

PRODIGAL SONS

Part Nine

“Well don’t look now, but we seem to have more visitors!” Michael pointed to a small group of men heading towards their camp.

“I recognize Simon,” Telesphor seem to relax a bit.

“I think you are right,” Eliud agreed, “but I don’t recognize the other two, but the fourth is one of Simons men.”

“The old man can’t be dangerous,” Telesphor added. “Maybe the other is his son?”

“Our oasis in the middle of nowhere is getting crowded,” Abe mentioned.

“There is always room for more friends,” Eliud reminded.

“Shalom, Simon!” Eliud greeted his party and invited them around the campfire. “We would offer you something to eat but we ended our meal a while ago, and I am sure the women finished any cooked food by now.”

“No need,” Simon talked for their small group. “Our friends arrived at our camp early in the day and we have already eaten, but I wanted you to meet them.”

“Anyone we know, Simon,” Eliud asked.

“Yes and no,” Simon teased with his cryptic answer. “This is Felix, a Roman friend of mine!”

“That is a surprise,” Telesphor said with interest. “I thought you had such a hatred for Romans after what they did to your son. I am surprised but pleased that you even introduce your friend as a Roman.”

“There are good ones,” Simon admitted, “and then there is Felix who is a Christian.”

“So, there are actually good Romans?” Eliud teased.

“This Roman knew my father,” Simon simply said with emotion.

“Thanks for mentioning our reason for our friendship in Christ,” Felix added, “since it was Jesus who brought your father and I together.”

"Yes, he loved to tell me the story many times," Simon mentioned, "and I never tired of listening to him repeating it."

"Before us get anymore crowded here in the oasis," Abe teased, "please explain this Christ person."

"As we were talking about before in the book of Isaiah," Telesphor offered, "the servant in his book is the anointed one, the Christ."

"We believe that Jesus ben Joseph is this anointed one, the Messiah," Eliud added.

"I thought Isaiah was talking about Cyrus, King of Persia?" Abe asks.

Michael interrupts, "I am more interested in what Jesus ben Joseph, the Christ, has to do with your relationship," Michael interrupts looking at Simon and Felix, "especially you father, Simon?"

"Meet the Centurion," Simon again simply says, "Felix, who was at the foot of his cross."

The brothers Abe and Michael, and their hosts Eliud and Telesphor, were stunned!

"What brings you here," Michael finally asked, "to this oasis?"

"In the middle of nowhere?" Abe added with disbelief.

"You never mentioned to us," Eliud said, "after all these years."

"I was protecting him and myself," Simon said.

"Can it be true?" Telesphor said to no one in particular but was now excited to hear more.

"I guess you could say, I am on the run from the authorities," Felix said.

"But the Lord will protect you," Simon said convincingly. "After all these years we have been on the run, we have always managed to escape."

"But I am getting too old now, Simon," Felix sadly said. "I am tired of running."

"You can stay with us," Abe said.

Michael was surprised at his brother's suggestion. "I guess we are sort of on the run anyhow."

"We are a respected caravan and well known," Michael interjected, "but the Romans always check the caravans for just such persons on the run."

"Even though such travelers as Eliud and I could probably get away with it," Telesphor said, "they would extract a hefty tax."

"Well, I guess that saves me the trouble of asking," Simon said. "That was the reason I brought my friend Felix to meet you. As I mentioned, Felix was the centurion at the foot of the cross of Jesus, the Christ, and ironically my father carried the cross for him. Even it wasn't far, but enough to meet Felix at Golgotha."

"Our next meeting," interjected Felix, "was when I came to believe this Jesus of Nazareth really was."

"I thought he was from Bethlehem," Abe interrupts.

"I'll explain later," Telesphor wanted to hear the rest of the story.

"To make a long story short," Felix said, "I wanted to give a gift to Simon for helping this Jesus carry his cross, so I gave him his garment."

"Whose garment?" Michael asked confused.

"Jesus' garment, who was crucified," Felix explained. "The condemned are always crucified naked as part of their shaming, especially Jews."

"My father said that you rolled dice for it," Simon added.

"I won!" Felix said.

"Why roll dice?" Telesphor asked. "It must have been expensive."

"It was seamless," Simon said. "It was weaved by hand in one piece!"

"Only a mother would have done that," Eliud said.