. Maybe, even used it to excuse ourselves way too much. I can see that our two houses represent two important elements of God: law and grace. We can help each other.”

She winked.

Paul smiled and rested back on the rubble once a column. It was a tough life of dust and dirt, no immediate amenities or luxuries visible anywhere in sight. Soldiers dressed for the movies added only an element of humor to a scene full of hardship.

“Paul,” she hesitated and under her breath she whispered, “Tell me, tell me, tell me, should I say?”

“You worry—” he said.

“Yes—it is just about the traditions. I think you should know—around 321 A.D. – quite a bit of time in your future. Constantine replaced the Biblical Passover with Easter—Ishtar that pagan fertility goddess at a council that we call the *Council of Nicea*. Constantine hated the Jews and said, ‘It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast [Easter] we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd’ (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3, 18-19, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1979, second series, Vol. 1, pp. 524-525).”

Paul stood up in a rage. “I will take them to court!”

The Roman soldiers scuttled into their battle positions.

“Hey!” She shouted staring down the soldiers. “Stand down!”

The soldiers drew their swords.

“Hey!” She threw her hands on her hips and stomped towards them flinging dirt in every direction from her memory foam runners. “Listen boys, the man is still in chains and goin’ nowhere. I stand before you unarmed. What is *your* problem?”

She held her ground with much success. They stood down, sitting in a huddle on the ground.

Shaking her head, she returned scowling and rolling her eyes.

“My sister,” Paul said. “These are Roman soldiers!”

She took a second look. “Skirts?”

Under his breath he muttered, “Now I know what God meant when he said that the house of Israel was obstinate, tough with—briers and thorns.”

She chuckled. “Welcome to the 21st century attitude. But, I want to continue—” Her frown lines deepened, her eyes pained. “Constantine—he also changed the day of rest to Sunday, the sun god day of dedication.”

She grabbed his arm and whispered, “Don’t stand up. I don’t know how long I can play this game with those brutes.”

He nodded cautiously.

“Then, Constantine made it difficult for Jews and Christians to keep the Sabbath. In addition, 100 years later at the Council of Laodicea, they outlawed Sabbath-keeping and Christian observance of the biblical Holy Days. The sun-cult merged into Christianity. Their nativity-feast on 25 December, the birthday of the sun at the winter solstice became known as Christmas, a celebration of the birth of Christ even though Christ was never born on that day!”

Paul dropped his head.

“I’m sorry Paul. Over the years, those principalities in dark places have hidden the ancient paths by mixing and distorting traditions. Christians *were* loyal to God’s teachings, we suffered martyrdom for many, many years. We were seen as imperial rebels. They blamed us for every misfortune. We didn’t falter then and the persecution—it strengthened us.”

They sat face-to-face. Paul had broken into a sweat, while she found refuge in his shadow.

“When Constantine came to power, oh Paul, he may have thought that he was doing the right thing. He valued the Christian beliefs of love, charity and mercy, which gave them a unity he admired. I think he wanted to bring this unity and harmony to the Roman Empire.”

She stopped to search her memory. Paul gestured her to continue.

“So, taking caution and understanding the power and influence of paganism, Constantine proceeded to Christianize the empire. With a level of sincerity, he enforced more humane laws. Crucifixions were abolished, adultery and the taking of concubines were discouraged. His laws considered the widows, children, slaves and beggars. He didn’t understand the power that he was going up against. Compromise became his most effective weapon. So, we Christians today have ugly spots, deep wrinkles and offensive blemishes in our theology.”

He took a long deep breath and looked up into the sky as if in prayer.

“Paul—I don’t want you to worry. There is a remnant. They’re preparing. And those ugly spots, deep

wrinkles and offensive blemishes: the misconceptions, the traditions of men, and the falsehoods will be removed—soon. The remnant has the baton, and they *will* take it all the way to the finish line!”

He bobbed, turning toward her.

“I’m a bringer of difficult news—I’m sorry—but Paul—” She grabbed his hands and squeezed them tight. “We’re going to participate in the greatest witness to the world, ever!”

Her eyes glistened as she spoke. He listened, softly watching her every expression, nodding with excitement, awe, and wonder.

“It will ignite a revival of unprecedented heights during that time of our distress. The two houses of Israel will return to our God weeping and trembling and He will bring us back into the land. **With an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath**, He will not allow us to remain like the Gentiles.”

“Ezekiel prophesied that!” Paul interjected.

“He is going to bring us out from the nations and gather us from the countries where He scattered us. In the desert of the nations, there face-to-face He will execute judgment. He will take note of each one of us as we pass under His staff. The evil doer will not be allowed to continue into the land. He will clean us up and we will have a renewed heart wanting to obey Him. **We will remember our previous conduct and actions and we will abhor ourselves**” (Ezekiel 20:33-43).

“And so—it will take yet another time of distress and captivity before the nations of Israel repent and humble themselves before the Almighty God, the God of gods, the Lord of lords.”

Paul took a deep breath slowly looking up into heaven. “Then—so be it,” he whispered.

“Paul.” He turned towards her. “Your work was never in vain. You and the apostles did an incredible job. **God bless you!**”

Compiled by Janette Andrejowich