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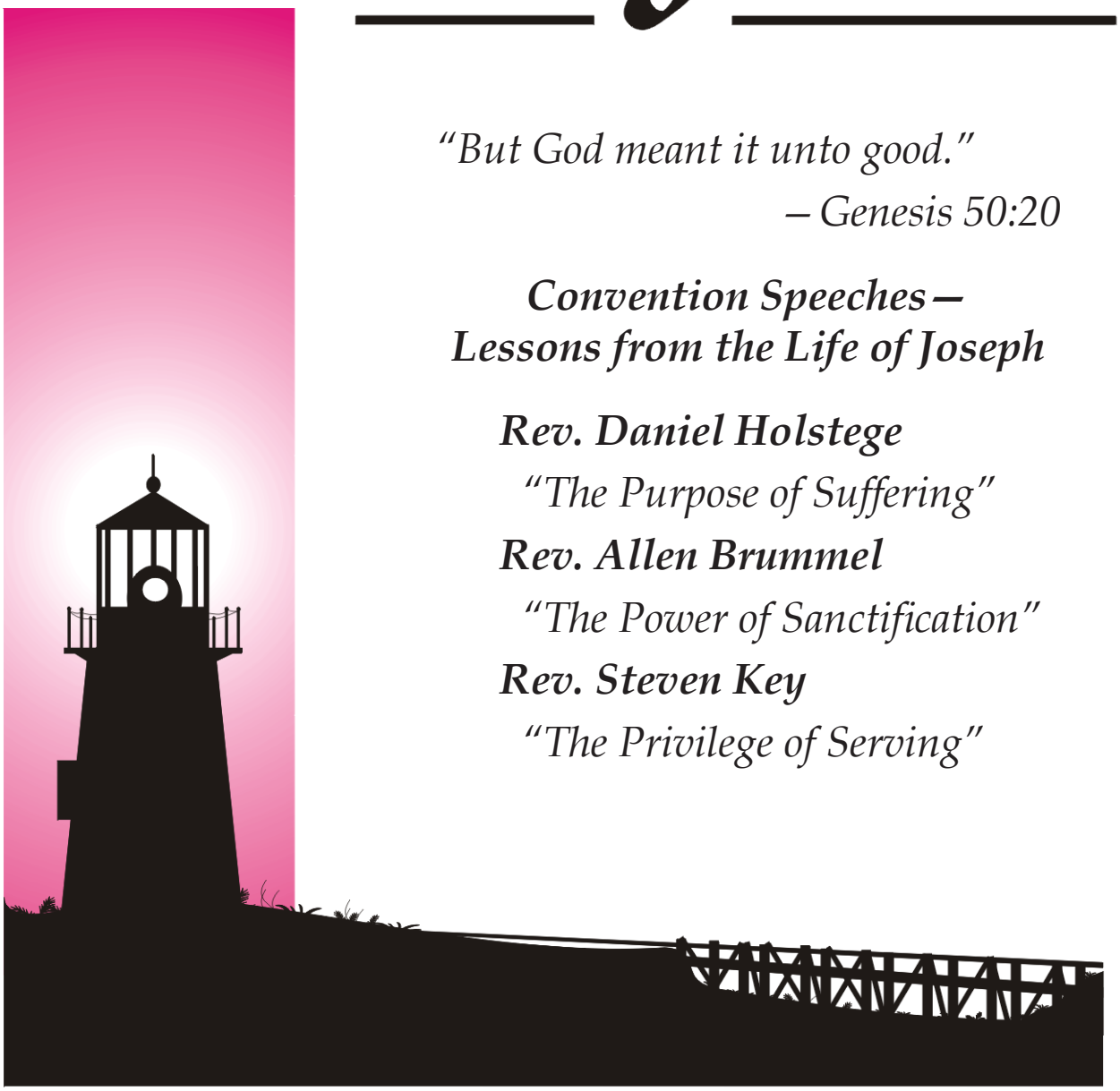

"But God meant it unto good."
– Genesis 50:20

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Lessons from the Life of Joseph

Rev. Daniel Holstege
"The Purpose of Suffering"

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Convention Reflection

by Hanna De Groot

This year's convention had an amazing message. Not only were the speeches excellent; the discussion groups also were meaningful to me. The theme verse, Genesis 50:20, is something that stays in my mind; it is a verse that every Christian, young or old, can look to in hard times. God tried Joseph in a way that we cannot even imagine; but in the end, he meant it unto good. No matter what happened to Joseph, he kept a positive attitude. He trusted that God would take care of him, and he did. As Rev. Holstege pointed out in his speech, we as Christians in the PRC need to always be "Josephs." Christians will always suffer—being teased for not drinking with the rest of the gang, losing a job opportunity because we will not work on Sunday, or being made fun of for going to church twice every week are some ways in which we suffer. There will always be people that Satan will use to try to force us off the straight and narrow path; we must fight against these temptations. Rev. Holstege stressed the fact that it is difficult to live the way Joseph lived, yet it is possible to fight against the scorn and mockery of the world for the way in which we serve God. We may suffer in this life, but God uses hard times for good.

We don't have the exact same trials that Joseph went through, but we can always stand strong and trust in God the way he did. Even though trying to explain why you will not go to that party can be hard, the best thing to do is to remember that you will be rewarded by making the right decision. Even though we may never understand why God takes certain people to be with him before we think it is time for them to go, he always has a plan. Trials like this will come up every day; but, if we follow Joseph's example and keep a positive attitude, we can look back and see how God meant these hardships for good. We will be rewarded in the end when we continue to walk in the light and trust God to take care of us. Joseph too was rewarded greatly in the end! Follow his example, and God will always continue to take care of you. ❖

Hanna is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randdolph, Wisconsin.

"But God Meant It unto Good"

by Daniel Ophoff

This year's Young People's Convention was in Green Lake, Wisconsin. The convention is something all of the young people look forward to. It is one of the highlights of summer. The theme for this year was "Lessons from the Life of Joseph."

Let me start off by mentioning some of the things that I really liked about the convention this year. The facility where we stayed was great. The area where we slept was also very nice. They were a lot like college dorms. And I know serving meals to a family of teenagers can be a big job, but all of the young people would be something else! And yet the hosting place did a great job with the food. The chaperones seemed very friendly and relaxed, which made for good relationships with the conventioneers.

Personally I had fun the entire convention. I can't really think of a time when I didn't. But I will only mention some of my favorite parts. First of all, free time. During free time you can do whatever you want. I love

this because you can walk somewhere for five minutes and find a group of friends. It's so much fun. Secondly, there are the team games. Everyone is divided up evenly into groups and placed under a chaperone. Then your team plays all different games. This is always a blast. In my opinion the best games were broomball, human bowling, and the relay races. I also enjoyed our devotions with our chaperone at night. My chaperone was Aaron Lim, who is from Singapore. He lives in Michigan as he is currently going to college for pre-sem. The nightly devotions were always a good way to end the day. So was learning about Aaron and Singapore. Did you know gum is illegal there? Yeah, neither did I until convention.

Now I may be wrong here but I think it's pretty safe to say that none of the conventioneers got much sleep during the convention. This can make it tough to pay attention during the speeches. But don't get me wrong, they were still excellent. The theme for the speeches was the theme for the convention: "Lessons from the Life of Joseph." The ministers talked about how we as God's people don't always understand why God does the things that he does. But yet we cannot question him. Joseph's life was a perfect example of this. The ministers examined all of his life. Joseph often didn't know God's purpose in what was happening, yet he never questioned God. And all of it worked out for the good of God and his church! God directed Joseph to his position of power in Egypt to save his own church when famine came. Surely our God is great.

One part of these speeches really struck me. It was something I had never thought of before. It was that sometimes we have to suffer for doing the right thing! When Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife he was fleeing from adultery. This was definitely the right thing for him to do. But he suffered for it! Potiphar's wife lied and Joseph was put into prison. And yet he didn't question God.

The Randolph Church did a great job at hosting the convention. It was such a fun week. I am already excited for next year. ❖

Daniel is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Convention Speeches

God's Purpose in the Sufferings of Joseph

by Rev. Daniel Holstege

Suffering is a grim reality in this world. But the God who controls it by his almighty power is also real. The question therefore follows, What is God's purpose in our sufferings? The last part of the book of Genesis (Ch. 37-50) is largely devoted to answering this question. The inspired writer answers the question by way of the story of Joseph.

Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. He was the eleventh son born to Jacob in Padan-Aram. He followed Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and his sister Dinah. Only Benjamin was born after him. Joseph is seventeen years old at the beginning of our story (Gen. 37:2). He is called a "lad." He is no longer a child, but he is not yet a man. He is a young person. In fact, at the age of seventeen, he is the same age as many of you young people. Later when Pharaoh exalted him in Egypt, Joseph was thirty years old (Gen. 41:46). Thus, the period of his suffering was about thirteen years. It stretched from his late teens through all of his twenties.

Joseph represents the godly young person who suffers for his godliness. Joseph is a spiritually-mature, godly young man. The whole story portrays him as such. He is godlier at the young age of seventeen than his much older brothers who seem to slumber in wickedness until late in life. Joseph is a young man with conviction. He

loves God, and hates sin and evil. And he suffers for it. He suffers not "as a murderer or as a thief or as an evil doer or as a busybody," as Peter would say, but "as a Christian" (I Peter 4:15-16). Joseph does not so much suffer physical pain or financial woes or the loss of a loved one. But he suffers persecution for righteousness' sake. He suffers persecution at the hands of his family, which was the church of that day, and at the hands of the world. But Joseph recognizes that God has a purpose with his suffering. In the end he confesses that, although others meant evil against him, God meant it unto good (Gen. 50:20). Joseph represents you godly, believing young people. You are Josephs. I know that some of you might look more like Joseph's brothers at this point in your life. But I am not interested in that right now. I will address you as Josephs.

He suffers persecution at the hands of his family, which was the church of that day, and at the hands of the world.

Joseph suffered greatly, more greatly than I have ever suffered, and probably more than most of you. As I write this article, I wonder what it was like. I almost have to go to Joseph and ask him: "Joseph, what was it like? What did you experience? Let me walk in your shoes. Let me stand at your side and see what you saw, hear what you heard, feel what you felt. I want to get a sense of what your suffering was like. Otherwise I cannot relate to you." Are you prepared to do that with me? Let us walk in Joseph's shoes for a moment.

First, let us look into Joseph's home life for it was there that his suffering began (Gen. 37:1-11). The first thing we see is that Joseph was hated by his brothers, and that hatred grew. Their hatred was kindled when Joseph brought to Jacob "their evil report" (v. 2). Joseph informed his father that his brethren had a reputation for evil among the natives. We can easily surmise that Jacob rebuked the brothers for that, and they in turn despised Joseph for telling their father. Their hatred grew when Jacob showed open favoritism to Joseph by giving him a "coat of many colors" (v. 3). In fact, when this occurred, they could not "speak peaceably" to him any longer (v. 4). From that point on, Joseph heard from them only the rough words and sneers of those on the brink of exploding in anger. Their hatred grew white hot when Joseph told them his two dreams in which they made obeisance to him (v. 5-11). If you can imagine, we read that "they hated him yet the more for his dreams" (v. 8). In all this, Joseph suffered. His own flesh and blood, those who should have been his spiritual allies, had turned against him.

Can you relate to Joseph already? Have you ever been hated for righteousness' sake by those who should be your spiritual allies? I see a young man who refuses to party and get drunk while his friends are doing so. For his godly resolve he is mocked and left out. I see a young lady who will not go to the movie theater when her best friend wants to go. For her desire to live the antithesis she is abandoned by that "best friend" with a sneer. I see a young person who refuses to do sexual things with the one he or she is dating. For this young person's chastity he or she is hated and mocked. I hear godly young people like Joseph being called "goody, goodies," and "tattle-tales." I hear them being reviled with words like, "Oh, you think you're so perfect. You can't do anything wrong." It is painful to be hated.

But there is more. Joseph's suffering was only just beginning. Joseph's brothers made him suffer the worst possible evil (Gen. 37:12-28). Look and listen. The brothers have been gone a long time in Shechem seeking better pasture for their father's flock. Jacob sends Joseph to inquire as to their well-being. Joseph journeys to Shechem, but he is told that the brothers have moved on to Dothan. So to Dothan he goes. As he approaches, the brothers see him coming. Listen to their words: "That dreamer cometh. We are far from home. We have an opportunity here! No one will know. We can silence him and his dreams!" An ingenious plan is hatched: "Let us kill him, throw him into a pit, and blame it on a beast." But Reuben urges a modification: "Let us not kill him, but throw him into this empty cistern." To this they agree. Now put yourself in Joseph's shoes. He walks up. He greets them. But only silence replies. A strange aura is in the air. Something does not feel right. Their eyes have a gloomy look. They stare at him blankly. Then, without warning, hands are upon him. His prized tunic is violently ripped off his body. He is pushed forward to a dark hole. "What do they have in mind?" Joseph must have wondered. "Are they going to drown me?" Then he is hurtling down into the pit. A thud. A dry bottom. He looks up, but they are already gone. He is overwhelmed by a deep sadness. But soon, shadows dance on the floor of the pit. He hears voices, and looking up, he sees faces. Hands pull him out of the pit. "What is this?! Was this all just a cruel joke? But who are these strangers? And why are they leading me away?" He perhaps hears the

jangling of silver in the pouches of his brothers as they walk away, but little does he know, he has just been sold into slavery. He is put among the other merchandise and carried away into Egypt, as far as he knows, never to see his father again.

> Have you ever been sold into slavery, i.e. decisively rejected by brother or friend?

Can you relate to Joseph now? Have you ever been thrown into the pit? I see a young man getting beat up, kicked, punched, pushed down, not because of sinfulness on his part, but simply because he is disliked. I see a boy being slammed against the bathroom wall at school or a girl being slapped in the face, simply for being diligent students and godly young people. Have you ever been sold into slavery, i.e. decisively rejected by brother or friend? I see a young person who sits home every weekend because no one cares to call him or her. No one loves him or her. I see another who has been abandoned by his peers because he is not cool enough. I see a young man and woman who terminate their dating relationship and so decisively split ways that they can no longer look at or talk to each other. To be rejected and despised is great suffering.

But there is more. Joseph's suffering increased even more. He suffered also at the hands of the world, in Egypt, in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39). At first things went quite well for Joseph there. But soon Potiphar's wife laid her eyes upon him and lusted after him. She enticed him to lie with her, but he steadfastly refused. But she did not take no for an answer. She even tried to force him, but he slipped away. Then Joseph suffered again. Potiphar's wife slandered him to the servants of the house: "This Hebrew servant tried to rape me! He came into my room and tried to lie with me. But I cried aloud. Then he ran and dropped his robe here." She slandered him again to Potiphar. Potiphar was filled with wrath. He seized Joseph, apparently gave him no chance to defend himself, and led him to the prison. He put Joseph in chains, as we read in Psalm 105:17-18: He "was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron." Joseph could get no lower than this. He had reached a depth of suffering to which we struggle to relate. He had been sold into slavery, slandered for his chastity, thrown unjustly into prison and now he was bound in chains, in a dark, dingy prison cell, far away from home and father.

Can you relate to Joseph? Have you ever been slandered by a wife of Potiphar for righteousness' sake? Some of you have been unjustly treated by your unbelieving bosses for your refusal to work on Sunday. Some of you have been called names: You bigot! You hateful, intolerant people! Some of you have perhaps been mocked by your ungodly professors at college, or even been given bad grades on your homework for your Christian views. These are the sufferings of Joseph. These are our sufferings.

God had a purpose in Joseph's sufferings.

God had a purpose first of all for Joseph. His purpose was Joseph's good. Joseph himself recognized this later on when he said to his brothers, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good…" (Gen. 50:20). God intended to do good to Joseph through his sufferings. Indeed, God used Joseph's sufferings as the means of exalting him. God purposed the hatred of his brothers as the means to bring him to Potiphar's house where he blessed Joseph and exalted him as overseer of Potiphar's house (39:2-6). God purposed the slander of Potiphar's wife as the means to lead Joseph into the prison of Pharaoh where God blessed Joseph again and exalted him over all the other prisoners (39:21-23). God purposed Joseph's imprisonment as the means to lead him into Pharaoh's house to interpret his dreams, and thus as the means to exalt him to the highest position of power and honor in Egypt, under Pharaoh (41:41). God exalted Joseph through his sufferings so that Joseph would come to realize that his exaltation was solely the work of God, and not of himself. God exalted him through suffering so that Joseph would not trust in his own flesh but would look to God. He exalted him through suffering to reveal to Joseph the great power of his saving grace.

God's purpose in your sufferings is also your good. You may not always recognize it right away. But God always wills suffering for your good: to test your faith and reveal to you and others that you are a true believer; to purify your faith and obedience from the dross of self-trust and self-confidence; to chasten you, if you are walking in disobedience, so that you turn from sin and serve God again. But even if you cannot put your finger on what God's purpose is, you may know that his purpose is your good and salvation and glory.

God also had a purpose in Joseph's sufferings for Joseph's brothers and family. Joseph also recognized this when he said to his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7). God

used Joseph's sufferings as the means to put Joseph in a position to save his family, the church. God intended to send seven years of famine, so terrible that Jacob and his family would nearly starve and be in danger of death. God's purpose was then to preserve his covenant people, out of whose bosom Christ would come, through Joseph. He purposed thereby to show that the salvation of his people and the coming of Christ were wholly dependent on his sovereign, saving grace.

Moreover, God's purpose was to save his church through Joseph's sufferings, and I submit to you that Joseph was therefore a type of Christ.[1] One man suffered that others might live. Joseph suffered for the earthly salvation of the church of his day; in like manner, Christ suffered for the eternal salvation of the elect church of all ages. Joseph, although still a sinner, suffered as a righteous man; Christ suffered as the perfectly righteous man. Joseph suffered the hatred of his own family, the church of his day; Christ also suffered the hatred of his fellow Nazarenes, the church of his day. Joseph suffered ultimate and decisive rejection when sold into slavery; Christ suffered that same kind of rejection when he was crucified at Calvary. Joseph was thrown into the pit and then into prison; Christ descended into the bottomless pit and prison of hell. Joseph submitted to great humiliation, but was thereby exalted by God to great exaltation in Egypt; Christ submitted to the deepest humiliation, but was thereby exalted to the highest exaltation at God's right hand. Joseph from his exalted position saved the church of his day; Christ from his exalted position saves the church in our day.

So remember, young people, that as Joseph suffered to save his brethren, Christ suffered to save you. Also remember this: We must still suffer as Christians because we are members of Christ's body. We do not suffer for our sins because Christ accomplished that perfectly at the cross. But we suffer to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ (Col. 1:24). We suffer as partakers of Christ's sufferings (I Peter 4:13). And therefore, Jesus tells us, we are blessed! We must rejoice and be exceedingly glad when we suffer for his sake! (Mt. 5:12). It is a great privilege to suffer for Jesus' sake! And such suffering will be rewarded with a crown of glory in heaven. Also this: The sufferings that we experience now are not worthy to be compared to that crown of glory because the glory will far surpass it (Rom. 8:18).

God wills your suffering in life and death in order that he might comfort you in it by his Spirit and save you from death's dark pit through the resurrection of Christ—to reveal his power and mercy, unto his glory!

Finally, God has a purpose in Joseph's suffering for himself, namely, his own glory. God led Jacob and his family into Egypt in order that he might later deliver Israel from bondage by a mighty hand and a stretched out arm—to reveal his power and grace, unto his glory! God sent seven years of terrible famine in order that he might save Israel from starvation and preserve his covenant people—to reveal his covenant faithfulness, unto his glory! God led Joseph into the deepest depths of suffering in order that he might exalt him to the highest heights of power and honor—to reveal his power and grace, unto his glory! God wills your suffering in life and death in order that he might comfort you in it by his Spirit and save you from death's dark pit through the resurrection of Christ—to reveal his power and mercy, unto his glory! So give glory to God in your sufferings. Even when we walk through the difficult paths of sorrow and rejection, he is worthy of our praise. Lift up his name and exalt him. ❖

Rev. Holstege is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan

1 All do not agree that Joseph was a type of Christ. But I became convinced of this when I read the *Standard Bearer* articles of Rev. George Ophoff on the life of Joseph. I refer the interested reader to these fascinating articles beginning in Vol. 8 of the *SB*, No. 2. In this first article Rev. Ophoff writes, "If the earmark of a type is the inner agreement between it and the event, transaction, personage, or life, to which it stands in the relation of type, Christ is typified in Joseph."

The Power of Sanctification

by Rev. Allen Brummel

Joseph appears in Scripture as a great example of God's sanctifying power in his people. His godly response to sufferings, fleeing fornication, and forgiving his brothers, reveal God's work of grace in his heart. For us as young people, it is easy to look at the life of Joseph and to try to distance ourselves from Joseph. We say—but that was Joseph! My situation is far different. This attitude reflects a low view of God and a minimizing of the work of God's grace in your heart. We know that Joseph was a sinner, but the Bible intentionally does not reveal any blatant sins of Joseph. This is remarkable! God uses this history to show his power of grace in the lives of his people.

This history is not about Joseph. This history is about God and his marvelous work of sanctification. Before God created the world or time, God had ordained all the good works that he wanted performed on earth for his glory. He decided to create each of you so that you will do those good works. The works are God's which he creates us to carry out by his Spirit. He ordains the works, he chooses us to do them, and he works in and through us to do his good pleasure. This is humbling and glorious. God rewards his works in us by his grace. This is why the history of Joseph is your history. This is the history of God's dealings not only with Joseph, but with you personally.

Sanctification means that sin is more and more put off and holiness is increasingly cultivated and put on.

Justification is God's declaration that we are righteous in Christ. Sanctification is the work of God's grace in making us holy. There is a difference between sin surviving in us and sin having the mastery over us. It is one thing for sin to live in you, it is another thing for you to live in sin. Sanctification means that sin is more and more put off and holiness is increasingly cultivated and put on.

The Holy Spirit alone is able to work sanctification. Never forget that you are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. Self-confidence promotes pride and ungodliness. If Joseph would have walked in self-confidence the result would have been far different. God uses means in sanctification and makes it so that sanctification is a process in which we are active. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). Because God is at work, we work. All the working is God's work in us. The more active we are in working, the more we realize that all the power is of God and his Spirit of grace.

You need to work to concentrate your thoughts, actions, heart, mind, and will on the prize of the high calling of living unto God in Jesus Christ. You need to work to direct all of your life to God and his glory. We want to be holy, as God is holy. God gives us means—chiefly the preaching of the pure gospel and the sacraments, but also prayer, the reading of the Bible and singing of the Psalms, trials, admonitions and discipline.

What does it mean to you to be holy? You all know that God has called you to be holy. What does that mean?

We are going to look at three aspects of Joseph's life which are daily reflected in our lives in which it is necessary that we walk in holiness.

First, we need to maintain holiness when we face suffering and trials. At issue is not this question—" how much suffering do you have in your life?" No, the question is this—"how are you responding to that suffering?" You can't control the actions of others, but you can control your own response. Joseph lost his mother at a very young age. Joseph was surrounded by godless brothers who mocked and picked on him. Some of you can relate to both of those struggles. Then, as he got older those brothers conspired against him to throw him into a pit and to sell him to the Ishmaelites who took him

to Egypt. Then, he found himself in a far away land as a slave to people he didn't know. Joseph was wrongly accused of sin and put in prison. He did not deserve to be in jail at all. Don't ever say that your situation is too great for you to handle. Do you really have it worse than Joseph did? How did Joseph respond? It would have been easy for him to spend time in self-pity. It would have been easy for him to turn his back on God and claim that there must not be a God if this is how much suffering I need to endure. Don't despair if life is not as you would desire. Whatever the future holds, you know that God controls it and that the outcome will be for your good and God's glory. God gave Joseph a remarkable ability to focus on God's perfect plan rather than to focus on his present distress. The theme verse of our convention is Genesis 50:20 "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." God works the same grace in you. Focus on God and his faithfulness and trust his perfect will.

Don't despair if life is not as you would desire. Whatever the future holds, you know that God controls it and that the outcome will be for your good and God's glory.

Second, Joseph was faithful in temptation. All of us face temptation. And, again, the question we face today is how will we respond to those temptations? You are all familiar with the wicked attempts of Potiphar's wife to seduce Joseph. He was not her first attempt at an affair, nor would he be the last I'm sure. She was lying in wait for him, waiting for her opportunity to seduce him. Imagine how difficult this had to be for Joseph! What is the first thing we usually think of when we face a temptation? Will we get caught? Joseph's chances of getting caught were slim. He did not have any family around to know what he was doing and Potiphar was in a far country. Joseph could enjoy the pleasures of the moment without fear of being punished. Even more, the immediate consequences of refusing the temptation were greater than going along with it. We have that often—it is easier to go along with the temptation than to try to stand up against it, especially when our friends or someone we are close to is involved. We are at a party and someone brings out the wine coolers and beer. They offer it to us. If we refuse, they will mock us. Joseph could even have argued—this would be a way for me to increase my influence and opportunity in Egypt through this powerful woman. I can help God along perhaps. This was acceptable and normal behavior in Egypt. And, remember, Joseph was the brother of Reuben who had defiled himself with his father's concubine. He was the brother of Judah who gave his body to someone he thought was a prostitute, but ended up being his own daughter-in-law Tamar. This kind of sin was present in Joseph's own family.

We live in a wicked culture. Sexual temptations abound. It is normal for couples to live together before they get married. College students leave home, move to college, and soon are living with their boyfriends or girlfriends. They would never think to do that at home, but they get away from home, and they give in to the temptation. The devil is tempting us with pornographic literature which has never been easier to find. He is using the internet, television, movies to try to de-sensitize us to sexual sins. Most young men and women now lose their virginity long before marriage. They don't view their bodies as belonging to Christ nor save themselves for Christ and for their spouse as God requires. The devil is working hardest among the people of God. He wants to destroy our families through sexual sins and wants to mess up our lives. We can be forgiven, yes, but we will have to live with the consequences of those sins—the guilt and shame, the unexpected baby that is ours, and the sexual diseases which plague us. There is the dissatisfaction of sex in marriage because it was "fun" before marriage and not viewed as intimate love. We can be such fools! We put ourselves into situations of temptation.

What would you have done if you were Joseph? An attractive woman or good looking man wants your attention, your love, your passion. They are eager to please you. Your parents will never find out. You will not get caught. The excitement of the moment overwhelms you. What would you do? What should you do? Joseph said no, and fled temptation. He resisted temptation as a faithful child of God. Joseph showed that he was a slave of God. He would not be a slave to sin! As a servant of Jehovah God, he had to serve his master. And, notice the motivation that Joseph had, a motivation that shames us. Genesis 39:8 reads: "Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand: There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Joseph did not consider the consequences, instead his concern was to love his heavenly Father. His relationship to God was more precious than any pleasure he could experience. He was not saying—but maybe I'll get you pregnant, so we better not do this. He was not thinking, but we might get caught, so we should not do this. He did not say, but I don't think I'm ready, and maybe we should get some condoms or something so we can have safe sex, as if there is such a thing outside of marriage. There is a place for warnings and fear of the consequences, but neither will keep you from sin. Your encouragement is God's faithfulness to preserve his children in his love. When you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, then your main concern is that you not do something that would stand between you and God. You want to please God, not grieve God.

Love your boyfriend or girlfriend so much that you view defiling him or her as an act of hatred against your neighbor.

Three lessons come out of this history. First, you need to love your neighbor like God commands and like Joseph did. Joseph loved Potiphar. Potiphar was a wicked man, but out of love for Potiphar, Joseph would not touch his wife. You need to love the parents of the girl who is making eyes at you and trying to seduce you to go to bed with her. Love your boyfriend or girlfriend so much that you view defiling him or her as an act of hatred against your neighbor. Second, Joseph's love for his neighbor flowed out of his love for God. Joseph was walking close to God. Everyone else had forsaken him. He did not have anyone to go to. Would he now forsake his one true faithful friend and Lord? Would he depart from God to walk alone? Joseph loved the fellowship he had with God. So great was that love that the idea of yielding to temptation was not even an option for him. Finally, notice that fornication is great wickedness. Just because others are doing it, does not make it right. Sin is sin, regardless of the cloak that the devil gives it. You can't hide that sin from God. He sees sexual sins as great wickedness.

God works in our hearts a power so great that it is able to move us to make tremendous sacrifices for his sake. God is able to make us turn away from our own pleasure in order to walk with him as our covenant friend. Never say—I can't resist! The temptation is too great! That reveals a low view of God. The grace God gave Joseph is the same grace God gives you in Jesus Christ. That grace is sufficient to preserve and keep you faithful. Your relationship to God is the only thing that can keep you faithful until marriage! Remember I Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Finally, notice the power of sanctification in Joseph's life that led him to forgive his brothers. Joseph did not hold grudges nor did he lord things over his brothers. His brothers rejected the son of their father's love. They sought to destroy him. Later the Jews would do the same. They rejected the Son of the Father's love and sold him for 30 pieces of silver to be crucified. Joseph did not turn away from his brothers. As a matter of fact the history teaches that Joseph was looking for his brothers. We read in Genesis 42:6 that he, the ruler of Egypt, was personally selling corn to all who came. God does not turn away from his children who come to him with humility of heart and confession of sin. Joseph knew his own sin to such a degree that he was able to know the forgiveness of his heavenly Father. Knowing and confessing that forgiveness, God gave him the grace to forgive others. All who have tasted the wonderful grace of God in Jesus Christ will forgive one another. Joseph did not get to the point where he could forgive his brothers in a matter of days, but prayed constantly through all his years in Egypt for his brethren and for the grace to forgive them their sins. Don't think that was not a difficult battle! Joseph battled every day to see God, not man, behind all that he was experiencing. Are you praying for that grace- the grace to see that it is God, not man, behind all your struggles? Do you pray for grace to overcome your own selfishness? Years of self-discipline, self-condemnation, and self-abhorrence lie behind Joseph's forgiveness. The spirit of God was in him.

Are you praying for that grace- the grace to see that it is God, not man, behind all your struggles?

Imagine how humbling and painful it must have been for Joseph then after his father died when his brothers came to him implying that he had not fully forgiven them. For one who is holy, upright, and praying for grace to think no evil, this was a tremendous blow. By all his actions, Joseph demonstrated that he was one with the brothers, but regardless they were suspicious of him. They thought he was treating them kindly only to regain the respect of his father. More seriously, the brothers did not understand the character of God's forgiveness. They continued to beat themselves up over the sins they committed. They could not see God's wonderful, marvelous, undeserving forgiveness. Joseph asks in Genesis 50:19 "Fear not, for am I in the place of God?" God showed that his will was to bless the brothers in the benedictions Jacob pronounced on them in chapter 49. Joseph says-am I in the place of God to change his will and punish those whom God has blessed? Fear not! Joseph has the power to make their lives miserable, but he is not seeking revenge. The work of God's grace in him moves him to look away from himself and his situation and to God and God's grace. When it is in your power to seek and attain revenge, do you? Joseph reassures them with one of the most beautiful passages of scripture, parallel to Romans 8:28 in Genesis 50:20: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive." God gave Joseph the grace to make this remarkable confession. The more one walks with God, the more God works the reflection of Christ in him. He begins to think, speak, and act like Christ.

God uses means. What means did God use in Joseph's life? God used first of all a close relationship to a parent. Joseph and Jacob had a close relationship due to their spiritual union. Jacob's other sons did not share that relationship. You need your parents. You need to tell your dad and your mom how much you love them and you need to spend time talking with them. You don't know how long you will have them.

Second, Joseph had a close relationship to God. When he could have fellowship with no one else, Joseph was able to walk with God. Joseph knew two things about God. First, God is sovereign and nothing happens to God's children outside of God's divine working. There are no accidents. Second, God works all the things in life for the good of his people and for his glory. Not just the dream of Pharoah, but also the terrible act of betrayal by his brothers and being falsely accused. All was for good. This confession comes in the way of walking close with God in his Word and prayer.

Finally, Joseph loved the church, the people of God. This is evident in his willingness to forgive. Joseph could have taken the position that he did not need his brothers or family any more. He did not go that direction. Joseph loved his brothers who constituted the church of that day, and showed his love for the people of God by insisting that his bones be buried back with those of his brethren. You need to see your need for the church and you need to live your lives as living members of that church.

Joseph walked close with his parents, his God, and his church family.

Some of you have had a very difficult life. God's grace is at work when you can confess—nothing in my life has been an accident. All has come from God and all is working together for my good. God ordained who my parents were, whether I knew them or not, where I was born, my education or lack thereof, the classmates he put on my path, my teachers, my siblings, my pastor, my church. God ordained that I would be short or tall. He ordained that I would not have skills in basketball, but would instead have skills in chess and checkers. He ordains my looks and hair color and everything! He gives grace to go forward by faith.

You have been sinned against. But God calls you to forgive and go forward, trusting his grace. Don't dwell on the past. Don't hold grudges against others. Pray for the grace God gave Joseph.

Faith does not need to know all the answers. Faith believes the promise. Faith sees Jesus in Joseph and cries out to God to make us more and more like our Lord.

"Not my will, Thy will be done." That prayer cost Jesus the cross and experience of hell. That prayer will cost you and me much as we sacrifice our own desires for the sake of our Lord. It will not cost you hell, as Jesus earned everlasting life for you. Do you desire to live for God and His glory?

That confession is the fruit of God's work of sanctification in your life.

By God's grace and power, walk close with your parents. Respect them and talk with them and obey them. Walk with your God in prayer and read his Word. And, don't think you can go through life alone. You need the church. Through these means God powerfully will preserve you in sanctification and godliness. ❖

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The Privilege of Serving

by Rev. Steven Key

In the first two speeches of this convention we have considered various lessons from the life of Joseph. One of the things we noticed is that Joseph was not blessed with the family life that most of you have enjoyed. He came from a very dysfunctional, troubled family. Yet in the midst of a life of adversity, Joseph manifested the powerful work of God's grace—not only in the way he dealt with his suffering and trials, but also in the way he lived in devotion to God, striving to walk in holiness in all things.

I now direct your attention to yet another way in which God's grace was seen at work in Joseph. Joseph served God. Throughout his life we are given the example of Joseph dedicating himself to the Lord in service. By his life we are reminded that serving God doesn't belong just to ministers. It isn't only a matter of serving God in the church. Nor is it a matter of occasional, special service projects. But in every aspect of life and no matter the calling or vocation God gives you, your life as a child of God is to show forth the privilege of serving the Lord. In other words, your life in fellowship with your redeemer is to be a life that shows thankfulness for his love. That is true, even if you live in difficult circumstances.

As we conclude our consideration of "Lessons from the Life of Joseph," and specifically "The Privilege of Serving," I call your attention to the distinct periods in Joseph's life, each of which shows how that service of God involves every aspect of our lives.

Serving in Family Life

We begin by observing Joseph serving God in family life. That is where the recorded history of Joseph begins. Apart from telling us about his birth, revealing an early childhood in his unsettled and traveling family, and letting us know that his mother Rachel died when Joseph was in his mid-teens, the Bible doesn't tell us any more about Joseph's early childhood and spiritual instruction.

The substantive history of Joseph begins in Genesis 37, where we are told that Joseph, at age 17, was a herdsman. As soon as he was old enough, he was given certain responsibilities in the household of Jacob. He was found with some of his brothers caring for the flocks of his wealthy father Jacob. Even though we read that Joseph was special in his father's eyes, that does not mean that he was brought up with everything handed to him on a silver platter. Children who are not taught to work, children who have everything handed to them, are children who generally turn out to be irresponsible and unproductive parasites upon society. We are called to labor. Especially as young men, you are called to labor. That, after all, is going to be your life's calling, as providers for your households and the kingdom of God. Joseph was taught to work.

But the example for us is that Joseph did his work to the glory of God.

Notice as well that Joseph had to work alongside those who were ungodly. Most of you have the blessing of growing up somewhat sheltered from the influences of the ungodly. Notice, I don't say, from the influences of sin. We carry sin with us. We live in relationships marred by sin, within the family and within the church and school. We have to learn how to live as Christians within those relationships marred by sin. Yet generally we grow up somewhat sheltered. But we live in the world. And when the time comes that you are able to take on more responsibility than just those chores around the house, and you begin working outside the home, for many of you that will mean rubbing shoulders with those who are unbelieving and ungodly. I well remember beginning a job as a freshman in high school, being the only Christian in the work place. Not only do we have the calling to do our work to the glory of God, but also to stand faithfully as Christians among those who love not God nor his truth. Joseph did so faithfully.

But when I say that Joseph had to tend the flocks alongside those who were ungodly, there was a complicating factor. Those ungodly were four of his brothers, the sons of Jacob's two concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah. Some of these brothers may have later repented and been converted, as would be the case with other of Joseph's brothers. But at this time they were notorious for their wickedness. While we are not told specifically what their sins were, they were sins that gave these sons and their

family a bad name. Joseph worked with them. But he would not be a partaker of their evil deeds.

What are your friends like? What is your reputation? How do you handle being around those who are unbelieving and perhaps openly ungodly, even if they might call themselves Christian? Joseph worked with them; but he could not have fellowship with them in their sins. To use New Testament language, Joseph was not a man-pleaser, but a servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. It would have been easy to go along with those brothers. It would have made life a lot simpler—humanly speaking. But you can't have it two ways when those ways are polar opposites. Joseph would serve his Lord, because there was no one more important in his life.

The ungodly whom God places on the pathway of our lives are our neighbors, according to Scripture, and therefore those whom we are called to love as ourselves.

When I speak of the complicating factor of Joseph's ungodly fellow workers being his brothers, we also have to consider Joseph's special calling in that regard. The ungodly whom God places on the pathway of our lives are our neighbors, according to Scripture, and therefore those whom we are called to love as ourselves. That love is to come to expression by seeking their spiritual good, calling them to repentance and pointing them to life. But there is an added calling when brothers or those who call themselves brothers walk in sin. It is to be understood that not only did Joseph refuse to be a partaker of their evil deeds, but he had spoken to them in the name of God. He called them to repentance, to no avail. His very life and speech witnessed against them. That is why they hated him. But when he was unable to effect a change, he had the calling to take it to the higher authority, his father, whose own reputation was being damaged by the wickedness of his sons. So Joseph told his father about the evil committed by his sons. Again, that was not the easy way. But it was right. It was the way that sought his brothers' salvation. Also here Joseph carried out his calling to the glory of God.

And when we are told that Joseph told his father about the evil of his brothers, the implication is that Jacob attempted to deal with his sons. He did not simply file away in his mind the report of Joseph, and hope that all would turn out well with his other sons. As a godly father, he rebuked them for their iniquities. They knew, in other words, that Joseph had reported their evil deeds. And when sin and hypocrisy is uncovered, there can only be one of two reactions. Either the sinner will humble himself and repent; or he will harden himself and reveal all the more the hatred of his heart. Those who hear the precepts of God and his truth faithfully set before them either will hate it and seek to hide behind the filthy rags of their own self-righteousness, or they will come out into the light, bow before God's verdict, and repent. May God give you and me grace to repent always. With these sons of Jacob, the response was one of hardness of heart and impenitence. They not only continued in their wickedness, but began to focus their hatred with even greater intensity upon Joseph.

Now I would have you notice that Joseph's desire and willingness to serve in the household of his father Jacob, while founded in his love for God, was also an expression of the fellowship that he enjoyed with his father.

Much could be said about Jacob's faults and sins as they affected his family. But even as a teenager Joseph revealed a love of the truth and a determination to stand for the truth in honor and love for Jehovah. Thus this father and his one son were brothers in the Lord! They were friends together, united by faith in the Messiah! Jacob and Joseph could talk together about spiritual things. What a blessed thing that is!

What is your relationship to your parents? May God grant that there is spiritual fellowship and oneness. Yes, as parents and particularly as fathers, we have to provide spiritual direction to our children. Sometimes we don't do that very well. And perhaps in his old age, those spiritual things were more on the foreground now with Jacob than they had been when his other sons were younger. But the sad fact as seen in the record of this family is that Joseph's brothers didn't want such spiritual fellowship and conversation with their father. And in our day, when everything goes on at such a mad pace that there is no time for worthwhile things and spiritual conversations unless one consciously makes the time, there are far too many whose lives are much more like Joseph's brothers', than they are like Joseph's.

You sons and daughters ought to enjoy spiritual fellowship with your parents. You ought to give serious consideration to what your parents think of you, far more consideration than that given to what peers think. The fact that many young people are more concerned with

what their peers think than what their parents do is often nothing more than an excuse for mindless disobedience. The inclination to follow the word and example of sinful peers rather than the wise instruction and example of God-fearing parents is an inclination that arises out of the old man of sin. Joseph was not perfect. He was just like you. But Joseph received the instruction and correction of his father. He trusted the Word of God that his father taught. And the fruit was seen in a strong spiritual bond of love and respect, communion and joy. That is what motivated Joseph's service of God in the home of his father.

One more thing before we move on to the other aspects of Joseph's life of serving God, because this affects them all: Joseph lived this life because he stood in the brilliance of the righteousness of one who was yet to appear on the scene of history. God saw Joseph in Christ. God took Joseph into his own fellowship of love and communion. And living in the consciousness of that covenant fellowship with God, Joseph would walk in that fellowship, even when it required that he face persecution. For Christ's sake he would bear persecution! Is Christ that important in your life? Do you live in the consciousness of your covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Do you belong to him—body and soul? That knowledge is critical to serving him in every aspect of your life.

Serving God as a Servant to Potiphar

That we see also as we consider Joseph serving God as a servant to Potiphar.

The way in which God led Joseph to Egypt is familiar to you. The Ishmaelite merchantmen, who had bought Joseph from his brothers for 20 pieces of silver, sold him for a profit to a man named Potiphar. We ought to notice immediately the Lord's hand in this. Joseph was brought to Egypt and sold to a person who stood in direct connection with the king, who in our day would probably be called the head of the secret service, and who was able presently to throw Joseph into the same prison where offenders against the king were kept.

Jehovah, by his counsel, was leading Joseph every step of this journey. The ways of the Lord with us are often mysterious. We are unable, from the point where we stand, to see the connection between the way and the end. But in the life of Joseph this truth is revealed to us just the same. Nothing happens by chance, but by God's fatherly hand for you who love him.

In the service of Potiphar, Joseph showed himself to be a young man of tremendous talent. He was ambitious, hard-working, responsible and trustworthy. So that Potiphar was willing to entrust his entire household, his whole estate and all his financial dealings, into the hands of this young Hebrew. That is astounding when you think about it. How tremendously noticeable must have been the gifts that Joseph had received of God, as well as his spiritual perspective toward all things.

Now, very few of us have the gifts and abilities that Joseph apparently had. But every one of you has gifts necessary to serve God in a particular place in life. The question is: How do you use those gifts? Joseph showed himself faithful to God by using his gifts to God's glory in this particular calling. He served Potiphar with complete faithfulness, not as a man-pleaser, but for God's sake. For most of you right now, the particular station in life that God has given you, the most time-consuming calling, is that of students. Do you apply yourself as did Joseph? And what about at work? The abilities and gifts God has given you, all of which still are developing, are to be used for God's sake.

We read that Potiphar didn't even know the affairs of his estate, didn't even know his financial situation, so extensively had he committed all things into the hands of Joseph. The only thing Potiphar knew was that the meals were faithfully provided for him each day by Joseph. He could also see that things were prospering greatly under Joseph's care and stewardship. We are told in verse 4 that Potiphar saw this prosperity, and knew that Jehovah prospered this Hebrew. It becomes evident, then, that not only did Joseph live in obedience to God, but he also testified of his relationship to Jehovah.

It is in this context, of course, that Joseph fled the temptation of Potiphar's wife.

I mention that incident here only to point out that the temptation did not come upon Joseph because he was frequenting a place where he should not have been. He wasn't hobnobbing with the ungodly in the neighborhood tavern. He wasn't dancing with the women of Egypt. He wasn't going about the house of Potiphar, looking for an opportunity to see Potiphar's wife naked. Or, to put it in today's context, he wasn't on the web feeding his lust by looking at naked women. He was in the house of Potiphar simply doing the duties that his master required of him.

It is important that we understand that. We read in Proverbs 6:27,28: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" If the temptation that Joseph faced was due to his own deliberate playing with

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The Western Young People's Retreat

by Leah Marcus

Beach volleyball everyday, mixer games, speeches and discussion groups—sounds like a convention! I'm not talking about the convention that most of us went to in Wisconsin, however. Early this summer, a small group of our young people (32 to be exact) representing six of our churches attended a "Western Young People's Society Retreat" which took place at Ross Point Camp in Post Falls, Idaho.

The retreat started off as these gatherings do—with registration. The odd thing about this registration was you were asked to give yourself a nickname—one that nobody knew and that never had or would be used again. After settling into our cabins we enjoyed a meal of campfire roasted hotdogs and played a few mixer games. This is where our nicknames came into play. Each nickname was read aloud and then we would have to guess whose "nickname" this was. Most of them were pretty tough to guess since most of us had never met. As we got to know each other during the retreat, however, we could begin to understand why the nicknames such as "Chevy," "Marathon" and "Visa" were selected. At the close of the evening, we settled down around the campfire again and read a portion of scripture for our devotions before going to bed.

The next two days were packed with activities such as going to an indoor water park with a wave pool and water slides, doing a high ropes course, and getting very wet (again!) while going canoeing. During free time, many of us had fun playing volleyball on the beach, participating in basketball games, or playing mini golf. Another activity we all did together was going on a short hike to Mineral Ridge. The view from the peak overlooked Coeur d'Alene Lake which was encircled by mountains. The beautiful scenery and view loudly declared the glory of our creator! On the third and last night of the retreat many of the young people played volleyball in the gym at the camp. This was when we all learned that the most qualified referee for making a game of volleyball go to all hours of the night is Rev. Rodney Kleyn!

Although all of these activities were extremely fun, I would have to say the highlights of the retreat were the discussion groups and, especially, the speeches which were given by Rev. Marcus and Rev. Hanko from our Edmonton and Lynden congregations, respectively. The theme of the Retreat was "Waiting for Christ's Coming." Rev. Marcus' speech focused on Christ's coming at the end of the world. We learned that the signs of His coming are not only reminders to us to be ready and to prepare but are also actually part of Christ's coming, just as dark clouds and flashes of lightening in the distance are actually part of the thunderstorm as well as a sign of the actual full blown thunderstorm that is to come.

The subject matter of Rev. Hanko's speech was how Christ comes today. Yes, he is coming at the end of the world, and we don't know the exact day or hour, but, nevertheless, we do know Christ is coming today, and tomorrow, and on Sunday, and next month! He comes in the preaching of the gospel—so closely in fact that we can hear his voice! He also comes by the work of his Spirit in our hearts, in all the events of history and in his judgments. Lastly, he could come any day for us and bring us to be with him. Being mindful of these things should lead us to examine our attitude and life and make sure we are ready for Christ's coming everyday of our lives.

These speeches, as well as the delightful fellowship with like minded believers, were truly a blessing. We are grateful to the Lynden PRC Young People's Society for organizing this enjoyable event. ❖

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fire, you can be sure that the outcome would have been entirely different. Genesis 39:11 makes explicit reference to the fact that Joseph was in the house to carry out his master's business, nothing else. Moreover, it is apparent from that verse that there usually were many servants in and around the house every day. When Joseph entered the house on this particular day, he did not realize that "none of the men of the house" were there at the time. In fact, in that act of fleeing fornication, Joseph's love for God came to expression in his love for Potiphar. He served Potiphar faithfully also by honoring him not only in his relationship as a servant to his master, but also by honoring Potiphar's marriage. But once again God took his faithful servant and led him to another area of service, one Joseph would never have chosen—in the king's prison.

Serving God in Prison

For his faithful obedience to God, Joseph found himself serving God in the king's prison. Falsely accused, Joseph lost his job in the house of Potiphar. He lost his freedom, what little freedom he had as a slave. He was cast into prison, for an unspecified term. For all Joseph knew, he would live out his life there.

Those years in prison were wonderful years. I realize that's an astounding characterization of the history. But Joseph did not sit and sulk in Pharaoh's prison. He did not wallow in self-pity, questioning God's wisdom. We find him in prison, enjoying the mercy of Jehovah, patiently bearing his burden, with an amazing measure of contentment. Which is to say, Joseph lived in the knowledge of and in subjection to the truth that God is God, and that in every circumstance the Lord works all things for our spiritual profit. Even prison could not dim the beauty of Joseph's godly life.

Joseph enjoyed Jehovah's fellowship while in that prison.

Certainly that would not have been the case, if Joseph had not enjoyed his fellowship before entering that prison. Again, young people, the chief lesson we learn from Joseph's life is the importance of living in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. It is true, Joseph would never have been in this situation, if he had not had such a close relationship with his redeemer, that compelled him to walk in godliness regardless of the consequences. But this is his reward—the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy. And that mercy was expressed in a tangible way that Joseph could clearly see and experience. We read that Jehovah gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

That prison was not a place where prisoners sat on their hands. They worked in hard, menial labor. Joseph began his prison term doing that work. You talk about a drop in position!—from the chief ruler in Potiphar's household to the labors of a prisoner! But recognizing that no work is too lowly when it can be done to the glory of God, Joseph faithfully and diligently performed those labors. With the humility of one who serves the Lord in everything, Joseph performed his work, showing that his life was one committed to the Lord his God. That was seen by the keeper of the prison.

Joseph was noticeably different from the other prisoners. He was godly. And God, Who rules the hearts of men, moved the keeper of the prison to give Joseph great freedom. But it didn't stop there. The prison keeper's confidence in Joseph continued to increase, until Joseph was promoted to a position of authority. He became, as it were, the prison keeper's "right hand man." Not only was he given the run of the prison, but he exercised complete control over all the prisoners. And in all those labors Joseph showed himself trustworthy, humble and caring, a servant of the most high God even in prison—until God set him free once again

Serving God Under Pharaoh

In a very wonderful way Joseph was delivered from the bondage of prison to serve God under Pharaoh. God led him to the court of Pharaoh. Joseph appeared before Pharaoh; a Hebrew slave before the king of Egypt.

There is something striking in verse 14 of Genesis 41. Even before an ungodly earthly majesty, Joseph appeared clean shaven and dressed fit for the occasion. Such was the respect he showed an earthly superior. The Bible makes a point of mentioning that. How, then, shall we appear in worship before the King of all the earth? That is certainly an aside. It has little to do with the main thought of the passage. But it is mentioned nonetheless. And how do you show up for your job interviews? What is the general appearance you convey as a child of God? Obviously we must think about these things. Else such a detail wouldn't be noted in the Bible.

Then we are told of the conversation that took place between Pharaoh and Joseph and Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. When you consider that conversation you will find that on Joseph's part all the emphasis is on God's sovereignty. Do you live, young people, in the consciousness of God's absolute sovereignty, his rule over your life? Joseph would not have made that

testimony unless he also understood that God himself had determined Joseph's way, even through that long time in prison. Joseph had entrusted himself to the care of his God, living in contentment. That perspective rules also in his testimony to Pharaoh, his respect toward Pharaoh and his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams.

To that interpretation Joseph added also wise counsel. "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine" (Genesis 41:33-36).

Pharaoh looked at the young man standing before him, one who was the spokesman of Jehovah, and was amazed. Not only was this Joseph able to tell him the meaning of his dream, but he was also able to give to Pharaoh a solution to the many political and economic problems that presented themselves in this amazing revelation. "And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Genesis 41:38-40).

So Joseph immediately passed from a wonderful deliverance to an amazing exaltation! How amazing are the works of God! Let's remember: This is the God whom we serve, and who has saved us. (I want to come back to that momentarily.)

Pharaoh gave Joseph everything he needed to carry out his responsibilities in his newly appointed position and office. With that power and authority vested in him, Joseph served as the chief ruler in the government of Egypt. But he exercised his office under God. He subjected the entire land to his strict economic policy. With wisdom that makes our country's economic policies look like something written only for a comic strip, Joseph exercised faithful stewardship. By his rule Joseph showed the people that bumper crops and prosperity were not to be taken for granted, but were gifts from the God of heaven and earth, the God who governs all things. There were no entitlements, no hand-outs. By his rule he not only spared the land of Egypt from economic ruin, but was used by God for the provision of the church. That, after all, was the purpose for this amazing exaltation of Joseph.

We realize that God's sovereign work in all things always has a purpose. All things lead to Christ. All the events in this history were divinely and precisely directed in a such a way that the outcome would be Joseph's exaltation as ruler of Egypt at exactly the right moment with a view to bringing the covenant seed into Egypt. God would lead his people into Egypt, to preserve them, to try them, to cause them to grow into a mighty nation. And so he would set the stage to "call his son out of Egypt."

But the gospel of this history for you and for me is this: What Jehovah God did in Joseph's life for the sake of preserving the line of Christ, he has also promised to perform for every one of his children.

The wonder work of Jehovah in the outworking of Joseph's life so long ago is also happening even now in your life and mine, and to everyone who is united to Christ by a true and living faith. The Lord told us, "The meek shall inherit the earth." Christ gives us the victory. A rich inheritance awaits us. And everything leads us to that end.

I know that sometimes this is hard to believe. We cannot see how all these things work toward that end. And our faith is often very weak. I know that. But look again at Joseph. When he sat in Egypt's prison, did it even seem possible that his own dreams of being exalted would come to realization? Did that seem possible? And yet the Lord brought that very thing to pass!

When you know that he looks upon you in Christ Jesus, you may also lay hold of Psalm 37:9-11: "Evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." That promise is absolutely sure. And its surety is demonstrated to us in the Scriptures. Not only is it Jehovah's promise, Who is unchangeably faithful; but Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, has been revealed as accomplishing the victory. He sits in the highest heaven, glorified at God's right hand. All you who are one with him shall surely follow him into that reward!

Be patient therefore until the day of our Lord. Serve God in that knowledge, in every aspect of your life. Then will our churches continue to thrive as well, to the glory of our bridegroom, who is Christ our Lord. ❖

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Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

November 8 Read Exodus 24

This chapter begins the account of Moses meeting with God. Let us notice the words of the people before he went up Mount Sinai. "All the words which the LORD hath said will we do." That is quite the confession of faith. And yet, time and time again, Israel failed at keeping it. We should take those words upon our lips and into our hearts, but we must fully realize that we fail to keep Jehovah's words. Then we must come to the blood of the Lamb and pray for forgiveness. As we make our journey through this wilderness let us keep the Word and the blood fully in the forefront of our thoughts. Sing Psalter 334.

November 9 Read Exodus 25

Part of the ceremonial law given to Moses and Israel was the plans for the building of the tabernacle. Each stitch, each symbol, and each piece of furniture had two functions. First of all, they showed the glory and grandeur of God who must be worshipped. Secondly, they pointed to Christ. Israel had to look ahead while we look back and ahead. There is instruction for us in Israel's ceremonial and civil laws. Let us learn from the church in the wilderness, and let us bow before God whose glory is greater than all the gold in the tabernacle. Sing Psalter 225.

November 10 Read Exodus 26

Here we have the continuation of the instructions for the building of the tabernacle. As in every building, if the builder does not follow the plans explicitly, the building will not look as designed. As we saw yesterday God designed this building so that it showed his glory. The church is made up of many parts like the tabernacle. Each person has a function in that church. When each of us is functioning as God has ordained, the church will be at peace. Let us seek out our function and let us do our part in God's church that he may be glorified. Sing Psalter 223.

November 11 Read Exodus 27

A light shines forever in God's church. That light was pictured in the lamp found in the Holy Place. That light is Christ in the new dispensation. Our lives must be ordered in such a way that he shines in them. We cannot quench that light, but we hide it when we take on the works of Satan. We cannot stop the flow of oil, the Holy Spirit, but we do grieve that Spirit when we do not walk in that Light. Israel of old knew that when they did not follow God's ordinances, life was hard. Have we learned that lesson? Sing Psalter 287.

November 12 Read Exodus 28

There are many aspects of the priestly garments we might examine. Today let us look at that plate mounted on the high priest's mitre or headwear. On that plate were the words "Holiness to the Lord." Israel was to be a holy nation, and the high priest was to hold that before them every time he was wearing his priestly robes. The hymn title, "Take Time to be Holy," loses something, I believe. We should not just take time to be holy we should be holy as Jehovah God is holy. Holiness is not a garment that we put on and take off. It should be as much a part of us as any part of our body. Let us walk in holiness, and therefore please God. Sing Psalter 368.

November 13 Read Exodus 29

Many were the ceremonies that went with the ordination of Aaron and his sons to the priests' office. We must remember that Israel was living in the time of types and shadows. They needed these ceremonies to look to Christ. For us worship is simpler. Worship is to be done in spirit and in truth. Both the churches of the old dispensation and new dispensation must worship. Both have the same goal. We worship so that we know the God of the last two verses of the chapter. Read them again and then worship God as he would have himself worshipped. Sing Psalter 251.

November 14 Read Exodus 30

Laws, ordinances, rules. This is what governed Israel's worship as they waited for Christ to come. Everything had to be done just right or as the last verse states, they would be cut off from among their people. We might wonder why? But then we remember that God is holy, and he would redeem only a holy people made holy by himself and not by their works. Christ has come and fulfilled all of those laws, ordinances, and rules. Yet, we must worship him as he has ordained and not how we might desire. Let us be instructed by the old dispensation that we must worship a holy God and be holy ourselves. Sing Psalter 218.

November 15 Read Exodus 31

Are there any Bezaleel's or any Aholiab's reading this today? In other words are there any out there whom God has endowed with a talent? But then, we all fall into that class. Each of God's people has been given some special

gift with which to serve him. Not all of us are builders. Some of God's people are preachers, some are fathers, some mothers, some writers, some teachers, and some are good with small children. The list goes on and on. The gift that God has given us must be used in his church for his honor and glory. Are you using yours? Sing Psalter 174.

November 16 Read Exodus 32

Are you on the Lord's side? That was the question Israel had to face as Moses came down the mountain full of anger at the way God was being treated. That is the question we must face as we go throughout our lives. Many times we hear God's name being taken in vain. Many times we see his day being desecrated even by those in the church. Many times we see idol worship around us. Are we ready, like those valiant Levites, to be on the Lord's side? This is not easy; it can only be done by grace through faith. Let us pray for that grace to be on the Lord's side. Sing Psalter 164.

November 17 Read Exodus 33

In the first verses we have a foretaste of that which would come. Israel would become weak in the faith and would not want to follow the path on which God would lead them. Moses mediated for them, and God promised that his presence, the Shechinah cloud, would be with them. Moses then begs to see a glimpse of God's glory. That was all that he could see as no one can stand before God and live. That will change as through the blood of the Lamb we are made able to worship at his feet in heaven. Do we long for that day? Sing Psalter 155.

November 18 Read Exodus 34

Once again Moses ascends into heaven and spends forty days and forty nights in God's presence. Once more he must bring two tables of stone on which God with his finger inscribes the law. Moses realizes that he and the people are not worthy to have God for their God. He shows that he is a type of Christ and mediates for the people. God renews his covenant with Israel and reminds them through Moses of the laws they must keep to show that they are a chosen people. Then with a shining face Moses descends the mount to bring God's word to Israel. We no longer have these types and shadows. We have something better. We have the full Word of God and the knowledge of the Mediator who died for us on the cross. Sing Psalter 149.

November 19 Read Exodus 35

Often throughout the books of the law Israel is reminded to keep the Sabbath holy. We, too, need that reminder. It used to be easier to outwardly keep the Sabbath. Stores were closed, and there were very few Sunday entertainments. Now, the day is not kept by almost anyone. Yet, the calling is the same. God must be worshiped, and his day must be kept in the way that he has commanded. Does the world around us know that we keep the Sabbath? Against the backdrop of the world's Sunday, we should stand out starkly different. This takes work. This takes grace. Sing Psalter 137.

November 20 Read Exodus 36

Along with the detailed description of the tabernacle's design, stands verse 5. After a call for an offering, there had to be an announcement for Israel to stop giving. Could it be true? Could it be true today? Could God's people give so much that the church leaders say, "Stop!" Giving must come from the heart. Hearts must be prepared to give. This is not a one-time act. This is a daily work. We must think that of the bounties God has given to us, we must give back to him weekly and even daily. We must also teach our children this principle because it is a part of the worship ordained by God for us. Let us give thanks even as we are privileged to give. Sing Psalter 311.

November 21 Read Exodus 37

The details given in this chapter were for Israel and also for us. We might think that Moses would just say that this piece of furniture was built, and then that one, and so forth. But it was not that way. By divine inspiration Moses records exactly how the tabernacle was to be built. This was done for the church of all ages' instruction. Israel of old had to know how that tabernacle was to be built for the proper worship of Jehovah. We must know that God has not changed, and what he says about proper worship is how we must carry it out. All the things of the tabernacle pointed to Christ; the same Christ who saved us from our sins. May we worship God as he has commanded. Sing Psalter 133.

November 22 Read Exodus 38

This chapter continues with the description of the work of building and furnishing the tabernacle. Notice how the last chapter gave the description of the furnishings of the inside of the tent. They were of gold, the most precious of metals. Now we move outside the door and the furnishings are made of brass. This was less precious but fully as beautiful. Then we have the coverings and the fence. These things, too, had a purpose in the worship of Jehovah. Notice that much of the brass came from mirrors of the women. They had obtained these in Egypt and had now given them up to God's worship. Are we as zealous? Finally an accounting of all the materials is given. Israel was happy to give of their abundance; are we? Sing Psalter 131.

November 23 Read Exodus 39

Not only were the furnishings of the tabernacle described in great detail, so were the garments that the priests wore in the service of God richly described. Each color and each stone symbolized some aspect of that worship. The crowning piece was the headpiece or mitre. On that headpiece was a plate inscribed with the words, "Holiness to

the Lord." Israel was commanded to live a holy life and to worship Jehovah in a holy way. This command goes to us as well. Because God has given this information to us twice, we cannot emphasize it enough. We must worship God in the beauty of holiness. This should be our goal today as we seek to enter the Holy of Holies in heaven. Our high priest has entered there for us. Let us look ahead to the day when we can enter that most blessed place. Sing Psalter 266.

November 24 Read Exodus 40

Nearly a year has passed since Israel left Egypt. Now on the first day of the first month they are ready to erect the tablernacle. This was not by accident; this was God's design. The erecting of the tabernacle was not done in a haphazard way, but it was done in the way in which God had ordained it. This was their place of worship. Every thing had to be sanctified for the worship at the time God appointed. It is good for us at the beginning of each calendar year to set apart a time to sanctify ourselves for the worship of Jehovah in the coming year. As we read through Israel's call to worship, let us make the spirit of that worship ours. Sing Psalter 270.

November 25 Read Leviticus 1

Not only were there exact plans given for the place in which Israel had to worship, so were there exact methods given for worship. The animals brought for worship had to be perfect. Israel had to give of their best to God—not that which was left over. After they brought it to the tabernacle, it had to be killed a certain way, and in a certain manner it was offered to the Lord. Israel lived in the day of types and shadows. Each of those sacrifices pointed ahead to the perfect atonement for sin. As we look back at Christ on the cross and ahead to him returning on the clouds of glory, we, too, must worship him according to the regulative principles given in Scripture. We must also worship him in spirit and in truth. Sing Psalter 250.

November 26 Read Leviticus 2

Here another type of offering, the meat offering, was ordered by God. It was an offering given in thanksgiving for his wonderful works. All of God's people whether they were rich or poor were to bring this offering. A part of it was given to the priests and Levites for their service to God. God's people were required to take care of those who had been ordered to serve. We have that calling as well. Our ministers must live out of the gospel that they preach. We must bring thank offerings for God's wonderful works for the use of those servants of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 237.

November 27 Read Leviticus 3

Another type of offering was a peace offering of thanksgiving. This was divided three ways. One part was offered unto God; one part was given to the priests, and one part was returned to the offerer for his use with his friends and families. It was an offering of reconciliation, that is, an offering which brought God and man together to live in peace. As there must be peace around our family tables, so there must be peace between God and his people. As the sacrifice signified that peace, so Jesus gives to us the peace that we need to draw near to God around the table of communion on this earth and the table of the great feast in heaven. Sing Psalter 360.

November 28 Read Leviticus 4

The second verse is one that we should consider often. We might use the excuse, "I did not know," and expect to get away with what we have done. The teaching of this section tells us that that reason is not excused by God. Sins of ignorance must be confessed and must be repented of. We must do this to obtain forgiveness from our forgiving God. He does have mercy for his people, but those people must repent of all sins, even those of ignorance. Let us seek forgiveness from God each day for all sins that we commit. In that way we please our heavenly Father. Sing Psalter 235.

November 29 Read Leviticus 5

Related to the sins of yesterday's passage is the teaching of this chapter. When we know about sins of others even if they are seemingly mild, we become responsible for the guilt of those sins. In the office of believers we have this as a responsibility. We must look after all of our brothers and sisters in the faith. We must also guard the holiness of God's name and attributes wherever we are. We may not ignore sin no matter what it is and no matter what the severity is. We must be holy even as God is holy. Sing Psalter 24.

November 30 Read Leviticus 6

As we read these chapters, we cannot help but be struck by the different varieties of sins mentioned. We also cannot help but be struck by how often we fall into the same sins. We see that in this chapter as well. We are commanded to care for our neighbor. Part of carrying for our neighbor is to care for his goods. We are to have this as an obligation of the command to love our neighbor. Our Heidelberg Catechism speaks of this in its exposition of the eighth commandment. We do well to read this often. Let us seek our neighbor's welfare in all things, and in that way glorify our God. Sing Psalter 83.

December 1 Read Leviticus 7

Rules! Rules! Rules! We may wonder that the same God who abhorred the rules of the Pharisees at the time of Christ enacted all of these rules in this book of the law. We must see the difference between the two kinds of rules. The rules of Leviticus were enacted to show Israel a proper way to worship Jehovah and to point the way to

his Son. The rules of the Pharisees were enacted to bring their desires to pass and had little to do with God's glory. We must obey the rules that God and his officebearers have set for his church to bring glory to his name by the proper worship of that name. Let us recognize that fact and seek to glorify God's name in our worship of that name. Sing Psalter 109.

December 2 Read Leviticus 8

How often do we contemplate the ordination of officebearers? How many times do we consider their election no different than the democratic process the republics of the world undertake every so many years? Our election of officebearers and their subsequent ordination into office must be different. These are men of God's choosing (the others are as well) for the care of his church and the benefit of the believers in that church. We must treat the offices and their holders with the respect that God has placed upon them. He has determined to use these men, weak vessels that they may be, for his glory and our service. May his name be glorified in their work in the churches. Sing Psalter 371.

December 3 Read Leviticus 9

Sometimes we might wish that fire from heaven would come down upon one of our meetings so that all might know God's power. This is and is not done today. We do not see this in our worship since Christ has come and has fulfilled all of the Old Testament laws and ordinances. This is not done today because we have the full revelation of Scripture to testify of God's power to us. But it is done when we look at the signs of Christ return that are sent to us daily. Do we think of this when we hear of an earthquake, a volcano, a flood, or any of the so-called natural disasters that God brings upon this earth and maybe even upon us? God's power is evident all around us. Do we acknowledge it? Sing Psalter 385.

December 4 Read Leviticus 10

On the very day that they were consecrated to serve Jehovah in the way in which he had commanded, Nadab and Abihu rebelled against that way. They refused to worship God in the way that *he* had ordained. Their punishment was death before the congregation. God will not be mocked. He has ordained the manner in which we are to worship him. If it is not followed, he will bring distress to those who are disobedient. Now, as we saw yesterday, he does not bring down fire upon those sinners, but he does bring them to justice whether it is in this life or the life to come. Let us be careful how we worship; let us bring no strange fire to his altar of worship. Sing Psalter 318.

December 5 Read Leviticus 11

In this chapter we see the listing of the clean and unclean animals. God brought this regulation upon Israel's life for several reasons. The reasons are still valid today. First of all, Israel had to know that they must live an antithetical life. We, too, must walk in that sort of a path saying yes to the things of God and no to the things of Satan. Secondly, Israel had to know that their God was holy. In their obedience to these dietary laws they acknowledge and confess the holiness of God, as we must do all through our lives as well. Finally, in these laws Israel saw the liberty that they had to serve God in a right manner. Do we use our Christian liberty in such a way? Sing Psalter 342.

December 6 Read Leviticus 12

In this set of regulations, God showed Israel what they must do to preserve his holiness even as they obeyed his command to be fruitful and multiply. That command stood then and still stands today. Did you remember as you read this passage that Joseph and Mary kept these ordinances correctly? God directed them to obey these laws for us. Jesus had to "fulfill all righteousness" as the gospel according to Matthew informs us. In fulfilling these laws our salvation was ensured. Let us thank God for such a great gift. Sing Psalter 261.

December 7 Read Leviticus 13

Leprosy was that illness that most surely showed the effect sin has upon our spiritual bodies. Just as leprosy rotted away the body and rendered it unpleasant to the eye, so does spiritual leprosy corrode our souls. For a picture of what leprosy did to the physical body remember Job's condition when Satan struck him. God gave to Israel the manner according to the law to receive a healed one back into their fellowship. God sent his Son to make it possible for us to be brought back into favor with him. Just as the one leper gave thanks to Christ for his cleansing so must we thank God for the atonement of Christ that cleansed us. Sing Psalter 140.

December 8 Read Leviticus 14

How great a sign Israel had in leprosy! It is probably incomprehensible to most of us how leprosy could affect a garment or a whole house. But the truth of the teaching is clear. Sin affects the whole of our spiritual being. Sin that is left unchecked will destroy a person, a family, and even a whole congregation. Sin must be removed, and the affected party must be pronounced clean. By God's grace we have the way for this process to be carried out. Christ was made sin for us in order that we can be presented before the throne of grace spotless and can receive the white robes of righteousness. May we see that day and live lives of holiness as we wait for it to come. Sing Psalter 141.

"The Lord Gave the Word":
Commemorating the 400th Anniversary of the King James Version (6)
The Golden Age of the English Bible (1)

by Jonathan Langerak, Jr.

Introduction

In our study of the history of the English Bible thus far, we have seen its dawn in the Wycliffite Bibles of the 1380s and 90s, and the birth proper of the English Bible in the translation and revision work of William Tyndale in the age of the Reformation. We now come to what may be called the "Golden Age" of the English Bible, which "Golden Age" would come to culmination in the King James Version of AD 1611. It is for me, and I hope for you, my longsuffering readers, a fascinating history. The alert and discerning child of God sees his covenant Father's hand at work. God moves all of history, including the hearts of kings, which He turns wherever He wills (Proverbs 21:1), for His own glory as the Almighty and for the salvation, gathering, and preservation of the church of Jesus Christ, which Scripture and our Reformed Confessions assure us shall surely continue to the end of the world (HC, LD 21, Q/A 54; BC, Art. 27). So, too, in this brief window of history, the "Golden Age" of English Bible translation, does the believer discern the providential hand of Jehovah.

This period comprises six major translations: the Coverdale Bible, the Matthew's Bible, The Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishop's Bible, and the KJV. These articles will not treat the lesser known versions of this period, such as the Bible produced by the Cambridge scholar Richard Taverner (1505-1575). Later, in connection with the condemnation of it by the King James translators—especially Bishop Miles Smith in his preface to the KJV of 1611—we will take a brief look at the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Protestant English Bible with its own English translation, the Douai-Rheims Bible of 1610. For now, we begin with Coverdale's Bible.

"Let it go out among our people": The Coverdale Bible

Under the remarkable providence of God, a thing totally unthinkable since long before the days of John Wycliffe, a thing for which thousands of God's children in England prayed for and looked unto and worked toward, finally, in God's good time, emerged in the nation: a public, accepted, licensed translation of the Holy Scripture into English. The push for such a translation began to surge forward even before Tyndale's martyrdom in Belgium in 1536. Already in December of 1534, the English bishops asked King Henry VIII to authorize a new translation of the Bible in the English tongue. Why the change? The answer is that the church was now under direct control of the monarch. Henry VIII severed the English Church from Rome after the pope refused to grant him a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and made himself "Supreme Governor and Head" of the Church of England. Henry began to be persuaded from several quarters that a Bible in the native language and promoted in the king's name would help to calm the religious turmoil among his subjects and restore them to a knowledge of the Christian faith. With the execution in 1535 of Chancellor Thomas More for his refusal to accept Henry VIII as head of the Church of England, the primary threat to an official, licensed, and public translation of the English Bible disappeared. (Thomas More, as you remember, was the ardent Roman Catholic hired by Cuthbert Tunstall to reply to William Tyndale, and who, as a Roman Catholic, recognized no other head of the church than the pope in Rome.) Under the reforming influences of Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, new Chancellor Thomas Cromwell, Bishop of Worcester

Hugh Latimer, and Queen of England Anne Boleyn (for whom Henry VIII had divorced Catherine of Aragon), Henry began to relax the oppression of those who worked for reformation in the English church and "some who championed a vernacular Bible were appointed to positions of rank."[1] Chancellor Thomas Cromwell was such a champion of a vernacular Bible. To improve his Latin, which would enable him to converse with academic scholars and clergymen who would execute his vision for a licensed English Bible, Cromwell "memorized the entire Latin New Testament of Erasmus on a trip between England and Rome."[2]

The matter of whether a new translation would be done was now settled. It would be done. The king desired it. Therefore, the bishops had requested it. It was now time to determine who would perform the work of translating. And the most obvious choice to all parties was Miles Coverdale. Coverdale was born in 1488 and ordained as an Augustinian monk and a priest in the Romish Church (like Tyndale before him) in 1514. It seems that he too was converted to the faith of the Reformation while at Cambridge (Erasmus, as you remember, was at Cambridge lecturing on Scripture in 1514) and by 1528 was preaching against image worship, confession of sins to a priest, and the popish mass. Concerning the Bible, he declared: "Sure I am that there cometh more knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures by their sundry translations than by all the glosses [commentaries] of our sophistical [philosophical] doctors."[3] For this he was forced to flee to exile on the Continent of Europe, where he settled in Hamburg and assisted William Tyndale in Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch. Possibly, Coverdale also then migrated with Tyndale to Antwerp. In any case, Coverdale spent the next six years in that city as a meticulous and much sought-after proofreader for printers and publishers. During this time, he employed himself in his own translation of Holy Writ, and completed the manuscript (hand-written copy) on October 4, 1535. Across the Channel in England, Thomas Cromwell was elated. It was put to the press in Antwerp at once and the pages were shipped to London, where they were bound into a Bible.

Coverdale's Bible of 1535 (still almost a year before Tyndale's martyrdom!) was an improvement upon Tyndale in that Coverdale's was the first complete printed Bible in English. It was also the first to gather all the books known as "apocryphal" into one place between the two canonical testaments, so that they could be discerned by the reader as not to be considered part of the canon of Scripture, as the Roman Church had done (for the Reformed position on the Apocrypha, read the Belgic Confession, Art. 6). But its improvements end there. The parts of Scripture which Tyndale had not been able to translate, Coverdale himself did. The problem was that Coverdale had very scant knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. The only ancient language in which he had fluency was Latin. Therefore, he used the Latin text as the basis for his translation: the *Vulgate* of Jerome and a new Latin translation from the original languages by a scholarly Dominican monk named Sanctus Pagninus. Coverdale also consulted the German Bibles, having learned German during his stay in Hamburg: Luther's German Bible and a collaborative effort by the Swiss reformers Huldrych Zwingli and Leo Juda, known as the Zurich Bible. Nevertheless, the base text was Latin, and that was no improvement, but a regression into the great weakness of the Wycliffite Bibles.

What saved Coverdale was his "remarkable editorial gift and exquisitely melodic ear,"[4] acquired during the six years he worked for Antwerp's printers. Coverdale was able to blend his various sources into a harmonious whole. So good were some of his phrases, that the King James translators brought them unchanged into the KJV, among them "the pride of life," "the world passeth away," "enter into the joy of the lord," and "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."[5] Moreover, Coverdale's version of the Psalms was incorporated into Archbishop Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* of 1549 and lasted until the revision of this book in 1960. If you have ever heard Psalms sung in a British cathedral, or have a CD at home of Psalms by any of the skilled choirs of a British cathedral or college, you are listening to Miles Coverdale's version, not to the KJV. And they sound lovely when they are sung! Coverdale's "exquisitely melodic ear"!

The Bible was received by the English bishops, reluctantly, in obedience to Henry's commandment. When they reported that they were unable to detect any heresy at all, in answer to his question whether they found any

1 *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution It Inspired* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 139.

2 Ibid, 143.

3 *A Visual History of the English Bible: The Tumultuous Tale of the World's Bestselling Book*, Donald L. Brake (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 111.

4 Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters*, 145.

5 Ibid.

heresies in it, Henry exclaimed in his bombastic manner: "If there be no heresies, then in God's name let it go abroad among our people!"[6] Queen Anne Boleyn laid a copy of Coverdale's Bible in a prominent place in the palace, so that all could read it. And in the Convocation of Bishops of 1537, the Bishop of Hereford, as was noted already, exclaimed, in the face of fierce opposition from some of his colleagues:

> Think ye not that we can, by any sophistical [philosophical-JL] subtleties, steal out of the world again the light which every man doth see. Christ hath so lightened the world at this time, that the light of the Gospel hath put to flight all misty darkness; and it will shortly have the higher hand of all clouds, though we resist in vain never so much. The common people do now know the Holy Scripture better than many of us…[7]

Christ hath so lightened the world at this time, that the light of the Gospel hath put to flight all misty darkness; and it will shortly have the higher hand of all clouds, though we resist in vain never so much.

"By the King's most gracious license": The Matthew's Bible

In the same year (1537) as the Coverdale Bible appeared, yet another translation was being readied. This was by John Rogers, who went by the false name of Thomas Matthew to confuse those who wanted to destroy him. Rogers had been entrusted by Tyndale with his manuscript translation of Joshua through II Chronicles, which Tyndale had completed while imprisoned in Vilvorde Castle. He synthesized all the completed portions of Tyndale's Bible with the translation by Coverdale—based on the Latin—of the books not completed by Tyndale. Printed in Antwerp, the Matthew's Bible reached England in July 1537 and was delightfully received by Archbishop Cranmer as "better than any translation heretofore made."[8]

It was then distributed to the nation, as the title page proclaimed triumphantly, "by the King's most gracious license", the first English Bible ever to be able to make such a declaration.

The Matthew's Bible may have garnered the praise from Archbishop Cranmer that it did because it continued a tradition begun by William Tyndale: the addition of marginal notes to the text, to assist the reader in interpreting and applying the Scriptures. Rogers added extensive marginal notes. Many were aimed at the antichristian character of the Romish papacy; Rome's corruption of the sacraments; and the wickedness of the papist priests. God would reward Roger's outspokenness with the honorable place of being the first of those martyred at the hands of Bloody Mary (who reigned 1553-1558) in 1555.

"Here may men…learn all things": The Great Bible

In April 1539, the third Bible of the Golden Age of the English Bible appeared. It was a revision of both Coverdale's and Matthew's, to bring what was best of both into one better Bible and also to clear from the margins all notes except those which gave a different reading for a word or phrase in the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. The reviser of the new translation would be the ever-willing Miles Coverdale. The base text would be the 1537 Matthew's Bible, but Coverdale was also instructed to consult, yet again, several Latin translations, including, this time, Erasmus's Latin translation from the Novum Instrumentum.

The still-authoritative presence of the Latin is, to my mind, due to more than the fact that Coverdale was better skilled in that language than in the Greek and Hebrew. Coverdale was working in an ecclesiastical environment in which many of the church leaders hankered after the old Romish ways. Many bishops, although in a church that was officially Protestant, made no secret of their Roman Catholic sympathies. They would have loved nothing more than to once again tear the Scriptures out of the hands of the common folk and imprison it again in the fusty Latin of the Vulgate and into the hands of the highest circles of church and scholarly power. That the people should become shamefully ignorant and more stupid than swine was no concern of theirs! Let the old ways remain! After all, Rome was "semper eadem", always the same! But, they now simply could not have it that way. The king would not allow it. Archbishop Cranmer would

6 Ibid, 146.

7 qtd in Ibid, 147.

8 qtd in Ibid, 148.

not allow it. So, if an English translation of Scripture was required, far better to have one based on the Latin than on those mysterious and no doubt pernicious tongues of Hebrew and Greek. So went the thinking of many leaders in the Church of England.

When the manuscript of the new Bible was complete, Cromwell sent Coverdale to Paris to have the new official English Bible printed by the Frenchman Francois Regnault. This strange situation was due to the fact that no English printers were really up to the job, and Regnault, by contrast, was one of Europe's best printers. Providentially, Regnault agreed to do the work, and, even more providentially, the Romish French king, Francis I, licensed him to proceed. But the Inquisition, that diabolical papist institution for the purifying of the Romish Church through any and all means possible, had other ideas. They seized the printed sheets just before Christmas 1538. A hefty bribe prevented destruction of the printed sheets, but instead of returning them to Regnault, the Inquisition pawned them off to a hat-making factory, which intended to use them to line the inside of new hats. The authorities of the factory resold them to desperate agents of Thomas Cromwell, who had them immediately shipped to England. To prevent any chance of a repeat debacle, Cromwell also shipped over all Regnault's printing presses, the typeset used in the printing, and the entire staff of Regnault's operation and installed them in new buildings in London. And there in 1539, the magnificent Great Bible appeared, so named because of its huge dimensions: 16.5 inches by 11 inches. "With the Great Bible, the Scriptures in English had finally achieved that official status Tyndale had envisioned for them when he died."[9] Archbishop Cranmer, with the backing of Cromwell, ordered every church in England, from St. Paul's Cathedral in London to the humblest parish church, to purchase a copy of the Great Bible and place it in a public place—usually the church pulpit—so that the common people could resort to and read "the very lively Word of God."[10] In many cases it was necessary to chain it to the lectern so that zealous laymen, undaunted by the Bible's massive size and weight, would not carry it home with them. The 1539 edition sold out in a year, so in April 1540 a second edition appeared, carrying a preface from Archbishop Cranmer, in which he wrote, showing that Scripture was God's Word to His people of all rank and circumstances:

"Here may…men, women; young, old; learned, unlearned; rich, poor; priests, laymen; lords, ladies; officers, tenants, and mean [lowly] men; virgins, wives; widows, lawyers, merchants, artificers [craftsmen], husbandmen, and all manner of persons of what estate or condition soever they be…learn all things, what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they should not do, as well concerning Almighty God as themselves and all other."[11]

One final word about the Great Bible: In July 1540, Thomas Cromwell was found guilty of treason and beheaded by order of Henry VIII. Since a picture of him appeared on the title page of the Bible, receiving the Word of God from the hand of the king, his face and coat of arms had to be scrubbed out, and all traces of him wiped from the Bible he had worked so hard to promote. The title page of the de-Cromwellized 1541 edition indicated who did the purging: "Overseen and perused at the commandment of the King's Highness by the right reverend fathers in God, Cuthbert bishop of Durham, and Nicholas bishop of Rochester."[12] The "Cuthbert bishop of Durham" was none other than Cuthbert Tunstall, formerly Bishop of London and now, seemingly, rather demoted to the city of Durham. Divine justice ensured that in this life, Tunstall, who had so rabidly sought to stamp out an English Bible, persecuted William Tyndale for laboring to bring it about, and burned hundreds of Bibles in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, would now pay homage to this godly and righteous man. Not only did Tunstall put his stamp of approval on just any English Bible, but an English Bible which was, at bottom, Tyndale's Bible.

And on that note of God's vindication of our beloved Tyndale, we look forward to continuing the Golden Age of the English Bible in our next article. ❖

Jonathan is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

9 Ibid, 151.
10 Ibid.
11 qtd in Ibid, 152.
12 qtd in Ibid, 157.

Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Act 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Alayna Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Hassevoort—Bryon Center, MI

Trent Jamison, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim Boverhof—Byron Center, MI

Brendan Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Phillip Lenting—Crete, IL

Brian John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Mancusi—Crete, IL

Ryelle Suzanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Noorman—Faith, MI

Lael Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Pastoor—Faith, MI

Luke Grant and Reed Lane, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Ross Wassink—Holland, MI

Hannah Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Kamps—Hudsonville, MI

Aliya Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bryant VanOverloop—Hudsonville, MI

Cayden David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dave VanTil—Hudsonville, MI

Eliza Danielle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Andringa—Hull, IA

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established." Proverbs 4:26

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Anga Dyck—Ballymena, N Ireland

Corinne VanPutten—Byron Center, MI

Kylar Hassevoort = Byron Center, MI

Joseph Andringa—Crete, IL

Erin Compagner—Grace, MI

Julie VanDenTop—Grace, MI

Willian Streiff—Holland, MI

Jayna Warner—Holland, MI

Courtney Wassink—Holland, MI

Jordan DeBoer—Hudsonville, MI

Trevor Huizinga—Hudsonville, MI

Karissa Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI

Jessica Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI

Andrew Ezinga—Loveland, CO

Chad Solanyk—Loveland, CO

Kelly Warner—Peace, IL

Jacob DeVries—Randolph, WI

MARRIAGES

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

Mr. Tedd VanSolkema and Miss Abigail DeVries—Byron Center, MI

Mr. Erik Guichelaar and Miss Cherith Cammenga—Faith, MI

Mr. Bryan Kiel and Miss Erika DeVries—Kalamazoo, MI

The Sunflower

"Don't cut those!"

Clara paused. She held a pair of scissors in her right hand, and a colorful bouquet of flowers in her left. One more flower would make the bouquet complete. Especially one of those sunflowers. She looked back to see if her mother was still watching.

"But Mom, these are the best and biggest ones!" Clara exclaimed. Clara's mother had been happy to let Clara cut a bunch of flowers for Grandmother, but suddenly these huge yellow blooms were not allowed to be part of it.

Mother walked over to where Clara stood in the garden. "I know, Clara. They're so pretty. But they have all kinds of seeds in them—see?"

The sunflowers branched out in several directions off of one tall, main stalk. They were much taller than Clara, but the flower heads were large. She could clearly see the seeds in the middle of them.

"The birds will love to eat the seeds as soon as they are ripe," Mother explained, "and we will love to watch them do it."

Clara sighed and nodded. Her bouquet of zinnias and black-eyed Susans would have to do. Mother went back to picking beans at the other end of the garden. Clara looked up at the sunflowers swaying in the breeze above her. She pulled on a stem to bring one of the flower heads down to her level. She had never taken the time to look at one this closely before.

The dark brown seeds were arranged in neat rows that curved in just the right way to fill up the large middle circle. Yellow petals grew out from around the edge of the circle, framing the dark middle disk in a bright, cheery pattern. How could something grow all by itself into such an amazing, beautiful design?

Clara let the sunflower go. It bobbed back to its full height above her. For a moment, Clara thought it was nodding at her.

She started to walk away, but turned around for one more glance at the regal, golden bloom. It stood still now as it faced her. Clara said within herself, "Sunflowers can't talk!" But she smiled as she thought of the possibility. What if…what if they could?

Then she remembered a verse from the song they had just learned in school: "Thy Spirit, O Lord, makes life to abound; the earth is renewed, and fruitful the ground; to God ascribe glory and wisdom and might, let God in his creatures forever delight" (Psalter 287, vs. 1).

She looked at the sunflower again. No, it didn't grow in that beautiful pattern all by itself. God's wisdom made it grow that way. It's his design. And he has a design for everything.

That's what the sunflower was saying!

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine !

by Connie Meyer

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing" (Psalm 65:11-13).

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R	P	O	U	O	C	L	O	T	H	E	D	L	V
A	U	J	T	D	W	P	M	U	N	R	F	O	A
L	L	E	S	N	H	N	M	R	A	E	N	C	L
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O	V	D	P	S	A	D	Y	S	I	O	H	S	E
J	E	O	N	S	L	L	I	H	T	C	O	K	Y
D	R	O	P	I	K	F	V	S	H	M	U	R	S
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Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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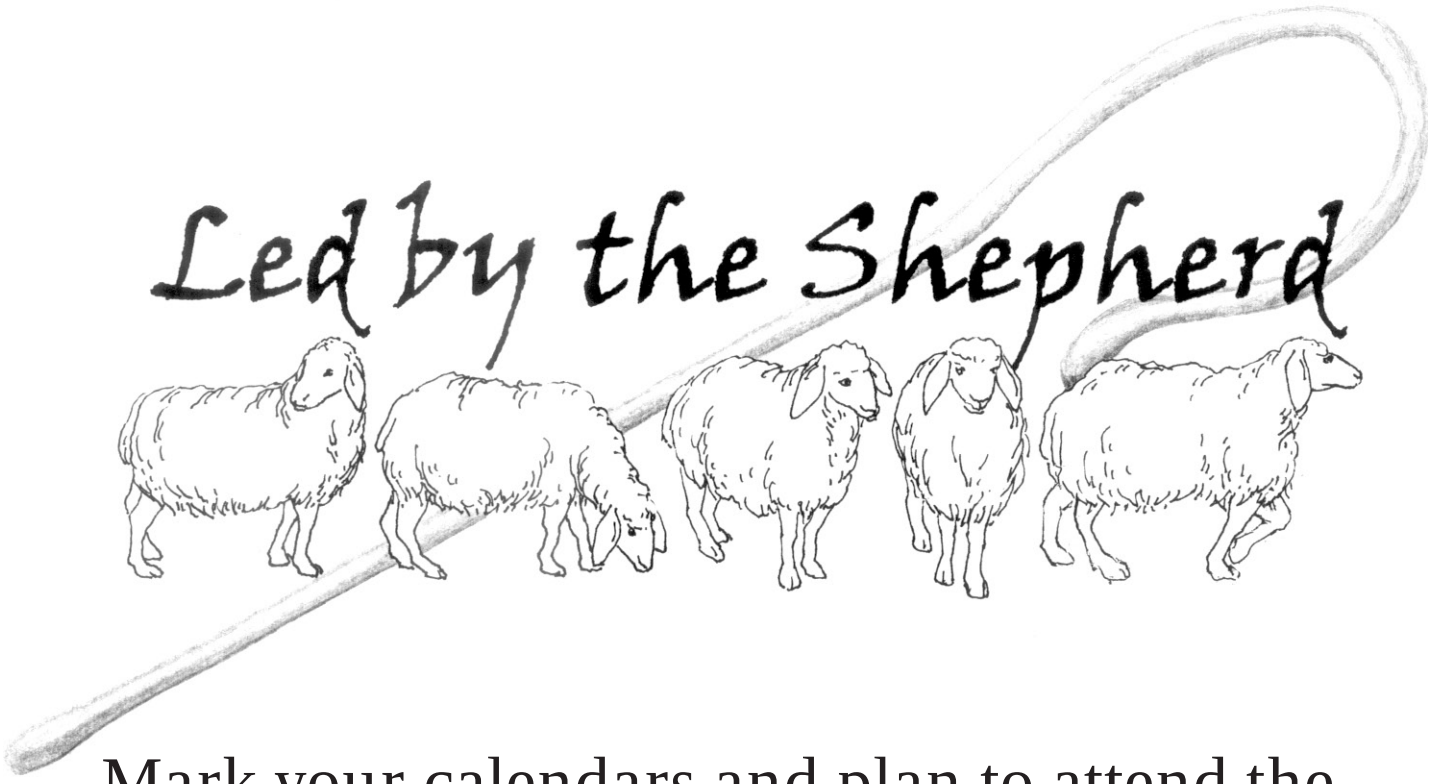

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2012 PRYP Convention!

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