

Thursday, January 25th – Genesis 37: 12-14

The Bible tells us that children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps. 127,128). It may not always be readily apparent that this is so. Isaac and Rebekah were deprived of children for many years, and then they had only two sons, only one of whom was godly. Jacob had many sons, but 10 of the 12 of his sons were hateful murderers and deceivers. Yet even wicked or otherwise defective children serve to bless their parents by driving them more vitally and consistently to the Lord, whereas godly children draw their parents gratefully to the Lord. In these and following verses, we shall learn how wicked most of Jacob's sons were, and yet how God graciously used what they intended for evil to bring about much good for many. The blessings of God can often appear for many years to be curses.

Friday, January 26th – Genesis 37: 12-14

In these verses, we begin to learn that Joseph was not only a dreamer, but he was also a young man devoted to his father and to his brothers. The divine revelation he had through the two dreams of his exaltation did not puff him up with pride, but rather filled him with humbling gratitude. Therefore, when his father orders him on a mission to serve his brothers, he does not arrogantly refuse, claiming that he is above such lowly work. Rather, the son destined for high exaltation stoops to serve his father and his brethren. We, too, who are destined to reign with Christ forever in glory, should humble ourselves to serve others out of gratitude to and for the glory of our exalting God.

Saturday, January 27th - Genesis 37: 12-14

Shechem is located about 50 miles north of where Jacob and his family resided at Horeb (Gen. 35:1). It had been the scene of Simeon and Levi's deception and mass murder of the men of Shechem, and therefore was a place of possible danger for the sons of Jacob who may have been targets for revenge. Naturally, Jacob would have been concerned for his sons' welfare in such a place, and he desired to learn, through his sending Joseph to Shechem, how his other sons were doing. Though Joseph was but 17, his father entrusted him with a mission that called for courage and discretion. Though Joseph was the most beloved son of his father, yet his father did not spare him but gave him up for a time to learn the truth regarding the situation of the other sons whom he also loved. Joseph did not claim incompetence due to his youth, nor did he plead his beloved status so that his father might spare him from this mission. Instead, he willingly placed himself at his father's disposal and went on a mission to inquire into the welfare of his brothers, though the mission would prove exceedingly costly to Joseph and Jacob in terms of the loss of Joseph's liberty for decades and the hazarding of his life. Such costly undertaking points to the Father who did not spare His only begotten Son, but gave Him up for unworthy sinners.

Sunday, January 28th - Genesis 37: 12-14

Jacob sent his beloved son to see about the welfare of his other sons. Joseph willingly undertook this mission. However, it would not be Joseph reporting back to Jacob, but rather Joseph's brothers returning to tell their father of the death of Joseph (which report they concocted to cover their having wickedly sold Joseph to Midianite traders). Joseph's obedience to his father would place his life in jeopardy, not from Shechemites, but from his own brothers. It would plunge him into decades of tribulation and daily deaths. To Jacob, Joseph would be practically dead for decades. It is well that Joseph's last act before his long departure from his father was one of devoted obedience. He would have the comfort of knowing that his sufferings resulted not from his sin, but from his righteous obedience to his father. May our

Saturday, February 24th – Genesis 38: 1-5

Scripture draws an instructive comparison between Joseph in Egypt and Judah in Canaan. Here in Chapter 38 we see Judah living as a free man in the Promised Land and wallowing in sin. In Chapter 39 we shall be told of Joseph living in godless Egypt as a slave and growing in sanctification. It is not where we live but how we live and to whom we look for our guidance that determine whether we grow in sin or in sanctification. More often than not, pleasant circumstances permit our passions to wage war against our souls, while painful circumstances act as prods to drive us to our sanctifying Lord.

Sunday, February 25th – Genesis 38: 1-5

These verses tell us of Judah's bad marriage. It is significant that the chain of sinful choices for Judah began with his leaving his brothers in order to visit his Adullamite friend. As bad as Judah's brothers were showing themselves to be, they were at least sons of the covenant of the Lord, and shared a common training in the godly teaching of their father, Jacob. When we assemble regularly with our brethren in Christ, however imperfect they may be, we are encouraged to godly love and living in a way that we are not when we walk in the counsel of the godless (Ps. 1:1,2; Heb. 10:24,25).

Monday, February 26th – Genesis 38: 1-5

While Judah was removed from his brothers he met the woman who would be his wife. His choice of this woman resulted from godless passion and not from godly principle, as we can gather from several points. In the first place, Judah rashly chose a Canaanite woman rather than prayerfully and carefully to seek a wife from a godly source. The language of v.2 indicates a swift and thoughtless choosing. Judah saw her, took her, and went in to her. His was a quick and carnal action, like that of Eve, who saw the forbidden fruit, took it and gave it to her husband with most miserable consequences (Gen. 3:6). Judah did not seek the counsel or blessing of his father for this choice, nor did he consider the care with which his great-grandfather, Abraham, had expressly refused to let Isaac marry one of the daughters of the Canaanites (Gen. 24:3). Judah also neglected to consider how miserable the Hittite wives of his uncle Esau had made life for Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26:34,35; 27:46), as well as the misery that Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, brought to the covenant family through Esau's perverse choice of her as an additional wife (Gen. 28:8,9). Judah's choice of a wife ran contrary to the prayers, precepts, examples and experiences of his godly parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. Carnal lust made him blind to the lessons of the Lord in this critical matter of his choice of a life's partner and helpmeet. No good could or would come of such an unprincipled and godless choice in Judah's life, nor can or will good come from our choices that issue from sinful passion rather than righteous principle.

Tuesday, February 27th - Genesis 38: 2-10

We learn from these verses that Shua, Judah's Canaanite wife, quickly bore to him two sons. Outwardly Judah seems to have contracted a happy, lovingly intimate, and fruitful marriage. However, Scripture makes clear to us that Judah's wife bore him evil fruit in the persons of his sons. We read in v. 7 that Er was evil in the sight of the Lord, however fine he may have appeared in the eyes of men. Onan was a self-regarding, cunning and godless son who refused to obey his father, to honor his brother, or to submit himself to his God. Both of these godless sons the Lord called out of this world at a young age, whereas we know nothing of the third son, Shelah. Nothing good, but only that which is insignificant at best and evil at worst, issues from the sinful choices of the people of the Lord.

Wednesday, February 28th - Genesis 38: 7

The sin of Er is not detailed for us by Scripture. Some men's sins are evident in this life, while the sins of others follow after them and are disclosed only on the final day of divine judgment (1 Tim. 5:24). It is perhaps implied in this verse that Er was respectable, even godly, in the eyes of men. Yet, if in the eyes of the Lord, who knows not only secret deeds but also thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12,13), a man is found to be evil, he is in a most perilous state. We are all warned not to partake of the ordinances of God in an unworthy manner, lest we become sick or even perish by the judging hand of God (1 Cor. 11:27-31). Clearly, then, we should not only guard our hands from sinning, but we should especially strive by divine grace to keep our hearts pure before our Lord.

Thursday, March 1st - Genesis 38: 8-10

The duty which Judah urged his son, Onan, to fulfill would be codified in God's Word centuries later under Moses (Dt. 25:5,6). It was an arrangement that made provision not only for the widow of a man's deceased brother, but also enabled the fulfillment of one of the purposes of marriage, namely, the production of descendants. It was also an arrangement that gave testimony to the immortality of the human soul, for the descendants issuing from a man's fulfillment of the duty were regarded as being descended from the deceased man. Such a reckoning would be absurd were it not for the fact that the soul of the deceased lived on, though his mortal remains did not. This duty was a gracious arrangement instituted by God to demonstrate to man that by divine provision even the wages of sin would not triumph finally over a man and his descendants. The duties of the Lord always point the way to life, never to death.

Friday, March 2nd - Genesis 38: 8-10

Onan sinfully sought to frustrate the gracious divine intention contained in this familial duty. He took steps that outwardly indicated his willingness to fulfill his duty when he went in to Tamar. Yet, privately he took steps to ensure that she would not conceive a child. Scripture tells us why he did this. He refused to be an instrument of blessing to his brother and his brother's widow, reckoning that he himself would be deprived of blessing were he to beget children through Tamar. Yet, in doing what he did, Onan paid a heavy price of sinning against many people. He sinned against Tamar, against his brother Er, against his father Judah, and against his grandfathers, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham—to all of whom God had promised numerous descendants. Most significantly, he sinned against the Lord, who instituted the familial duty here spurned by Onan. The painful irony of this self-regarding sinfulness of Onan is that as the Messiah was prophesied to descend from Judah, Onan might have been reckoned in the genealogy of Christ (1 Mt. 1:3), whereas, due to his receiving capital punishment from the Lord, he neither married nor produced children, but died a barren fig tree cursed by God. We lose far more than we know when we try to save our lives by our own devices, rather than lose them in obedience to God for Christ's sake.

Saturday, March 3rd - Genesis 38: 8-10

Onan did not murder anyone or steal from people something they already had. He simply, being guided by selfish reasoning, failed to fulfill a familial duty. His failure was not destructive, but rather depriving. Nor was his an open sin that clearly affected many others, but rather was one of a most private nature. Yet, it was a sin heinous enough in the sight of the Lord to call for the divine execution of the sinning Onan. Great and vital matters often turn on seemingly small and incidental duties. What great matters are suspended for us on whether or not we, with sincere and loving humility, regard our brethren in the body of Christ as being more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:3,4)?

Sunday, March 4th - Genesis 38: 8-10

The action of Onan and the punitive response of the Lord should lead us to reflect very seriously upon the prevailing ethos of our culture wherein children are regarded more as a burden than a blessing. Furthermore, if the Lord took the life of one who refused to be instrumental in giving life, what an awful judgment awaits those who serve to take the lives of unborn children in their mothers' wombs!

Monday, March 5th - Genesis 38: 11

The brother's sinful refusal to give Er's widow children is followed by the father's fearful expedient to excuse his only remaining son from his performance of that familial duty wherein Onan had failed. Tamar is thus doubly wronged by the father and brother of her deceased husband. To her it must have seemed not an attractive blessing but rather a painful curse to be by her marriage part of the covenant people of the Lord. Believers should be the last persons on earth, not the first, to defraud and wrong their neighbors, let alone their brethren.

Tuesday, March 6th - Genesis 38: 11

The two older sons of Judah suffered judgments from the hand of the Lord. Their deaths were not unfortunate accidents but divine executions for their sins. However, Judah appears blind to this sobering reality. Instead, with fearful superstition he regards Tamar to be the source of cursing that has afflicted his family. He draws the conclusion not that it was his sons' sins, but rather their association with Tamar that had led to their deaths. Accordingly, he endeavors to keep his only remaining son alive by keeping him away from Tamar. At the same time, he tries to placate Tamar with a promise that Shelah would perform his family duty at a later date. How wrongly do the faithless analyze their situations. How feebly and inadequately do they seek to secure themselves from their perceived threats. If the Lord is for us, no one or nothing can prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff). If the Lord is against us, who or what can secure us (Ps. 35:1-8)?

Wednesday, March 7th - Genesis 38: 12

This verse indicates that many years passed and Judah did not deliver his son Shelah to Tamar as promised. The delay may not have cost Judah his son, but we are told that his wife, Shua, died while Judah was still a relatively young man. For Judah, two sons have died at the judging hands of the Lord, while the only surviving son is fearfully sheltered. Now his wife is taken by death as well. His household is the painful picture of the fruitless and bitter misery that ever attends a marriage alliance that is not sanctioned by the Lord. Let us be careful to do all things by the direction and enabling power of the Lord of life and abundant fruitfulness (Ps. 34:8,9).

Thursday, March 8th - Genesis 38: 12-14

Tamar apparently trusted Judah and, relying on his promise of his sole remaining son, she complied with Judah's instruction that she should remain a widow until Shelah could reach manhood. Little did she realize, at least at first, that Judah was consigning her to perpetual widowhood. Meanwhile, years passed, Judah's wife died, and he observed only a conventional period of mourning. Shelah was surely an adult when his mother died, and yet Judah still withheld him from Tamar. This deceiving and defrauding of his daughter-in-law was Judah's sin. The fact that Tamar took matters into her own hands and resolved to deceive Judah was her sin. No good that man could perceive or perform could come from all of this sinning. Yet where such sin increased, God's grace would abound and bring blessing despite the undeserving antics of Judah and Tamar.

Friday, March 9th - Genesis 38: 12-14

Judah ceased his mourning and returned to his occupation and to the society of his friends. This seems a right and healthy action, indicating Judah's progressive recovery from his grief. However, Tamar intends to play a part in his return to normal life that Judah little suspects, but one to which he will prove very susceptible. She knew that Judah had deceived her with an empty promise, so she resolved to deceive him in an attempt to have him personally and unwittingly to fulfill his promise. If we employ sinfully cunning means against others, we should expect others to resort to similarly cunning means against us. According to our measure, so it shall be measured to us (Mt. 7:2).

Saturday, March 10th - Genesis 38: 14-16

These verses make evident to us that while Judah may have intended to return to legitimate work, his unholy and uncrucified lusts made him an easy target for temptation. Tamar must have known that Judah had a carnal eye for the ladies, as she adopted a luring tactic that would only have had a likelihood of success with such an impure man. It is our nurturing of pet sins, that we may think are hidden from all eyes, that makes us vulnerable to successful sinful exploitation by others. The only safe, secure, and satisfying way for us to live is when we hunger and thirst for righteousness and mortify any sinful desire we may have.

Sunday, March 11th - Genesis 38: 15-17

Judah's agenda was that he should satisfy his carnal desire. This sinful motivation blinded him to the true identity of Tamar, for in addition to her disguise, it was Judah's selfish lust that made him heedless of the identity of the woman to whom he made his sinful proposition. The sinner who does not respect the gracious and glorious God of heaven and earth will not respect a fellow sinner, but will view his neighbor as a mere object of his own gratification. But other people are not mere objects; they live and think and have their own agendas that may well ensnare us if we do not walk according to the law and in the light of the Lord.

Monday, March 12th - Genesis 38: 16-18

Tamar demonstrates that she not only knew of Judah's lusts, but that she also knew from bitter experience how inclined he was to trade in vain promises rather than solid provision. Therefore, when he offered her a kid from his flock, she countered with a demand for a pledge, and it was this pledge, composed of several of Judah's personal items, that Tamar truly desired to possess. Judah, seeing no harm in his giving of this pledge, gave the items and himself to Tamar in carnal confidence that was no match for her cunning. That which he gave in secret would soon come to light as evidence that would publicly expose and convict him of his sin. Our sin makes us heedless not only of moral boundaries but also of the bitter consequences that surely issue from our transgressions, however secret we deem those transgressions to be.

Tuesday, March 13th - Genesis 38: 18, 19

Judah gave his personal items to Tamar in carnal confidence that no harm would come from his so giving them to this harlot. He thought that he would have the pleasure of the indulgence of his lust at little cost. Yet, he gave to Tamar not only a pledge but also a pregnancy, which was what she wanted and what he should have provided legitimately through his son Shelah. Judah and Tamar parted from this mutually sinful encounter greatly changed from how they were before it. Sin always changes those who commit it. Sin is always deceitful, hiding from us the true cost and consequences of our indulgence of it.

Wednesday, March 14th - Genesis 38: 20-23

These verses inform us that Judah did, in this case, attempt to fulfill his promise. This, however, is not any indication of his moral improvement. He sends the kid through Hirah, his Adullamite friend, rather than deliver it himself. It reveals the ungodly and morally unedifying relationship that Judah had with this Canaanite friend of his that he could so easily implicate Hirah, and that Hirah was so willing to be implicated, in Judah's fornicating. Also, in v.23, we perceive how Judah was concerned primarily with maintaining his veneer of respectability. Finally, in addition to this hypocrisy, Judah shows how readily he will grab a bargain by allowing the unknown woman to keep his trinkets while he kept her kid. Judah is here revealed to be a most repulsive character, but sin makes us all similarly repulsive.

Thursday, March 15th - Genesis 38: 24

Judah, who had two of his three sons struck dead by the judgment of the Lord against their secret sins, did not himself perceive their deaths as being divine judgments. If he had seen the hand of God in his sons' deaths, he would not have so easily sinned in secret against the Lord himself. And yet, perhaps he did sense divine retribution in his sons' deaths, but the power of his lusts caused him to throw caution to the wind so that he might indulge his lusts. The perception or lack of perception of the sinner, however, does nothing to reduce his guilt and corruption. Transgressions of God's holy Law are objective facts that bear objective fruits, despite the dull apprehensions of the sinner. Our sins will find us out eventually. Meantime, when a hypocritical sinner detects his own besetting sin apparently active in another, the hypocrite affects excessive outrage and impeccable moral attainment. Thus, Judah reacts to Tamar's alleged harlotry neither with a call for investigation, nor even with an invocation of the biblical sanction of stoning, but rather with a cry for her to be burned to death. David, in his great guilt before the prophet Nathan, similarly called for a super-sanction of death against a man who purportedly stole a sheep (2 Sam. 12:1-5). The greater the sin in a man, the more super-sanctimonious he acts. It is thus no wonder that God's Word tells us not to parade either our own righteousness (Mt. 6:1), or the sins of others before men (1 Pet. 4:8).

Friday, March 16th - Genesis 38: 25

The keenly accurate understanding that Tamar had of Judah and the wise provision she had made both to disarm him and to save her life by her exposure of his secret sin are all made evident in this verse. Tamar springs the trap on Judah in words ironically similar to those Judah had so callously used when he presented Joseph's bloody tunic to Jacob, asking for him to identify it as belonging to Joseph (Gen. 37:32). All of a man's sins find him out in ways most righteous, fitting, and effective.

Saturday, March 17th - Genesis 38: 25, 26

Up to this point of Judah's exposure, he had been acting completely contrary to his covenant status and the godly prayers, precepts, and examples that his father, grandfather, and great grandfather had provided for his nurture and admonition in the Lord. Judah himself showed a fear of his sins being exposed that far exceeded any fear he might have had for the Lord. Yet, when his sin found him out, far from his life ending, it at that point truly began. He was convicted by the truth, offered a free and open confession of his sin against Tamar, and manifested the fruit of his repentance by how he respectfully treated Tamar thereafter. That which the sinner most dreads, namely his being found out, will be used by God graciously to cleanse the sinner and set him free from his guilt and misery.

Sunday, March 18th - Genesis 38: 27

Both Judah and Tamar deserved death for their fornication. What they received instead was a new life together and two sons for Judah to raise in place of the godless two he had lost to divine judgment.

How strange and wonderful are the ways and workings of our merciful God. Even when we know that where our sin increases, His grace abounds all the more, it still is breathtaking when we who so grievously sin are made recipients of His super-abounding grace.

Monday, March 19th - Genesis 38: 27-29

Tamar bore to Judah twin sons. The one seeming to be born first lost the primacy to his brother, Perez. This difficult birth seemed at best an inconvenience to the midwife and at worst a threat to the survival of Tamar and her twins. Yet, even in this birth the Lord was again showing that rank in His kingdom results from His sovereign and gracious choosing, and not from the natural order, for it is Perez who is honored to be in the genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:3). The Lord's way does not always appear the most straightforward, and yet it is always the most blessedly fruitful way.

Tuesday, March 20th - Genesis 38: 27-30

The difficult birth of those twins may have been a touch of divine chastising for Tamar's sinful conceiving of these sons, as Judah's exposure surely was for his sinful part in their conception. Yet, the sins of these parents are swallowed up in the gracious blessing of the Lord so thoroughly that Judah retains the honor of being the root from which Messiah would issue, while Tamar and her two sons are named in the genealogy of Christ (Mt. 1:3). Let us humbly but surely be encouraged by hope that even where our sins increase, so will the grace of the Lord abound all the more.

Wednesday, March 21st - Genesis 39: 1-6

From the sinning of Judah Scripture turns our attention to the sufferings of Joseph. From this point onward to the end of the Book of Genesis our focus is fixed upon the afflicting trials that Joseph endured for more than 20 years in Egypt, with his growing sanctification in and through those trials, and his consequent exaltation through which he became a savior to his brothers. The sins of Joseph's brothers instrumentally put him in Egypt, but the grace of God abounded above those sins to preserve and exalt the suffering one and use him to save the sinning ones. Let us never cease to marvel at the mastery of our God who intends and brings only good for His people out of the evil intentions and actions of men.

Thursday, March 22nd - Genesis 39: 1-6

The Holy Spirit has inspired Moses to write this portion of Scripture in such a way that we have an instructive contrast drawn between Judah in chapter 38 and Joseph in chapter 39. No two men could be more opposite in circumstances and character. Judah was a man free in his circumstances but a slave to sin in his character. Joseph was in circumstantial bondage, yet master of all things in his faithful and godly character. We are all naturally like Judah, being sinners in need of salvation. By God's grace in Christ, our heavenly Joseph, we are saved and transferred into the likeness of our blessed Redeemer.

Friday, March 23rd - Genesis 39: 1-6

These verses show us that while Joseph was living as a humiliated slave in Egypt, he was vitally living in the Lord and was rapidly exalted by the Lord. His situation was similar to that of John on the island of his banishment, for while John was on Patmos at the same time he was in the Spirit (Rev. 1:9,10). The Christian lives in two worlds. He is in this world but not of it, having his citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20). It is not the snarling attacks of the wicked in this world that will prevail in our lives, but rather the decrees and doings of our God for our good (Ps. 2; Rom. 8:31ff).

Saturday, March 24th – Genesis 39: 1-6

Judah was living at home with his family in the Promised Land and had access to the full means of God's grace. Yet, Judah failed and fell morally. Joseph was away from the circumstantial blessings that

surrounded Judah, and was living not in the Promised Land, but in godless Egypt. He was separated from his father's household and fellowship and was deprived of most of the means of grace. He lived not as a free man, but as a commodity possessed by another man. Yet, amidst all of this adversity, Joseph stood morally and prospered outwardly. The key to Joseph's standing, we are told in v.3, was that the Lord was with him. By this we are not to understand that God was working magically and mechanically for Joseph's good. Rather, we should understand that God was with Joseph as the root from which the fruit of Joseph's being with and for God issued. Joseph rightly reckoned by faith that God was with him, and he lived accordingly. Joseph blessed his Lord whether He gave to or took away from him (Job 1:21; 2: 9,10). If we are with the Lord, it is because He has first been with us (1 Jn. 4:19).

Sunday, March 25th – Genesis 39: 1-6

While Joseph was in Canaan with his family he was hated and opposed. When he entered into slavery in Egypt he was quickly appreciated by his master, and consequently he was trusted and advanced in his position. The Lord was with Joseph in both places: in Canaan by His Word of promise, and in Egypt by His works of preservation and provision. Let us learn to be comforted in hope and gratitude as we reckon by faith that our Lord is with us whether we are abased or are abounding. If our God is with us, no one and nothing can prevail against us, but all things, whether they lift us up or cast us down, will be made to serve for our good (Rom. 8:28-32).

testimony of trusting obedience to our Father ever comfort us in our trials that come upon us because of our desire to live lives of godly devotion to Him (2 Tim. 3:12).

Monday, January 29th - Genesis 37: 14-17

Joseph did not merely render eye-service to his father, leaving him in apparent obedience, only to make slight efforts to succeed in his mission. The young, beloved son of Jacob employed all diligence and resourcefulness necessary to reach his appointed destination. Upon his arrival at Shechem, he did not find his brothers. Rather than regard his responsibility as having been fulfilled by his merely having reached the appointed place, Joseph reveals his driving and caring concern when he replies to the man who found him that he was looking not for a place but for specific persons, namely, his brothers. Such fraternal care and quest for his brothers' welfare here and forever hereafter characterizes the life of Joseph. May we, too, regard not our own interests, but even more so the interests of our brethren in Christ (Phil. 2:3,4).

Tuesday, January 30th - Genesis 37: 14-17

Once Joseph reached Shechem he did not find his brothers, but was himself found by a man who gave Joseph a report that indicated the movement of Jacob's sons to Dothan, a further 15 miles north of Shechem. Joseph did not hesitate to go more than an extra mile to find his brothers whom he loved, unworthy though his brothers would prove themselves to be of such care. The fact was that Joseph and his brothers were separated by something greater than mere physical distance. Whereas Joseph loved his brothers because he himself was conscious of the love of God, his brothers hated him because they had no regard for the God who is love. Joseph would soon find his brothers, and they would repay his loving concern for their lives by plunging him into many years of manifold deaths.

Wednesday, January 31st - Genesis 37: 18

While Joseph was making diligent search for his brothers, being prompted in his quest by his love for them and for his father who also loved them, his brothers prove themselves to be a brood of vipers who determined to kill Joseph when they saw him approaching from afar. Because Joseph's brothers refused to mortify their sin of hatred for their young brother, that sin quickly ripened into the bitter fruit of murderous intention. If we do not kill sin in us, it will kill us and others with us. Sin is not static but dynamically destructive.

Thursday, February 1st - Genesis 37: 19, 20

When the sons of Jacob see Joseph approaching them, they do not refer to him as *our brother*, but rather as *this dreamer*. It is part of the rapid fruition of their hatred of Joseph that they should so vilify him. By such vilification, they are preparing the way to vent their full rage against him by killing him. When one contemplates killing his brother, it eases the murderer's conscience when he convinces himself that his brother is a babbling boaster deserving harsh treatment. Jesus warns anyone who calls his brother a fool of his being in danger of hell (Mt. 5:22). Our minimizing others is a prelude to our murdering them.

Friday, February 2nd - Genesis 37: 19, 20

The focus of the hatred of Joseph's brothers was the dreams Joseph had shared with them. They were deeply enraged at the prospect that Joseph should be, even in his own imagination, exalted over them. They refused to regard that prospect as divine revelation, but determined to regard it as the nocturnal fabrication of a boy who nurtured a wishful fancy to attain superiority over them. Far removed from their consideration was the truth that Joseph would die many deaths prior to his exaltation, and that

it would be through their hated brother's exaltation that they themselves would be saved.

Saturday, February 3rd - Genesis 37: 19, 20

It was likely the case that Joseph's brothers thought their brother's dreams issued from his wishful concoction rather than from the revelation of God. In their thinking, the heinousness of their sin is revealed. Should a boy be murdered for his thoughts of ascendancy? They were also badly mistaken. Their sinful jealousy and hatred blinded them to the true divine source and consequent divine authority of Joseph's dreams. Thus, they held in contempt not just Joseph and his dreams, but also the Lord who spoke to Joseph through those dreams. Their transgression was that they derided and sought to destroy not only their brother, but also their heavenly Father. Though men do not regard the Lord when they sin against other men, all sin is ultimately God murder.

Sunday, February 4th - Genesis 37: 19, 20

What Joseph's brothers hated about him with a murderous hatred was the claim, asserted through the vehicle of dreams, that Joseph would be exalted above them. They should have joined Joseph in marveling over these prophetic communications and rejoicing that God would so exalt their brother. For by his exaltation, the Lord would save and, indeed, sanctify their lives. But they were blinded by their hatred to this wonder of divine grace. We should understand from this the power of sin that blinds unbelievers to the beauty and vital saving power of the gospel we possess and proclaim. We should further brace ourselves for the deep hatred unbelievers have for those who appear to them to be supremely and insufferably arrogant in the belief and testimony that by God's grace they would not only inherit the earth, but also be exalted to reign with Christ in eternal glory.

Monday, February 5th - Genesis 37: 19, 20

The brothers of Joseph proceed with astonishing speed from their deriding Joseph (v.19) to their determination to destroy him (v.20). They who had sinfully whet their swords on the men of Shechem in a cause they conceived to be just reaction to the outrage of sinners, now demonstrate a facility for employing their swords against their brother who had not in any way sinned against them, but had only loved them. As with their sin against the Shechemites, that was compounded of deceit and murder, so here they with shocking ease determine to commit the same compound sin against their brother. Yet in this case, they will murder first (in violation of the Sixth Commandment), then seek to employ deceit to cover the deed (in violation of the Ninth Commandment). If men do not repent of and take effective steps to mortify their sins, those sins will break out of them at some future time in more sinister form against those who may well be closer to them and relatively more innocent than ones against whom their previous sins were committed.

Tuesday, February 6th - Genesis 37: 20

Joseph's brothers determine not only to destroy Joseph, but also to destroy his dreams. With titanic arrogance borne of their greater age, experience, and numbers than what the solitary Joseph possessed, they smugly sneer: *Let us see what will become of his dreams.* They will live to see what becomes of their despised brother's dreams, and will do so to their shock, to their shame, and to their salvation. It is infinitely better for a man submissively to accept the revelation of God, however foolish and despicable it may at first appear to him, than it would be for him to resist the revelation that comes from the God who rules prevailing over all things.

Wednesday, February 7th - Genesis 37: 21, 22

Though there is a consensus amongst Joseph's brothers that he should be killed, there is a voice of

dissent raised. Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's sons and the most likely one to take offense at Joseph's prophesied exaltation, votes for sparing Joseph's life. Perhaps Reuben had been humbled and softened by his previous sin with his father's concubine. Whatever his motive, it is clear that Reuben desires to save Joseph's life and to spare his father the grief that Joseph's death would inflict upon Jacob. As Matthew Henry rightly observes: *God can raise up helps for His people even amongst their enemies.*

Thursday, February 8th - Genesis 37: 21, 22

Reuben's determination is different from that of his brothers, but not greatly so. He proposes that they throw Joseph into a pit so that there he might be killed by beasts or die from lack of food and water, and not be killed directly by their hands. Yet, while his proposal seems but a small step removed from the intention of his brothers, we learn that Reuben's motive was to rescue Joseph and restore him to Jacob. The pit proposal is, in fact, a deceptive device used by Reuben to counter his brothers' murderous design. Such deception appears to be a strong family trait in Jacob and his sons. Reuben is therefore not a pure man who has the courage of his convictions, but he is morally weak. Yet he is sufficiently disturbed in his conscience to raise a feeble yet loving cry that does prove sufficient to save Joseph from death at his brothers' hands. Our faithful, even if feeble, crying out can accomplish more good than we may realize.

Friday, February 9th - Genesis 37: 23

This verse tersely describes the brutish reception Joseph received from his brothers. He who was beloved of his father was roughly stripped of the token of that love. He who lovingly obeyed his father and was on this mission by his father's will and authority, and by his own loving determination to see to the welfare of his brothers, is treated by his brothers as a criminal to be stripped of all his rights and possessions. Yet, whereas these hateful men could tear from Joseph the token of his father's love, they could never remove from him the essence of that paternal affection. Neither can men nor devils ever separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39).

Saturday, February 10th - Genesis 37: 23, 24

Joseph's brothers tear his possessions from him. Then they disposed of his person in a pit, where Joseph was virtually entombed alive, and yet without any resources to sustain his life. We read that these thuggish brothers threw Joseph into the pit, by which we should understand that they vented their hatred, casting Joseph down with violence that could have injured or killed him. But while these men and the earth itself that imprisoned him were all against Joseph, the Lord was with and for the man that He would not only preserve but also exalt and employ as an instrument of His salvation.

Sunday, February 11th - Genesis 37: 25

With cold callousness these brothers, whose hearts were emptied of love, sat down near the pit into which they had thrown Joseph and proceeded to fill their bellies. Their ears also were filled with the appealing cries of their younger brother whom they were so badly abusing (Gen. 42:21). Yet, they stopped their ears to his cries for common fraternal affection. Hence these sons of Jacob are at this point acting more like profane Esau, who valued a full stomach above his family blessings. The demonic depths to which even covenant people can fall at times can be shocking. These brothers were, in fact, in a more awful moral pit than the earthly one into which they had thrown Joseph.

Monday, February 12th - Genesis 37: 25

Joseph's brothers were not only filling their bellies with food and having their ears filled with the anguished cries of the brother they were so badly abusing. Their eyes also were filled with the sight of a

passing caravan of traders, and their minds were quickly filled with a way not only to punish Joseph but also to profit themselves through such traders. When men's hearts turn from godly love and righteousness, all of their faculties quickly become pervertedly ingenious and cunning in the way of wickedness.

Tuesday, February 13th - Genesis 37: 25-27

From their murderous plot the brothers of Joseph are turned to a proposal for sinful profit. Judah seizes upon the idea that he and his wicked fraternal confederates could gain more by their selling Joseph than by their slaying him. Thus they would not only rid themselves of a pain, but also bring to themselves material profit. Meanwhile, we see how the sinful and heartless selfishness of the wicked magnify in degree and increase in number the pains of the righteous. It is an amazing wonder of God's grace and preserving power that Joseph was not bitterly set on revenge because of his being served such manifold abuse. May we cry to our gracious Lord, asking that He preserve us from the harm of our sinful retaliation, if not from the pains of those who sin against us.

Wednesday, February 14th - Genesis 37: 25-28

Here we see soberingly how sons of the covenant who had been trained in the faith can be ensnared in the sin they do not lay aside. The sons of Jacob throw off their training in righteousness and quickly learn from and use the godless men of the world to do their dirty work. Their sight of the Ishmaelites planted the seed of their selling their brother into slavery. By the time they saw another caravan of Midianite traders, the seed of wickedness had grown into the fruit of action. Sin is not static, but it is a dynamic force. Its force does not weaken and die on its own; it must be put to death or it will lead to action that is deadly to others, especially to those whom we should love.

Thursday, February 15th - Genesis 37: 28

Joseph was dragged from a hole in the inhospitable ground and delivered as a slave into the hands of the godless. All things appear to be orchestrated against this godly young man. There is no sign of any person or power being with or for him. Yet, we are told that by these evil machinations Joseph was brought into Egypt, which is precisely where the Lord, by His holy design and sovereign power, would exalt him and make him to be the instrument of his gracious salvation for Joseph's exceedingly unworthy brothers. When God is for us, even though all things appear to be against us, they are truly being orchestrated to work for us as well.

Friday, February 16th - Genesis 37: 28

The profit Joseph's brothers received from their selling him was 20 shekels of silver. That would have worked out to an individual profit of two shekels per man (12 sons of Jacob, less Joseph and Benjamin, Reuben, not being in on this deal, apparently had a share reserved for him). They gained so little from this heinous sin. The irony is that they would receive their true profit decades later when Joseph, no longer a slave but a ruler in Egypt, would graciously save them from starvation and settle them securely in the land he ruled. The sinning sons of the covenant will settle for trivial gains, but God graciously determines to use their evil deeds to bring great good, even upon their own unworthy heads.

Saturday, February 17th - Genesis 37: 29, 30

These verses record Reuben's discovery of the empty pit and his consequent lament over the supposed killing of Joseph. Apparently, Reuben was not in on the plan to sell Joseph, and he therefore assumed that during his absence from his other brothers, those brothers had a change of heart and decided to kill Joseph, instead of waiting for him to die in the pit. Here we note how men of relatively good intentions, who weakly pursue a good course, can be ineffectual in their accomplishments and

fearfully inclined to assume the worst in all things. Those of little faith must endure many fears, weaknesses, and frustrations.

Sunday, February 18th - Genesis 37: 31, 32

Sin is rarely, if ever, simple. It breeds from itself a complex system of sinful aggravations. We have seen Joseph being sinfully hated by his brothers, abused by them, and delivered into slavery by them. Now that their brother was so dispatched by them, it remained for them to deceive their father. How cunning sin makes men, enabling them to anticipate the necessity and employ the means to cover their guilty tracks. How insensitive sin makes these men to be, blinding them to their growing guilt before the God who sees all things and cannot be deceived. Their sin also made them callously insensitive to the painful misery they had already brought upon their brother and were about to bring upon their father. It is no wonder that our Lord directs us ruthlessly to mortify our sin.

Monday, February 19th - Genesis 37: 31, 32

The callous sons of Jacob have heinously frustrated the loving plans of their father, who had sent Joseph to inquire into their welfare and report back to him. Instead, the sons for whom Jacob had so lovingly cared and after whose welfare he had made provision, return themselves, bringing a crushingly painful report to their father regarding Joseph. Their monstrous deed and cunning deception are bad enough. Yet, by the way they give their report they add insult to injury. They speak in a manner devoid of sympathy or affectionate consideration. They do not refer to Joseph as their brother nor to Jacob as their father, but curtly show their father the bloody tunic and ask: *is this your son's tunic or not?* Sin had transformed these brothers into beasts who tore at Joseph and tortured Jacob.

Tuesday, February 20th - Genesis 37: 33

This verse records Jacob's assessment of the evidence presented to him by his sons. In this assessment, Jacob is misled by appearance and draws a most wretched but wrong conclusion. Here we see that many years after his having deceived his own father and injured his brother, Esau, Jacob is deceived by his sons, who had greatly injured their brother. Those who practice deceit are most easily deceived, even years after they have repented of their misleading ways. Jacob's sons perceived this credulity in their father and therefore they did not need to interpret the evidence they presented, but left their father to do that and make his own mistake and misery.

Wednesday, February 21st - Genesis 37: 33

The callousness with which Jacob's sons deliver the evidence of Joseph's bloody tunic was unnecessary to their deceiving design. Why then were they so unsympathetic toward their father at this point? The answer is likely that as they were jealously hateful toward Joseph, who declared himself destined to be exalted over them, so they resented Joseph's father, whose special love for their younger brother practically had begun to exalt Joseph over them. But behind Joseph's declaration and Jacob's devotion to Joseph was the sovereign, electing grace of God, by which Joseph would be exalted not to oppress his brothers but to save them. All who resent the favorable providences of God in the lives of others do well to recognize that they resent the God who alone dispenses such providences for His glory and for the good of many, even for those who foolishly resent the ways of the Lord.

Thursday, February 22nd - Genesis 37: 34, 35

These verses indicate to us the painful grief that Jacob endured as a consequence of his erroneous interpretation of the evidence his sinful sons had presented him. The father's grief was inconsolable. He refused the comforting attempts of all his other children. Some would fault him for this, saying that his

grief became excessive and without godly hope. Yet, we do well to consider the towering hypocrisy which Jacob's ten sinful sons were practicing in their display of comforting concern, when they themselves had caused this deep wound in their father. Jacob did not yet know the depth of the sinning of those sons, but he was aware of their jealousy toward Joseph, and their resentment toward the father who had a special love for that godly son. Accordingly, Jacob rebukes his jealous and resentful brood, declaring that he would rather be dead with the one godly Joseph than to remain alive with Joseph's ten older brothers. Who among us would not rather be in a furnace of affliction with one so like the Son of Man as was Joseph, than to be out of it with a host of false and fawning brethren?

Friday, February 23rd - Genesis 37: 36

Jacob wept for Joseph, whom he believed to be dead. This verse reminds us how wrong the reckonings even of a godly man can be. Our God is always providing better blessing for us than we ever realize. Joseph is in fact alive. True, he has been sold as a slave in Egypt, but he is bought by one who serves near to Pharaoh. There is a hint of Joseph's exaltation in this providence, though many deaths would yet be died by Jacob's beloved son before he reached his highest and final exaltation in this life. These tokens of exaltation should suffice for the faithful to reckon rightly that God can preserve His servants from death or through death, and that He can bring blessing out of curses, light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, life out of death, and exaltation out of humiliation. Let us learn from this to trust and obediently to follow our God wherever He may lead us.

Monday, March 26th – Genesis 39: 1

The Lord our God reigns sovereignly over all of the earth, as we perceive through this account of how Joseph was dealt with in Egypt. It was by the infallibly wise providence of the Lord that Joseph was bought in the slave market by Potiphar, who was a man having some degree of spiritual discernment, as we learn in v.3, and who was a man serving near to Pharaoh, into whose service the Lord would eventually exalt Joseph. The darkest elements of our humbling afflictions are used by our God to bring us into light, exaltation, and blessed service for His glory.

Tuesday, March 27th - Genesis 39: 1, 2

Joseph was being abusively handled by his brothers, by the Ishmaelite traders, and was no doubt lovelessly bought by Potiphar as a slave. Yet, in all of this painful and perplexing adversity, the Lord was with Joseph, and that was the prevailing factor in this whole situation. The source of our triumphant success over all adversity is our God being with and for us (Josh. 1:8; Rom. 8:31). If the Lord is with us—and He has promised never to be against us, never to leave or forsake us—then our success is assured and will be achieved in any situation and under any circumstances. Joseph would prevail even as a slave in a godless, foreign land, and in the household of a godless master. It is our communion with our God, not our pleasing circumstances, that leads us to triumphant exaltation.

Wednesday, March 28th - Genesis 39: 2, 3

The Lord was with Joseph, and the divine favor caused this young Hebrew slave to be conspicuously successful even in his bondage. Potiphar was a man with sufficient discernment to see not only Joseph's success, but also to attribute it to Joseph's God, who was the empowering source of that success. Potiphar, however, would prove not to be so discerning that he could see through his wife's lying about Joseph. Yet, both Potiphar's discernment and lack of discernment were necessary for Joseph's divinely governed course of training. By his rightly discerning the source of Joseph's success, Potiphar gave to Joseph trust and responsibilities that would prepare him competently to fulfill greater responsibilities. By Potiphar's defective discernment in regard to his wife, Joseph would be promoted to deeper humiliation in jail, where he would learn more vital lessons in trusting his God.

Thursday, March 29th – Genesis 39: 2, 3

Potiphar would not have noted that Joseph's success resulted from his having been favored by the Lord had Joseph failed to manifest some credible testimony of his trust in and dependence upon the Lord. Therefore, we should observe how Joseph let the light of his dependence upon and devotion to the Lord shine in such a way that this man was enabled not only to see his believing slave's good works, but also to perceive that they issued from the favor of that slave's Father in heaven. We, too, are called so to let our lights shine that men would see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Mt. 5:16).

Friday, March 30th – Genesis 39: 4

When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even that man's enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). In Joseph's case, Potiphar was not only at peace with his godly Hebrew slave, but he also promoted Joseph, raising him to a high position, entrusting him with important responsibilities, and affording him considerable personal discretion. Joseph attained all of this not because he sought to please Potiphar, but because he aimed to please his heavenly master. When we make the glory of God our business, the Lord makes our good His business.

Saturday, March 31st - Genesis 39: 4, 5

Those who honor the Lord are honored by the Lord. Similarly, those who bless the servants of the Lord are blessed by the heavenly Master of such servants. Therefore, we find that as Potiphar blessed Joseph, the Egyptian was in turn blessed by Joseph's God. The blessing that the Lord showered upon Potiphar was lavish, extending to all the lands, crops, household, and personal possessions of the Egyptian. It might seem that God was showing preferential and excessively kind treatment to Potiphar, while Joseph remained poor a slave. Yet, when our Lord shows His favor to those who favor us, it is not to exalt them above us, but to encourage us with the truth that if He so greatly blesses those who respect His people, He will eventually bless His own people even more abundantly.

Sunday, April 1st - Genesis 39: 4, 5

The world should learn from the way that the Lord blesses those who bless His people to bless and not to curse, mock, ignore, or persecute the godly. A sure way for a man to prosper would be for him to show kindness to the people of the Lord. For the Lord will not be debtor to those who bless His people, but will repay with manifold blessing those who bless His children. Yet, we see how blind and perverse are most of the godless, who refuse to see how their own practical good would be promoted by their honoring the pious instead of hating them (Ps. 2:1-3).

Monday, April 2nd - Genesis 39: 6

Joseph's position in Potiphar's house was rapidly improving. He was, within Potiphar's limited domain, virtually in charge of everything—a position that was an encouraging token and one that provided essential training for the much more greatly exalted and responsible administrative position that he would assume years afterward under Pharaoh. Yet, this verse also notes that Joseph's personal appearance was attractive. This quality of handsome physical appearance is one far too highly esteemed by those who consider only outward appearance and have no concern for spiritual virtues. It will prove to be for Joseph a snare as the incident with Potiphar's wife will make clear. Yet in both Joseph's position and personal appearance the Lord was working for the good of His servant.

Tuesday, April 3rd - Genesis 39: 7

In vv. 1-6 Joseph was faced with the test of adversity. He had been sold by his brothers into slavery, and had been purchased by the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard, who would have been a hard, if not a fair man. Joseph could have sunk into despair and bitterness in this test, yet he trusted and served his Lord, whom he rightly reckoned to be sovereign over his dark situation. The result was Joseph's exaltation. Now there follows for Joseph the test of pleasure. Many a strong man has sustained pain only to succumb to pleasure. Think of Samson (Jud. 13-16). James warns us that it is our pleasures that wage most effective and devastating war within us (Jas. 4:1), while Peter agrees that it is our lusts that wage war against our souls (1 Pet. 2:11). The Lord does not keep His servants from such tests, but exposes them to a varied course of trials, not so that we might fall by them, but rather so that we might, by our faithfully resisting sin in them, grow strong in righteous character.

Wednesday, April 4th - Genesis 39: 7

The temptation Joseph faced was strong and multifaceted. He was invited to enjoy undetected forbidden pleasure. He was given opportunity to sin, his relative freedom gave him availability to sin, and the trust of Potiphar provided a cloak of anonymity for Joseph, should he decide to sin. There would have been for Joseph nothing to risk and no cost to bear or danger to face on the human level were he to

have given in to this temptation. Instead, he would have enjoyed immediate physical gratification if he partook of this forbidden fruit. There was nothing to stop Joseph from yielding to this temptation, except his knowledge of and faith in the Lord, and that, in the event, was enough to sustain him in his righteous resistance against this temptation.

Thursday, April 5th - Genesis 39: 7

The power of this temptation was greatly increased by the condition in which Joseph found himself when this sinful enticement came to him. He had been hated, abused, and sold into slavery by his brothers. The God he worshipped had prevented none of this painful persecution. Thus, Joseph understandably could have reasoned that if his earthly brothers and heavenly Father were to him ministers of rejection and pain, then he would do well to take his pleasures as best he could. Such thinking is common but it is fatally flawed. It is a way that seems right to man, but its end is death (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). The way to life entails our trusting in and obeying the Lord with all our heart while not leaning on our own understanding and desires (Prov. 3:5,6).

Friday, April 6th - Genesis 39: 7-9

To this potent temptation Joseph offers adamant resistance. His words of refusal reveal the right and godly reasons for his refusal of the advances of Potiphar's wife. First, Joseph shows his respect for due propriety when he refers to Potiphar as *my master*. Joseph here shows that he is not one to render mere eye service to Potiphar, obeying him only when in his sight; nor does he offer minimal service, doing the very least he could do in Potiphar's service. Joseph rightly recognized that his master would not countenance his doing what Potiphar's wife invited him to do, and therefore Joseph would not disobey his master's will in order to satisfy his own passions that could well have been aroused by this offer. Men who recognize and respect legitimate boundaries of propriety are more secure from alluring temptations than are those who exalt their passions over due propriety.

Saturday, April 7th - Genesis 39: 7-9

Joseph's recognition of and respect for his master's propriety are expressed when he uses such terms as *my master* (v.8) and *his wife* (v.9). Joseph adds to this his debt of gratitude to his master when he speaks of the trust (v.8) and reward (v.9) he had received from Potiphar. These matters do not come into the consideration of one who is guided by no higher principal than his own passions. They come into a determining consideration for one who loves the Lord and loves his neighbor by God's command and enabling grace.

Sunday, April 8th - Genesis 39: 7-9

It should be observed that another feature guiding and enabling Joseph's resistance to this temptation was his contentment in the situation in which he found himself. That contentment issued as a comforting and strengthening fruit from his vital awareness and acceptance of the fact that the Lord had placed him in his current situation for holy, loving, wise, and good reasons. Therefore, Joseph was not conscious of the painful deprivations of his situation so much as he was conscious of the productive blessedness that was his amidst the wise, holy, and loving providence of the Lord. It is a fact that godly contentment leads to great gain and guards against a host of temptations (1 Tim. 6:6).

Monday, April 9th - Genesis 39: 7-9

Although Joseph mentions his concern for his master first in his resistance of this great temptation, the highest concern that was the source of his consideration of Potiphar was Joseph's regard for the relationship he had with his God. The holy determination of young Joseph to maintain a pure conscience

before God overrides any inclination he may have felt to avail himself of this forbidden fruit. What would it profit Joseph to gain this sinful morsel, or indeed to gain the whole world, and lose his soul while dishonoring and grieving his God? We do well ever to ask ourselves this vital question when we are tempted.

Tuesday, April 10th - Genesis 39: 7-9

The determination Joseph had to maintain fellowship with his God that was unimpeded by sin was only part of what was contained in his reference to his having been tempted to sin against God (v.9b). The more important part of that concern was the regard Joseph had for the pleasure and glory of his God. Joseph had a care not to grieve or to dishonor his Lord by his sinning against Him, even if the sin were committed only in the sight of God and not before a watching world of men. For Joseph, it was God's will, not his own, that was paramount; it was God's pleasure, not his own that was of supreme importance. Such determination to glorify God will invariably safeguard us from sin. It will also lead us to enjoy the glorious delights of pure, loving communion with our God that will ravish our souls with holy pleasure that will not be like the defiling momentary pleasures of sin, but, instead, will fill us with joy unspeakable forever (Ps. 16:11).

Wednesday, April 11th - Genesis 39: 10

While we have noted the manifold components of Joseph's faithful resistance to temptation, we must also note the manifold aspects of the temptation. In this verse, we see how the perseverance of Potiphar's wife adds power to the temptation. Such perseverance makes this encounter to become one of attrition. New assaults come against Joseph, but we read of little additions to Joseph's arsenal of resistance. The only new feature of Joseph's defense disclosed to us in this verse is that the young man wisely sought not to be with the temptress. Withdrawal from the source of temptation is no feeble effort, but can often be decisive in keeping us from a great fall into sin. That is why Jesus teaches us to pray: *Lead us not into temptation*, and why, if we offer such a petition, we should walk according to it, rather than counter to it, as we put on Christ and make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).

Thursday, April 12th - Genesis 39: 10

We have noted that only the endeavor to remove himself from the persistent source of temptation was added to Joseph's tactics of his resistance to this temptation. Nothing other than that practical addition needed to be added to the deep and precious considerations to which Joseph gave expression in vv.7-9. The continuance of this temptation did nothing to change the godly factors that filled Joseph's mind and guarded his heart and his steps. That which is right for one to resist in a moment of spiritual lucidity and strength remains right to resist even at times when spiritual resolve may be growing weak due to the repeated assaults of temptation.

Friday, April 13th - Genesis 39: 10-12

The Word of God wisely warns us to expect and to prepare for the persevering attempts of those who would tempt us to sin. In vv.11,12 we should also note that variations will be added to the continued barrage of temptations. In this case, Potiphar's wife added the physical grasp of her arms to the imploring and repeated appeals of her mouth. Similar to this varying of the waves of temptation is the course of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1ff). For these varied and manifold darts of the evil one, our Lord provides us with the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff), which, if we are to withstand temptations, we must put on fully and properly.

Saturday, April 14th - Genesis 39: 10-12

Although we read in v.10 of Joseph's determination to avoid the temptress, due to the nature of his situation as Potiphar's slave he could not absolutely avoid contact with Potiphar's wife. Thus, we read of this critical encounter, when Joseph's duty led him into the very jaws of the most extreme occasion of temptation. Not only did he encounter the temptress in the path of his duty, but there were no human witnesses in that path to inhibit either the advances of Potiphar's wife or Joseph's response to those advances. Here is the moment of truth, when it will be made clear whether Joseph's holy resolve rested upon circumstantial props or upon the person and work of God applied by faith to his life and being treasured in his heart on the one thing necessary. What will such a moment of truth reveal about our priorities?

Sunday, April 15th - Genesis 39: 10-12

Joseph did right to arrange his circumstances, so far as he in his subservient position was able to do, so that he avoided Potiphar's wife. It is foolish presumption rather than faith that makes us careless of whether we are near or in tempting situations. However, while our responsibility is to remove all occasions for sin from our circumstances, it may at times be according to the holy, wise, and loving will of our heavenly Father that we be cast into a furnace of supreme temptation. Such divine placement is not intended to make us fall in sin, but rather to stand firm in our faith in and communion with our Savior in the fiery furnace. Out of the heart flow the issues of life and, if Christ reigns in our hearts, not even the most powerful temptations will make us fall.

Monday, April 16th - Genesis 39: 11, 12

The wife of Potiphar could grasp Joseph's garment but she could not touch either his body or his heart. The towering integrity of Joseph's righteousness and his adamant commitment to godly purity here shine most brightly. The servant of Potiphar demonstrates with his fleeing feet that he is willing to forsake his coat in order to preserve the integrity of Potiphar's marriage as well as the purity of his own heart before God. By his so leaving his coat in the hands of the temptress, he ran the risk of being charged with an attack against Potiphar's wife without his having done that which would at least have brought to him the temporary pleasures of sin. Yet, especially in this does Joseph's right priority show: he deems it more essential to avoid sin and appear guilty of it than to indulge in sin and be accounted by men to be innocent of it.

Tuesday, April 17th - Genesis 39: 11, 12

Joseph's flight from Potiphar's wife demonstrates his absolute commitment to God and to what is right and good. We see such commitment to righteousness expressed by the psalmist when he says: *I have sworn, and I will confirm it, that I will keep Thy righteous ordinances* (Ps. 119:106); and again: *I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes forever, even to the end.* (Ps. 119:112). May our Lord give us grace so to keep our hearts pure in His sight, whatever damage our outer man and fortunes may suffer at the hands of those who would entice us to sin.

Wednesday, April 18th - Genesis 39: 13-15

Joseph's stand for the Lord brought him suffering at the hands of men. His woes begin when Potiphar's wife summoned the men of the household to hear her concocted charges against the innocent servant of the Lord. This temptress does not summon the women, not only because their testimony would not have carried weight, but also, surely, because as women know women far better than men know women, the female members of the household would likely have seen through her false charges. Accordingly, the wanton woman sets about weaving a cloak of guilt in which to dress Joseph, using the cloak he had left in her grasping hands as evidence against him. Yet Joseph would rather be innocent

and dressed in guilt than to be guilty and covered with a veneer of false innocence. We saw in the previous chapter how Judah had reverse priorities, whereby he preferred to cover his sin with a cloak of false righteousness. Are we Josephs or Judahs in this regard?

Thursday, April 19th - Genesis 39: 16-18

Potiphar's wife put on her show not only before the household men, but also before her husband, for whom she saved the best performance. She continues to refer to Joseph not by name but as a Hebrew (as in v.14) and as a slave. She insinuates that her husband is partly to blame for the alleged outrage, as he was the one who had brought Joseph into the household. She misses no opportunity to demonize Joseph and to weigh Potiphar down with a share of the guilt. At the same time, she paints herself as the innocent one who saved herself by her screams. Not a word of what she says is true, yet truth is not the currency with which guilty sinners trade.

Friday, April 20th - Genesis 39: 19

Potiphar had rightly discerned that the Lord was with Joseph, and he had rewarded this godly servant accordingly. In turn, Potiphar himself was blessed by the Lord (vv.3-5). Yet, when his wife concocts a lie against Joseph, Potiphar's discernment failed him, and he chose to believe his deceitful wife rather than retain his confidence in his devout servant. It was Joseph's godly integrity alone that kept him from sinning against Potiphar as charged. It was also Joseph's integrity that prompted him to flee from the temptress, leaving his coat in her hands rather than allow himself to fall into her arms. Joseph honored Potiphar and served for his welfare. Yet, he who is pure and innocent is accounted a guilty offender against Potiphar. In the same way, the undiscerning account the false charges our redeeming Servant of the Lord bore for us to be deserved by Him, and they mock and curse Him accordingly.

Saturday, April 21st - Genesis 39: 20

Joseph's reward for his godly service rendered for Potiphar's welfare was swift and harsh punishment from Potiphar. The curt wording of this verse indicates that Joseph received no hearing where the charges against him could be examined. This swift punishment was apparently borne silently by Joseph, as it is not recorded in Scripture that he cried out in his own defense. Perhaps Joseph's silence resulted from his having perceived the adamant prejudice against him; perhaps that silence was maintained out of consideration for his master, to whom Joseph may have determined not to reveal the crushing news of his wife's unfaithful endeavors. We surely know why our Lord Jesus remained silent before His accusers. He was accepting our guilt and entrusting His soul to the righteous judgment of His heavenly Father (1 Pet. 2:23). There are times when it is right for us to submit silently to an unjust punishment, entrusting ourselves to the omniscient Judge of heaven and earth.

Sunday, April 22nd - Genesis 39: 20

Joseph's reward for his having faithfully resisted many temptations was that his miseries were multiplied. He had already been sold by his brothers into slavery; he was living out of the Promised Land and serving as a slave in godless Egypt; now he is reduced to being a prisoner in the land of his bondage and alienation. It is through many tribulations that the righteous enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Those who even desire to live a godly life must expect to be persecuted and to die many and ever deepening deaths (2 Tim. 3:12). Yet all of those deaths serve for the production of glory for the suffering righteous ones (2 Cor. 4:17).

Monday, April 23rd - Genesis 39: 21-23

Though Potiphar and his lying wife were against Joseph, the Lord remained with and for him. The

Lord was with Joseph in the jail, just as He had been with His servant in Potiphar's house. The same dynamic of God's favor exalting the servant of the Lord was operative in jail as well as in a man's home. Thus Joseph received kindness and promotion in jail, and was no doubt filled with gratitude to God, just as Paul and Silas rightly perceived that the Lord was with them in the Philippian jail, and sang His praises accordingly (Acts 16:25).

Tuesday, April 24th – Genesis 39: 21-23

Joseph lost nothing of enduring value by his imprisonment. The losses of his coat, of his reputation, and of his freedom were not worthy to be compared with the incomparable communion he retained with his Lord, who was to him as he should be to all believers, the one thing necessary that can never be taken from those possessing Him as their glorious portion (Lk. 10:41,42).

Sunday, April 25th – Genesis 39: 21-23

We rightly admire Joseph and marvel at his strong faith and unshakable integrity, and are filled with awe at his trust in and obedience to the Lord who sovereignly ordained this painful course of trials for him. Yet, we are called not merely to marvel at this godly man, but rather to be like him. For Joseph's God is our God, who sets our course through many trials for His glory and our good, and who will sustain us through our race by the same grace that upheld and empowered Joseph, whether he served in his father's house, in an Egyptian's house, or in a grim jail.

April 2007

Thursday, April 26th – Genesis 40: 1-3

In these opening verses of chapter 40, the scene shifts from an Egyptian jail to the court of Pharaoh. Two worldly officials in Pharaoh's court ran afoul of their king. They were put into the jail that was superintended by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard (compare v.3 with 39:1). However, as we learn from 39:22, the chief jailer had committed all of the prisoners to Joseph's charge. What is the significance of these details? It is that the Lord, who was with Joseph and making him prosper even in jail, was orchestrating these things outside of the jail for Joseph's exaltation and instrumental salvation of his family. In the economy of the Lord, nothing is insignificant, but all things are made to work for our good.

Friday, April 27th - Genesis 40: 1-3

The plight of the cupbearer and baker shows how slippery is the footing of those occupying high places in the world. Both of these officials were vital to and somewhat intimate with Pharaoh. The cupbearer was responsible for all that the king of Egypt drank, while the baker was responsible for all food Pharaoh ate. Not only did these officials serve to nourish Pharaoh, but they also were vigilant to see that he was not poisoned. Pharaoh entrusted his life to these men. Yet, for an offense unknown to us, they ignited their master's fury. Whether they had failed or Pharaoh had been fickle, we do not know. What we do know is that their punishment was jail. If these two high officials could fall to such low depths, surely no one in the world is secure in any position, except for those who are strong in the Lord and who stand upon the loving rock of their salvation.

Saturday, April 28th - Genesis 40: 1-3

The officials of Pharaoh were not merely demoted or fired, they were imprisoned in the jail of the captain of Pharaoh's body guard. This captain, of course, was Potiphar (39:1), in whose jail Joseph was incarcerated, trusting in and serving for the glory of the Lord. God seemed to be nowhere in the actions of Pharaoh and these offending officials; still less was the Lord in the minds of these worldly men who were sinning and being sinned against. Yet the Lord was the One who was sovereignly and sinlessly governing these godless, sinful men and their actions for His glory and for the good of His faithful servant.

Sunday, April 29th – Genesis 40: 4

In contrast to the obvious insecurity and agitation the officials of Pharaoh had in their high position, Scripture draws our attention to the security and peace that the servant of the Lord enjoyed in his lowly position. Not only did the chief jailer entrust to Joseph the responsibility for all the ordinary prisoners (39:22), but Potiphar also entrusted the two celebrity prisoners from Pharaoh's court to Joseph's care. When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). It is, of course, the Lord who provides security for His people, whether their condition be high or low. Our knowing this truth is the secret of our being content whether we abound or are abased (Phil. 4:11-13).

Monday, April 30th – Genesis 40: 4

Joseph did not abuse his security, nor did he disappoint those who had entrusted him with responsibility. He was not self-absorbed, using his security to indulge his own pleasures. Nor was he full of self-pity and bitterness that could have resulted from his being disappointed in his adverse circumstances. Instead, Joseph by faith perceived the blessing hand of his divine Lord in all things. Accordingly, Joseph used his powers of perception to see and tend to the needs of the prisoners under his

charge. He did not balk at Potiphar's charge, returning the evil of his abuse of the fallen officials for the evil he had suffered at Potiphar's hands. Joseph demonstrates that he was full of grace in this grim situation, and this was a fruit of his perceiving the grace of his Lord being ministered to him in all circumstances.

Tuesday, May 1st - Genesis 40: 4

Joseph's ministering to the fallen officials of Pharaoh spoke well of Joseph to them. The seeds of his caring deeds would eventually bear the fruit of at least one of them, upon his restoration to Pharaoh's service, speaking well of Joseph to the king of Egypt. We should never despise the day of small things, for great blessing can and will, in due course, rebound upon us from the small deeds of care and kindness we do for others. Consider the glorious reward our God will give to ones who but give a cup of water to His little ones who are in thirst (Mt. 10:42).

Wednesday, May 2nd - Genesis 40: 4

Joseph did not minister to the fallen officials because he thought they would somehow serve for his blessing one day. He did not serve them out of fearful regard for Potiphar who had charged him with their care. Had Joseph served from either or both of these motives, he would have grown weary and ceased to serve with his accustomed diligence and integrity. Instead, Joseph ministered to these men for a long-term confinement. Far from his growing exhausted, he was energized by his ministrations. This could only have been so because he was not rendering eye-service to Potiphar, nor did he serve with a manipulative eye to his own advancement, but he served the Lord in the low place of this jail, having the certain knowledge that the Lord had the eye of His gracious and tender mercy and lavish blessing upon him at all times (Col. 3:22-24).

Thursday, May 3rd - Genesis 40: 5-8

He who is faithful in little things will also be faithful in greater things and will, in God's perfect timing, be promoted to a higher sphere where he might exercise his faithfulness in greater things. Therefore, we find the stage being set in these verses for Joseph's promotion in service. From his deeds of practical kindness to these officials would issue the fruit of their confiding in Joseph regarding the things that troubled them most deeply. Ministering peace to troubled minds is far greater service than ministering comfort to miserable bodies, though both ministries proceed from faith and love and redound to God's glory.

Friday, May 4th - Genesis 40: 5-8

As Joseph correctly states in v.8, right interpretations of dreams belong to God. They belong to the Lord because He sovereignly ordains the events that such dreams portend. The Lord governs not only the circumstances and actions of men, but He also has access to their thoughts and intentions. He knows all that a man does openly and secretly, and He also knows all that a man thinks in the solitude of his bed at night. Strictly speaking, these officials did not know what to think of their dreams, but the Lord, who gave those men their dreams, knew their meaning and would make His servant to know and to declare their meaning, with blessedly significant results for Joseph and many others.

Saturday, May 5th - Genesis 40: 5, 6

Most dreams signify little, if anything. Yet, these dreams signified what the Lord would bring to pass for these two men. The men were disturbed by their dreams and were to find relief only when Joseph made the meaning of their dreams clear to them. Our Lord can unsettle complacent sinners with the blows of His almighty hand or with the elusive glimpses He gives to them of things yet to be. Thanks be

to God that by His grace we have great and precious promises upon which we stand, and not disturbing glimpses of things that unsettle us.

Sunday, May 6th - Genesis 40: 6, 7

A man's faith opens his eyes to the gracious blessing and sustaining presence of the Lord in every situation and at all times of his life. That same faith also opens a man's eyes to the physical and emotional needs and spiritual burdens of other men. Joseph, being a faithful man, consequently perceived not only the blessing presence of His God, but also the burdened state of the prisoners for whom he cared. He perceived their needs, not as a penetrating spectator, but as one equipped with grace and divine resources to give effectual help to those dejected inmates.

Monday, May 7th - Genesis 40: 8

The moral integrity, trusting composure, and compassionate care that Joseph had manifested to these men sparked their confidence in him. Therefore, when he inquires regarding the cause of their sorrow, they do not evade him as though he were merely a curious and invading sorry comforter. They had confidence in him because they rightly perceived his compassion for them. Yet, Joseph has more than compassion and sympathy to give to these men: he has solid help to minister to them from the Lord. Do people confide their needs to us because they have such confidence in our compassionate care? Are we lovingly attuned to others so that we perceive and show caring interest in their needs?

Tuesday, May 8th - Genesis 40: 8

When the soul of a person is troubled by God, no one can bring relief to that person but God. Therefore, when Joseph learns that these imprisoned officials had been troubled by their dreams, he declares that interpretations belong only to God. Yet, Joseph adds that these men should tell their dreams to him. With this invitation, he declares his reliance upon God, as well as his intimate knowledge of, trust in, and communion with the Lord. This trusting reliance upon and intelligent communion with the Lord formed the basis of Joseph's life and actions. This basis is the key to our understanding Joseph's ministry, mercy, motivation, and his eventual exaltation and saving ministry. When people are troubled, they should look to God and to His faithful servants to find relief and peace. Most people in our world are troubled, not by dreams, but by the daily grind of their lives. They will never find relief and peace unless they share their burdens with those who know well the saving God of heaven and earth.

Wednesday, May 9th - Genesis 40: 8

Joseph had confidence in his God and also, through his right understanding of his own divinely given dreams, he had some competence in understanding such dreams that others had received. In Joseph's case, his dreams filled him with hope, gratitude, and praise for the Lord's exalting promises to him. In that light, Joseph would see clearly the diverse ends of these two men (vv.21,22).

Thursday, May 10th - Genesis 40: 1-8

Through all the events that have led to this point in the narrative, the Lord has been with Joseph and has been working for Joseph. The Lord led Joseph into Egypt, not to enslave him there permanently but to put him in a position to store food and save many lives. The Lord brought Joseph into Potiphar's house so that there he might grow in trustworthiness and gain the trust of Potiphar. The Lord led Joseph into jail to meet the ex-officials of Pharaoh. All of these providences, that seem so grim when viewed individually, formed a tapestry of saving grace for Joseph and his family. Joseph was sustained in all of these trials not because he knew how all the details would work together for his good, but because he ever trusted that the Lord was with him and working all things together for him. Let us learn by faith to

reckon that the Lord is ever with us and working for us.

Friday, May 11th - Genesis 40: 1-8

Joseph's trust in the Lord freed him from self-absorbing worry and cares. This freedom allowed him to serve others and to reign over his circumstances even through he was a slave and a prisoner. Therefore, as Joseph rightly reckoned that the Lord was with him and working for him, so we find Joseph ever standing with and working with the Lord, by His enabling grace and for His glory. Joseph faithfully served the jailed officials as he had faithfully served Potiphar and would similarly serve Pharaoh, not because he had highest regard for these men, but because he had highest regard for and constant reliance upon the King of kings.

Saturday, May 12th - Genesis 40: 1-8

Joseph was more than a man who exercised faith in God. Joseph, because he exercised faith in God, was becoming blessedly familiar with God and a loving friend of God. We perceive this friendship by our observing Joseph's obedience to God. Jesus says that if we love Him, we will obey His commands (Jn. 14:15), and that we are His friends if we do what He commands us (Jn. 15:14). William Jay comments on how the faithful attain greatness by their faithful service to God, saying: *Had the requisition turned on worldly honor, or wealth, or genius, or science, many must have despaired. But the essential is not derived from condition, but from conduct. It is therefore within the reach of the poor as well as the rich, and of the illiterate as well as the learned. All may be great in the sight of the Lord, and he is the greatest, whatever his circumstances in life, who best obeys his Lord and Savior.*

Sunday, May 13th - Genesis 40: 9-15

In the remaining verses of this chapter we see how Joseph displays his skill at interpreting dreams. This was a skill he acquired through the right interpretation of his own dreams. Yet, as we noted with respect to Joseph's own dreams, it was not Joseph himself who interpreted them, but rather it was his brothers and father who mockingly but accurately interpreted his dreams (Gen. 37:5-11). Joseph clearly reflected upon the initially obscure revelation of God through his dreams. He concluded that such dreams were from God, and that, while their right interpretation also comes from God, it comes through men to men. Part of the divine intention in such an arrangement would have been to unite Jacob's family together in divine blessing, as they cooperated in a corporate endeavor rightly to understand and accept the divine revelation. The painful providences through which Joseph had passed to this point helped him to appreciate that the revealed plans and purposes of God take time to bear their fruit in provision, and that the Lord works through wicked men and reversals of evil in bringing to realization His promises. A man who understands such things as these is well suited to interpret the Word and works of God for himself and for others.

Monday, May 14th - Genesis 40: 9-11

In these verses, the cupbearer relates his dream to Joseph. His nocturnal vision included a vine with three branches, buds, blossoms, and ripe fruit, Pharaoh's cup in the cupbearer's hand, the squeezing of grapes into the cup, and the delivery of the cup into Pharaoh's hand. What would we make of these details? These things had, in this case (not in all, or even most dreams), divine origin, and required divine enabling for anyone considering them rightly to interpret them. The Lord so enabled Joseph, not us, to interpret these dreams. We do well, therefore, to trust in his interpretation instead of our own understanding. The treasures of all wisdom and knowledge are not opened by our finite and fallible reasoning, but are hidden by God in Christ, and are accessed by those having faith in Him (Col. 2:3).

Tuesday, May 15th - Genesis 40: 12, 13

Joseph rightly perceives two points being represented by these numerous details: the what and the when of something about to happen to the cupbearer. The when question is answered by the three vine branches. They signify, according to Joseph, three days (not weeks, months, or years). All of the other details of the dream indicate the cupbearer's restoration to Pharaoh's service. Precisely how he could so specify through this enigmatic data is something that must remain a mystery to us. Our calling is not to understand all the details of God's providence in our lives, many of which are to us enigmatic. We are called not to know the way so much as to know the Shepherd who knows and safely leads us in the way.

Wednesday, May 16th - Genesis 40: 14, 15

After he served to bring relief and rejoicing to the cupbearer, Joseph makes a reasonable and humble request for himself, asking that the cupbearer use his restoration to Pharaoh's service to speak to the king of Egypt on Joseph's behalf. The request is reasonable in that it simply is an endeavor to bring to Pharaoh the plight of an innocent man. Joseph must have reasoned from Pharaoh's reinstating his jailed official, that the king was perhaps moved to do so out of a closer consideration of what was just for his servant. Accordingly, the king of Egypt might be moved to consider Joseph's case. Furthermore, on the basis of Joseph's demonstrated giftedness, Pharaoh may find occasion to profit from a man who could predict the future by his rightly interpreting significant dreams. The cupbearer would therefore have opportunity to show gratitude to Joseph and consideration for Pharaoh's welfare if he carried out Joseph's request. The reasonableness of this request, of course, depended upon the accuracy of Joseph's interpretation. The welfare of the Lord's servants is intimately tied to their faithful service for the Lord by the Lord's gracious and effective enabling.

Thursday, May 17th - Genesis 40: 14, 15

Joseph's request was humble as well as reasonable. He requests a deed of kindness from the cupbearer. He does not demand such action as his right or his recompense for service rendered. In fact, Joseph rendered the service prior to his making the request. He rendered his service freely and graciously, and was determined to afford the cupbearer opportunity to respond freely and kindly rather than under any compulsion. Joseph could afford to appeal to rather than to compel this man, for while he humbly makes use of the means of the cupbearer's restoration, his reliance was not on that man, his reinstatement, or his remembrance, but rather was on the God of all gracious and kind remembrance.

Friday 18th - Genesis 40: 14, 15

The humility of Joseph in this request is further evident in what he omits asking. He simply asks to be released from his unjust imprisonment. He does not ask to be brought into the administrative cabinet of Pharaoh's court. When the restored cupbearer forgets Joseph (v.23), it would seem that Joseph received even less than the little for which he had so humbly asked. Yet after at least two more years (41:1), Joseph would receive far more than he had asked. He would be exalted to be a ruler in Egypt. This is so because Joseph surely asked and sought his answer from God, before he asked anything of this man. Our God always gives to those praying to Him more than they ask or think. (Eph. 3:20).

Saturday, May 19th - Genesis 40: 16-19

These verses inform us of the chief baker's dream and the interpretation Joseph perceived from God through it. The cupbearer had related his dream with no clear incentive disposing him to do so. He simply had confidence that Joseph could and would minister to him relief from this deep and mysterious burden. The baker, however, has incentive as we are told that he related his dream in response to the favorable interpretation the cupbearer had received. The cupbearer appears only to have desired the

truth, while the baker desires personal improvement. One's love for the truth sets him free, not one's love for freedom at the expense of truth.

Sunday, May 20th - Genesis 40: 16-19

The baker's dream had details of three baskets containing refined bread, with the top basket containing food for Pharaoh. Yet it was the birds, not Pharaoh, who ate the food while it was perched atop the baker's head. From these details, Joseph perceives that within three days Pharaoh would hang the baker, with the birds consuming his corpse. This would be exaltation far different from what the baker was presumptuously expecting. All people have their dreams. There is the so-called American dream of individual prosperity. The secular humanist dreams of unbounded self-exaltation. Such dreams are presumptuous, issuing from fanciful consciences of sinners who will awaken one day to find themselves condemned by the divine Judge of heaven and earth. Others are mocked as being pious dreamers of divine grace and eternal life in glory. They will find no disappointment in their expectations, but only amazement that not the half of the wonder of their glorious inheritance had been told them, even in God's Word.

Monday, May 21st - Genesis 40: 20-22

The deeds of Pharaoh confirm Joseph's clear interpretation of the enigmatic dreams of the king's imprisoned officials. By the gracious enabling of God, a wrongly imprisoned Hebrew slave understood clearly and accurately the future events that pertained not only to those two officials of Pharaoh, but also to Pharaoh himself. As ever, those most faithfully pre-occupied with the heavenly throne and its divine Sovereign can and do most easily and accurately comprehend the doings of those on the petty thrones of earthly kings.

Tuesday, May 22nd - Genesis 40: 20-22

The cupbearer and baker were united in Pharaoh's service, in their offense against Pharaoh, in their dismissal from his service, and in their imprisonment. They also shared the experience of each having a vivid, troubling dream. They were separated, however, in the subtle differences of the details of their respective dreams, were more greatly separated by the vastly different interpretations that Joseph gave to their dreams, and were most drastically separated by the deeds of Pharaoh. Common experiences do not invariably lead to common ends. Godly parents may have twin sons who grow up to be vastly different, as in the case of Jacob and Esau. There will be vastly different judgments rendered on the final day for people who share common experiences and even profess a common faith. Not all who say, *Lord, Lord* will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Wednesday, May 23rd - Genesis 40: 20-22

The common experiences of the cupbearer and baker may have made their characters practically indistinguishable to men. That may even account for both of them suffering imprisonment that only one may have deserved. Scripture has at least hinted to us that the cupbearer was a seeker of truth, whereas the baker appeared to be more a seeker of personal gain. Perhaps the baker stole something from Pharaoh who knew that at least one of these men did the crime, but as they were like peas in a pod, they were both imprisoned until a careful consideration of evidence led to the exoneration of the innocent and the execution of the guilty. Whether the caprice or the careful forensic consideration of Egypt's king accounted for his initially common, but finally discriminating treatment of these two officials, all men should see in this judgment a shadow of the justly discriminating judgment of the living God, who by His righteous and infallible discernment of men's secret deeds and hidden thoughts and intentions, will divide goats from His sheep and tares from His wheat, where the discernment of men will fail to perceive

such vital differences. The Lord will, accordingly, deal appropriately with such differing characters.

Thursday, May 24th – Genesis 40: 23

Joseph had rightly interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker. He had humbly requested that the restored cupbearer remember him and mention his plight to Pharaoh. But the cupbearer wrongly forgot about Joseph. The restored official failed to serve the one who had so graciously, generously, and effectively served him during his imprisonment. The cupbearer was guilty of a failure of sympathy with one who had demonstrated sympathetic compassion for him. The cupbearer was further guilty of a failure of gratitude to Joseph, whose interpretation was true and good news that relieved the dream-disturbed official of his distress. This ingratitude extended even to God, the Source of the cupbearer's dream, its right interpretation, and its realization (v.8). Such ingratitude is monstrous and inexcusable, but it is far less so than the ingratitude that we believers, who have been so greatly and eternally blessed by our Savior, often show to Him!

Friday, May 25th – Genesis 40: 23-41: 1

Joseph was forgotten by the man he had served and of whom he had made such a reasonable and humble request. He was forgotten by the man whose dream had come blessedly true. He was forgotten for two years. Here Joseph entered into a new period of testing. For two years he endured the test of dereliction. The man he had helped had forgotten him. The man of whom he made a request did not remember him or his request. Did this mean that Joseph had leaned on a shaky reed? The reed was shaky, but Joseph relied on his God, not on the cupbearer. Surely, Joseph, this faithful servant of the Lord, was tried by his dereliction, and was perhaps often tempted to think that his God had forgotten him. But just as surely, Joseph would not have made request of a sinful man and failed to make persevering and prayerful request of his holy, gracious, and faithful God. Joseph was forgotten by a man whose dream came true, but only until that man's master, Pharaoh, had a disturbing dream. Then the seed planted by Joseph would be watered by God's providence to bear fruit that would reveal to all that the Lord had not forgotten Joseph, neither does He nor will He ever forget us or cease causing all things to work for our good.

May 2007

Thursday, January 25th – Genesis 37: 12-14 Saturday, May 26th – Genesis 41: 1

For two years it appeared that Joseph had not only been forgotten by the cupbearer, who had been restored to Pharaoh's service, but also that the faithful son of Jacob had been forgotten by the Lord. Joseph languished in prison while the cupbearer devoted himself to his duties and the Lord delayed His work of deliverance. Yet, despite appearances, the Lord was at work for His own glory and for the good of His imprisoned servant. In the quiet of an ordinary night, the Lord spoke to Pharaoh in a dream. That seemingly incidental dream would engage the cupbearer to speak for Joseph and would lead to Joseph's deliverance and exaltation. Divine delays do not indicate divine negligence, but serve to ripen all things that the Lord is causing to work together for the good of the His people.

Sunday, May 27th - Genesis 41: 1

The divine delay in accomplishing Joseph's deliverance from prison issued from the infallible wisdom of God and resulted from the exercise of His holy, sovereign will. The delay, no doubt, served further to test and purify Joseph's faith, patience, humility, trust in and obedience to the Lord. It also provided time for the cupbearer to reestablish his credibility before Pharaoh, and build in himself the confidence to speak to Egypt's king when the time was right for him so to speak. The device of the disturbing dream would remind the cupbearer of his own dream and its interpretation that Joseph had received from God. The time we spend waiting upon God is never wasted time, but rather time in which our God weaves his wonders together for our good.

Monday, May 28th - Genesis 41: 1

The two additional years Joseph spent in jail after his request was made of the cupbearer and his hopes for release were raised were not years spent in growing disappointment. Joseph waited in trust and continued in diligent service for the good of others. We know this because when he is finally retrieved from jail, he emerges as humble, as caring and compassionate, and, most importantly, as attuned to the ways and words of the Lord as ever he was. Faith that is patiently and perseveringly exercised in trusting obedience to the Lord will sustain those so exercising it, and will enable them at critical times to perceive the wisdom, love, and power of the Lord, and to act accordingly.

Tuesday, May 29th – Genesis 41: 1-7

In this passage, neither Joseph nor the Lord appear. The scene is entirely focused upon Pharaoh and his dreams. Yet, the passage is all about the Lord and Joseph, His servant. God speaks disturbingly to Pharaoh in these dreams, and does so to ensure that Joseph would be brought to serve and to be exalted by Egypt's king. We can never tell how vitally connected our faithful service may be to events seemingly remote from our own situations. We should ever be reckoning that our Lord is always at work, forging a chain of events that will serve for our good and His glory in ways far beyond what we ask or expect.

Wednesday, May 30th – Genesis 41: 1-7

The account of God's Word regarding the life and service of Joseph during these two additional years of imprisonment is as silent as the grave. When he emerges in the third year from that veritable tomb, we shall see that he had been living on hidden, divinely provided manna all that time, making it his food to do the will of his God. May we from this learn to look for and feed upon the hidden manna our Lord provides for us in our valleys of the shadow of death.

Thursday, May 31st – Genesis 41: 1-7

These verses record how Pharaoh was disturbed by two vivid dreams. As we have seen in the cases of the previously imprisoned servants of Pharaoh, God can and does touch men in sobering ways, whether such men are lowly and confined in grim circumstances, or are great men of the world sitting upon thrones of power and carnal ease. No person is beyond the arresting touch of God, as the rich fool learned when, after he had built bigger barns to contain his wealth, his soul was immediately summoned out of this world by the Lord. Such revelation to us of the immanent working of our God should encourage us to pray more that His hand would touch and transform the hearts of those we know in places high and low.

Friday, June 1st - Genesis 41: 1-7

Some features of Pharaoh's dreams may seem obvious to us as to what they import. The cows were vital livestock in Egypt. In the dream, the seven lean cows came up from the Nile, the source of Egypt's fertility. The number seven, in Egyptian numerology, was the number for Isis, goddess of the earth. Thus, the dream appears to indicate something unfavorable about Egypt's livestock and gods. The ears of corn emphasize this and extend the portended adversity to Egypt's crops. The fact that in each case the lean ate the fat, but grew no fatter as a result, clearly hint at famine. However, these features are also vague enough that we cannot with confidence interpret them. For example, when and for what duration would the famine come upon Egypt? Only a man singularly gifted by God could rightly interpret these dreams. Sinners do not deserve one word of revelation from the Lord. Yet, He spoke to men in the times before Christ in various ways, all of which were made clear by His servants the prophets. Now we have the fuller revelation of God in His Son (Heb. 1:1,2), and there is nothing vague or unclear about that revelation that calls sinners to Jesus for their nourishing salvation.

Saturday, June 2nd - Genesis 41: 1-7

Pharaoh's two-fold dream is in a form similar to the two-fold dream Joseph had received from God and declared to his father and brothers. There is a progressive-parallelism in the imagery and expanding significance in such a structure. There is also the confirmation of the matter by means of the two-fold testimony of these dreams. It is apparent that the Lord spoke to Joseph years before this time in a fashion to train him to serve with effective understanding at this critical engagement with Pharaoh. The Lord uses the features of our current circumstances to train us in the right understanding and application of His providence for our own sake, but also for the sake of others to whom we shall be ministering in the future.

Sunday, June 3rd - Genesis 41: 8

Pharaoh's dreams disturbed him deeply. The indication of this verse is that these dreams were more troubling to Egypt's king when he awoke and could not forget the lucid details than when he slept and received these images. Why should they so excite Pharaoh? He was not pictured as dying in his dreams; nor did he dream about armies coming to conquer his land. Furthermore, Pharaoh knew that he had received these images in dreams, not in reality. The reason Pharaoh was so deeply disturbed by the visions he received in his sleep was that God gave them such vivid and penetrating point that they pierced the carnal delusions of this man who, despite his wealth and power, knew that he, too, was a sinner who was, along with his people, subject to the cursing judgments of God. The Lord quickens and the Lord strikes dead. Read about how the divine words of judgment enigmatically proclaimed through such things as writing on a wall (Dan. 5) and the words of the weaker vessel of a man's wife (1 Sam. 25:36-38) struck down other carnally complacent men of wealth and power. Pharaoh, the king of the most powerful nation of his day, is made to quake by the nocturnal whispers of God. How much more should we hold the clear Scriptures of the Lord in reverent awe?

Monday, June 4th - Genesis 41: 8

It was the arresting hand of the Lord that drove the troubling force of these dreams into the mind and heart of the king of Egypt. So deeply and unceasingly troubled was Pharaoh by his dreams that he had to have relief. Therefore, he turned to the only source of help that he knew, namely, the magicians, who were a caste of sooth-saying priests. Not a few but all of the magicians of Egypt were summoned and commanded to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Not one of them could offer an interpretation that struck Pharaoh as being valid. The king who had been seized by the word of the God of truth was enabled by the Lord to detect false interpretations. Pharaoh longed for the truth that alone would give him peace. When men are quickened to recognize the disturbing truth about their lives, only the Word of God can give them the truth that will free them from their anguish.

Tuesday, June 5th - Genesis 41: 9

The connecting link between Pharaoh's disturbing dreams, the magicians' failure to interpret them, and Joseph's deliverance from prison now at last is forged. The cupbearer receives from Pharaoh's experience the painful recollection of his having dreamed a similarly soul-troubling dream. More importantly, he recalled how Joseph had graciously and competently served to give him peace by offering to him the true interpretation of his dream. Therefore, the cupbearer is prompted to rise above the fear that had previously inhibited his speaking to Pharaoh on Joseph's behalf. Pharaoh's servant must have recognized in the experience of Pharaoh the hand of God, and rightly reasoned that only Joseph, the servant of God, could calm the heart of the man who had been troubled by an enigmatic communication from God. Thus, the Lord, who spoke to Pharaoh in his dreams, awakened the cupbearer from the dream of his forgetfulness, and caused him to work for Joseph's good.

Wednesday, June 6th - Genesis 41: 9-13

When the cupbearer mentions his sins to Pharaoh, he is not necessarily referring to his misdeeds that had infuriated Pharaoh, but more likely he is referring to his sinful and ungrateful forgetfulness of Joseph and of Joseph's God. The cupbearer then proceeds repentantly to repeat to Pharaoh how Joseph had served him by competently and correctly interpreting the dreams that both he and the baker had while they were in jail with Joseph. The sins of the cupbearer were aggravated by his long delay in mentioning Joseph to Pharaoh, but even that sinful delay had its purpose in the sinless plans of God.

Thursday, June 7th - Genesis 41: 9-13

The request of Joseph was that the cupbearer would advocate his innocence to Pharaoh (Gen. 40:14,15). Instead, the cupbearer sinfully forgot Joseph for two years. When the cupbearer repentantly spoke to Pharaoh regarding Joseph, he spoke not of Joseph's innocence but rather of his service that was remarkably suited to Pharaoh's need. It was that service that now, in the providence of God, commended Joseph more forcefully to Pharaoh who had acute need of it. Had the cupbearer acted on Joseph's request, at best Joseph would have stood before Pharaoh to argue his own innocence, which argument may or may not have prevailed with the king of Egypt. Now the wisdom of the divine delay and the mastery of the Lord's sinless use of the cupbearer's sin become apparent to Joseph and to us. For it is at this time that another sings Joseph's praises to a king made ready and eager to hear the tune. The Lord's choice of instruments, methods, and timing for His blessed purposes is always superior to anything we ask or imagine.

Friday, June 8th - Genesis 41: 9-14

We may reflect upon the course events would likely have taken had the cupbearer brought Joseph's request to Pharaoh two years earlier. Joseph might have secured a hearing before Pharaoh, and he might

have won his freedom. This would seem to have been an answer to his prayers. Yet, Joseph would have returned to Canaan, and he would not have been in Egypt to interpret Pharaoh's dream, or to be made a ruler in Egypt wisely to provide for the coming famine. Joseph would have returned to Canaan there to starve with his family when the famine came. Well and wisely do we pray: *Not my will but Thine be done.*

Saturday, June 9th - Genesis 41: 14

Pharaoh, having been deeply disturbed by two dreams, sought facts, not fables, for his peace of mind. Let us mark well how easily our God can humble the high, mighty, and proud. Pharaoh calls for Joseph, a foreign slave in prison. Pharaoh is so humbled that he is ready and willing to be the pupil of this Hebrew slave. The majesty and might of the ungodly can and will be brought low by our Lord. In a day, in one hour, our God will reduce all of the pomp and power of this world by the majesty, might, and holy authority of the Lamb of God (Rev. 18:8,17).

Sunday, June 10th - Genesis 41: 14

Not only is Pharaoh humbled, but Joseph is exalted. After years of his imprisonment, the Lord's servant is summoned in less than a day to leave his tomb-like jail, never to return to it, and to enter the court of Egypt's king, never to leave it in his earthly life. The reference to Joseph's being brought out of the dungeon hints that Joseph's imprisonment had for some reason unknown to us grown worse, as a dungeon is an underground vault, whereas a jail is a building for confinement above ground. From the lowest depths, the Lord in the twinkling of an eye raised Joseph to the greatest earthly heights. We, too, have certain hope of such a change—indeed, of even a greater exaltation—when we shall be raised from our graves to reign with Christ in celestial glory forever (1 Cor. 15:50-57).

Monday, June 11th - Genesis 41: 14

It was not only Joseph's circumstances that changed so quickly, but his outward appearance and clothing also were changed. He was cleaned, groomed, and given new attire in which he was to appear before Pharaoh. What did not change quickly was Joseph's character. His inner man had been undergoing a sanctifying transformation throughout the course of his long and painful afflictions. When his character reached the degree of purity and godliness that the Lord determined would preserve him from any intoxication that might result from the sudden rise in his earthly fortunes, the Lord wrought his deliverance and exaltation. We do well to understand and accept this priority of character over circumstances. We can become too focused on the divinely ordained decaying of our outer man and neglect the inner man that our God is renewing day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).

Tuesday, June 12th - Genesis 41: 15, 16

Amidst the splendor of Pharaoh's palace and before the majestic king of Egypt himself, Joseph gives the same answer to the cry for an interpretation of dreams as he gave to Pharaoh's servants in jail (Gen. 40:8). The humble servant of the Lord was consistent in making clear to all men at all times that he was but a servant and an instrument of the living God. The key to our understanding the motivation for Joseph's thoughts, words, and deeds is our recognition of his willing dependence upon and submission to his God. Such trusting and grateful dependence upon the Lord should be the motivation of all who profess faith in Him.

Wednesday, June 13th - Genesis 41: 17-24

In these verses, Pharaoh tells his dreams to Joseph. Though Joseph had made it clear that he was not

the source of the dreams or their interpretation, he also made it clear that he, as God's faithful servant, would serve as an instrument through which the Lord would reveal to Pharaoh the true interpretation of his dreams. It is a remarkable testimony to the humbling conviction God had wrought in the king of Egypt (who was himself regarded as a deity) that he should be willing to be taught of a God who was foreign to him, and that he should be taught through such a humble slave who was fetched out of a dungeon. Despite appearances, Joseph did serve the one, true and living God of glory, and because Pharaoh heard and heeded this servant of the God of salvation, he saved himself and his kingdom from starvation. Likewise, those humbled enough to look to Christ crucified shall find that they will not be disappointed (1 Pet. 2:6).

Thursday, June 14th - Genesis 41: 17-24

In his telling of his dreams to Joseph, Pharaoh adds details that are not found in the previous narration of those dreams (vv.1-7). The additional details may simply have been omitted and implied in the first account, and then made explicit in this account of Pharaoh's telling. The details of the singular ugliness of the second set of seven cows (v.19), and the fact that the gaunt cows did not grow fatter even after they consumed the sleek cows (v.21) may also represent Pharaoh's appropriate reflection upon and profiting from the divine revelation that came to him through his dreams. The more men reflect upon God's Word the more truth they see in it and the more seriously they regard it.

Friday, June 15th - Genesis 41: 17-24

We note further evidence of Pharaoh's humbling when he, who was supposed to be a god, tacitly confesses that he did not understand his dreams and openly confesses the failure of his best counselors to make the true interpretation known to him. The pride of man looks up to earth's rulers and to men in high positions for guidance and help. The pride of man will also lead him to lean on his own understanding. However, the proud will never look down to a dungeon for help; will never humbly receive instruction from a Hebrew slave; and certainly will never look for salvation to a stable in the small village of Bethlehem, or to a man being executed upon a cross. But the dreams of God's giving confound the greatest men, and the day of the Lord's judgment will find the earth's rulers and all those devoted to worldly pomp and pride crying for the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb of God (Rev. 6:15-17).

Saturday, June 16th - Genesis 41: 25

Joseph immediately and rightly perceives that the dreams were revelation from God, sent as two witnesses to confirm what the Lord would bring to pass. He who so deeply and vitally recognized the sovereignty of the Lord over all things, and who relied upon and rejoiced in that divine sovereignty, was quick to see the hand of his sovereign Lord working in the dreams to effect the consequent humbling dread of the king of Egypt. He who so readily accepted the Lord's will in all things had a pure heart and enlightened mind rightly to read the signals His Lord sent that terrified this king and confused the counselors of this world.

Sunday, June 17th - Genesis 41: 26-31

Joseph perceives from the dreams that seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of severe famine would soon come upon Egypt. These years of plenty and famine are not simply events foreseen, but are related by Joseph as what they are, namely, the blessing and cursing of God. It is the curse that will have the last and prevailing effect upon Egypt, according to the dreams. The Lord ordains both. The blessing issues from His common grace whereby He makes His rain to fall on the just and unjust. The curse issues from His righteous and holy wrath against those who do not know, obey, and love Him.

God gives the blessing of His common grace to all men, and the curse of His holy judgment will result in eternal anguish for all who do not look to Him for salvation. What God would do to Egypt, He does in some way to all nations in every generation, if men but had eyes to see it!

Monday, June 18th - Genesis 41: 29-32

The blessing God would send upon Egypt is mentioned but briefly in v.29. The divine curse receives more elaboration as Joseph mentions its severity (vv.30,31) and its certainty (v.32). Divine intervention alone could change the triumph of the divine curse. Without that intervention, the blessing would only be a temporary tantalization that would be quickly and permanently eradicated by the curse. The blessing of life, which all men receive by the Lord's common grace, will be forever forgotten when they receive that death and condemnation to eternal torment that are the wages of their sin.

Tuesday, June 19th - Genesis 41: 33-36

In these verses, Joseph offers more than what Pharaoh had asked. In addition to his interpretation of the dreams, Joseph adds wise counsel which, if taken, would preserve Egypt through the coming years of famine. The Lord always gives to us more than we ask or think, and we, His servants, should ever be like our heavenly Father, giving to others more than they ask of us, never less.

Wednesday, June 20th - Genesis 41: 33-36

It is a bold initiative that Joseph takes in offering his counsel to Pharaoh. The king of Egypt could have been insulted that this foreign slave should presume to know better than Pharaoh how to avert the coming crisis. It may seem that Joseph is taking a great risk in so speaking to Pharaoh. Yet, the Lord's servant is motivated neither by pride nor by presumption but rather by sincere love for his Egyptian neighbors. He is also equipped with wise understanding of how God can and does preserve His people in a furnace of affliction. He attained this understanding not from the fine schools of the world, but rather from his own trials that he sustained by the exercise of his faith in God. Joseph, seeing the way of life through the coming death would therefore not fearfully withhold the good news from those needing it most. Neither should we, from fearful self-regard, be ashamed of the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation.

Thursday, June 21st - Genesis 41: 33-36

The policy that Joseph presents is one of preserving a portion from the years of plenty to make sustaining provision during the years of want. The principle here is that men should recognize that divine abundance does not come upon people for their immediate and entire consumption, but rather is given with a view to their providential saving for times of future want. The foolish and the wicked who demand to have in this life their full reward will find even their remembrance of that reward consumed in the flaming anguish of hell; while the godly learn and practice self-denial and cross-bearing, losing their lives now in order to gain them here and hereafter forever.

Friday, June 22nd - Genesis 41: 33-36

Joseph advised that 20% of the harvest during the years of plenty should be stored for the years of want. That amount would have to be regularly collected, stored, and the impulse to consume it before the time of need resisted consistently for the course of seven years. Even so, when the famine came, that 20% per year along with whatever else could be produced during the famine would mean that the people of Egypt would have to subsist on very likely less than half normal rations for seven years. If it is with difficulty that the righteous are saved, how much more difficult will be the preservation of the ungodly (1 Pet. 4:18)? Even though our salvation is free and abundantly supplied, it requires consistent diligence

and discipline for us to work it out through the course of our lives.

Saturday, June 23rd - Genesis 41: 33-36

God had revealed to Pharaoh through Joseph that Egypt was to be blessed with years of plenty, then cursed with years of want. When Joseph offers his counsel to Pharaoh in addition to his conveying the interpretation of the dreams, it might appear that he was exceeding his divine commission and seeking to work against what God had ordained. In fact, Joseph was working for God by manifesting the glory of God's mercy amidst His judgments. Only the righteous take seriously the admonitions of God and know how rightly to respond to them. Only the faithful rightly apprehend that the sobering warnings of God's Word come not to confirm us in doom but to arouse us to seek our deliverance.

Sunday, June 24th – Genesis 41: 33-36

To some, Joseph's counsel may seem to aim only at the mundane matter of preserving the physical lives of the Egyptians, while failing to point them to eternal life. Yet, his prescribed course manifests the justice, wisdom, and mercy of God in that the Lord's common grace would be extended to overcome His just curse upon sinners, provided that such sinners would trust in and obey the Lord's graciously wise and mercifully intervening servant. This servant, Joseph, points with more than sufficient clarity to the saving Servant of the Lord, who multiplied loaves to meet the mundane need of 5,000 people, yet in doing so demonstrated that He could and would provide eternal life to all who had faith in Him.

Monday, June 25th – Genesis 41: 36

It is remarkable and instructive for us to note that Joseph served to save the lives of the people and the land of Egypt. He had been largely betrayed, abused, and forgotten in that foreign and godless land of his sufferings. Yet, he did not return evil for evil, but returned, instead, good for evil, thus manifesting the grace and mercy of the Lord that he possessed in such full measure. The Word of God directs us all who have partaken of the saving grace of the Lord, to act according to that grace in our dealings with others, even be they our enemies (Rom. 12:17-21).

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Tuesday, June 26 th – Genesis 41: 37

The Hebrew slave was summoned from his jail by the king of Egypt . The task assigned to him was the interpretation of Pharaoh's disturbing dreams, which task he not only performed well but to which he also added his own wise counsel. The impressive credibility of the interpretation of the dreams and the gracious wisdom of the counsel given to preserve the Egyptians from the coming divine curse formed a combination that persuaded Pharaoh and his servants (including the frustrated magicians) to believe the slave's prediction of calamity and to adopt his proposal to avert it. Joseph's integrity, competence, and gracious wisdom won over these Egyptians. They rightly realized the value of the divine revelation and practical wisdom that came from God through Joseph, and that value outshined Joseph's having been a jailed Hebrew slave. By his interpretation and proposal, Joseph would be instrumental in saving many lives, thus demonstrating to us that the man who is most heavenly-minded is of most earthly good.

Wednesday, June 27 th - Genesis 41: 37-39

Pharaoh recognized not only the practical good inherent in Joseph's proposal, but also the godly source of it. In this Hebrew slave standing before him on what he and very likely Joseph himself thought would be a temporary release from prison, Pharaoh perceived the very life and wisdom of God in the soul of the erstwhile prisoner. Pharaoh also rightly perceived and confessed that to which so many in the world are blind, namely, that no man can be as wise and discerning and practically valuable as is the man to whom God reveals Himself and His sovereign will. How much time, money, and energy we all are tempted to waste seeking practical wisdom in sources other than God's holy and infallible Word!

Thursday, June 28 th - Genesis 41: 40-45

In these verses, we witness how the man who perceives and proposes the godly plan of wise and merciful salvation is promoted. It is not unusual for worldly men to esteem and rely upon the integrity and practical wisdom of the godly. Thus we find Mordecai honored by a godless king while all of unbelieving Susa rejoiced (Esther 8:15). Whether or not the people of the world applaud the godly, we may be certain that the God of heaven takes particular note of His servants who propose gracious terms of salvation to those dead in their sins, and the Lord rewards those servants accordingly.

Friday, June 29 th – Genesis 41: 40, 41

These verses sum up generally the exaltation of Joseph, while vv.42-45 make explicit the manifold particulars of his exaltation. The King of Egypt promotes Joseph above everyone in his land except for himself. Virtually all authority in all of Egypt , along with plentiful power effectively to exercise that authority, is conferred upon the son of Jacob. We should see in this temporal exaltation a token of the eternal promotion to heavenly glory that the children of the living God have as their certain hope in Christ, to whom belongs all authority in heaven and earth.

Saturday, June 30 th – Genesis 41: 42-45

Here we are given a catalogue of the particular facets of Joseph's exaltation. Pharaoh placed his own signet ring on Joseph's hand. That ring represented the authority of Pharaoh. With the symbol of such authority worn on Joseph's hand (the hand representing power) we are to understand that the former slave and prisoner is hereby empowered to act with highest civil authority. Surely the sufferings of

Joseph's afflictions must have appeared momentary and light in comparison with this great honor and enabling that he now received from the king of Egypt . Our sufferings will appear even less to us in comparison with the eternal heavenly glory that will be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

Sunday, July 1 st - Genesis 41: 42-45

In addition to Pharaoh's signet ring, Joseph was clothed and adorned. Since the definite article is used to designate the necklace, we should understand that it was not simply any gold necklace, but rather *the* necklace worn by Pharaoh himself and displaying something of the unique glory of the king of Egypt . The linen garment, likewise, was no doubt specifically tailored to betoken an Egyptian ruler. Therefore, Joseph was not simply given a ruling hand in the life of Egypt , but his entire being was made to display the glory and majesty of regality. In this, we have the Lord donning His servant through Pharaoh's hand, as a type of the regal and majestic glory of His redeeming and saving Servant whose glorious appearance the Apostle John records in Revelation 1:12-16. We also should see in Joseph's majestic attire something of the beautiful and blameless dress in which those in Christ will reign with the Savior forever (Rev. 1:5,6; 19:8; 22:4,5).

Monday, July 2 nd - Genesis 41: 42-45

The particulars of Joseph's exaltation extend to the manner of his travel. He is to be conveyed in one of the royal chariots—second only to Pharaoh's. Moreover, as Joseph appeared in public and was conveyed in his chariot amidst the Egyptians, criers were to accompany his chariot to command all of the people to bow before this exalted ruler. Through these provisions we should understand that Joseph's authority, power, and majesty adhered to and accompanied him wherever he went in all of Egypt . His was no limited or circumscribed rule. Furthermore, it would be through the decree and demand that all should bow before him that his brothers would come bowing to him in fulfillment of the prophetic dream he had of their prostration before him (compare Gen. 37:5-11 with Gen. 42:6). Here is a type of all knees bowing before Jesus, our saving Lord, whose name is above every name.

Tuesday, July 3 rd - Genesis 41: 42-45

It is clear from v.44 that whereas he was not exalted above the king of Egypt , yet neither would Joseph exercise anything less than practical co-equal authority with Pharaoh. It would seem that Pharaoh was acting with rashness and irresponsible caprice to promote a foreign slave and erstwhile prisoner to such an exalted and powerful position, based entirely upon Joseph's words of dream interpretation and life-preserving counsel. However, no one in all of Egypt was more fit and better equipped to rule than was Joseph. The Lord had suited His servant so to reign as more than a conqueror, and the Lord opened the eyes of Pharaoh to see and submit to this reality. Such submission by the king of Egypt would be vindicated by the salvation that Joseph would effect for the Egyptians. We, who trust the Word and wisdom of God in Christ and exalt Him as Lord over every area of our lives, find our trusting hopes vindicated by our salvation.

Wednesday, July 4 th - Genesis 41: 42-45

Joseph's exaltation changed all things for him. Not only was he given highest authority, power, majesty, and dominion so far as these things extended throughout Egypt , but he also was given a new name that meant something like *God speaks—he lives*. So clearly and persuasively did Joseph witness to his God that the king of Egypt , in re-naming Jacob's son, did not burden him with the name of one of Egypt 's false gods, but blessed him with a designation that pointed to the one, true, living God. It is the highest

honor any man can have to be known as one so faithfully knowing God that for men to see such a one is for them to see that God lives and reveals Himself. In this particular, Joseph is a type of Jesus, whom to see and know is to see and know the heavenly Father (Jn. 1:18 ; 6:46 ; 14:9).

Thursday, July 5 th - Genesis 41: 42-45

The final particular of Joseph's exaltation was his receiving a wife. His was no ordinary bride, but rather was one who came from the highest level of Egyptian society. Her father was the priest of one of Egypt's major cities. Such elevated status formally commended her, but, of course, both she and her father were defective by their lack of knowledge of the one true God. Such defect was apparently corrected by her marriage to a man who had been for all of his life most intimately devoted to the true God and Lord of heaven and earth. This extraordinary providence does not set a precedent for believers to marry those who do not know the Lord, but rather shows how the God who can make rocks into children of Abraham (Lk. 3:8) can fashion a bride for His servant from the spiritually dead soil of Egypt and make His servant, who had been torn from his family, to be head of a loving, fruitful, and faithful family of his own.

Friday, July 6 th - Genesis 41: 42-45

After his years of affliction, Joseph is exalted by God in a day. He is set free from prison to roam throughout and to reign over all of Egypt. Forever does the Lord's servant leave behind the dungeon for the highest dignity. The Lord compensated Joseph's sufferings magnificently, and He connected those sufferings to his glory. Joseph's trials served to produce his glory. His dungeon accordingly proved to be the Lord's workshop, wherein noble, wise, gracious, and merciful character was wrought in Joseph. From this workshop of prison, Joseph was led by God to be acknowledged as noble, wise, gracious, and merciful in the king's palace. So, too, should we reckon that our momentary, light afflictions are producing for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:16 -18).

Saturday, July 7 th - Genesis 41: 45, 46

These verses tell us of Joseph's freedom. Pharaoh's promotion set Joseph free from both his imprisonment and his slavery to Potiphar. The man who for years had been confined to a jail was now free not only to enjoy extensive movement throughout the impressive realm of Egypt, but also to possess highest authority and majestic dominion over every place and person he would encounter. Joseph made use of his freedom, ranging all over Egypt not as an imposing tyrant, but as a ruler who cared for the people under him and maintained highest reverential regard for his heavenly Master who reigned sovereignly and blessedly over him. Similarly, the freedom we have in Christ is rightly to be used not for our own gratification, but for the glory of our Lord and the good of our brethren.

Sunday, July 8 th - Genesis 41: 46

By the notice of Joseph's age in this verse we learn that he who had been sold into slavery by his brothers when he was seventeen (Gen. 37:2), had endured his captivity and alienation from his family for 13 years. For more than two of those years, Joseph was in jail (Gen. 41:1). These years marked the prolonged course of manifold testing of Joseph. The course was ordained by God for Joseph's growth in grace, faith, wisdom, trust, patience, and sanctification. He emerged from his course of testing pure and loving in heart and with a mind that was bright and wise. Joseph also was humbled by his sufferings and even more humbled by the Lord's ordaining and effecting his deliverance and exaltation. Only a pure and godly soul could rightly handle the immense authority and power that had been conferred upon Joseph.

The more we are faithful in our little tests and trials, the more we shall find ourselves promoted to higher spheres in which we can exercise our faithfulness by God's grace and for His glory.

Monday, July 9 th - Genesis 41: 47-49

After he surveyed the land and people he was to rule, Joseph began his saving work of preserving the surplus food during the years of abundant harvests. In this situation, the man who had rightly sustained his own test of pleasure when he refused the allurements of Potiphar's wife was just the man to restrain the people from consuming all of their food during the years of plenty. For the only thing to stop them from indulging themselves with the abundance was the Word of God that Joseph believed, just as he had believed and obeyed his God when he refused to indulge in sinful pleasure with Potiphar's wife. The tests of our obedience to the Lord that we sustain in small, private affairs may well pave the way for us to sustain—and help others to sustain—similar tests in public and great affairs.

Tuesday, July 10 th - Genesis 41: 50-52

God blessed Joseph with freedom and gave him authority and power to administer it faithfully to make provision for the salvation of many. The Lord also blessed Joseph with family fruitfulness. Joseph's wife, whose name means *belonging to the goddess Neith*, bore two sons to Joseph. Because of the father's being in the covenant of God, the sons were numbered among the covenant people as well. The Church of God is growing even in the pagan soil of Egypt . The blessing of God will make us fruitful wherever we live and serve for His glory.

Wednesday, July 11 th - Genesis 41: 51

The name of Joseph's first-born was Manasseh. The name means *making to forget*. Joseph used the name because the Lord made him forget all of his troubles, including and especially the treachery of his brothers against him. Joseph is not declaring that he forget his father or even his brothers, for when he sees the latter he weeps for joy (Gen. 43:30; 45:1-3). What he is saying is that his son, rightly seen by him as a gracious gift from God, more than compensated for any sorrow he had during the years he had been forcefully alienated from his father's household. Also, as Luther remarks, Joseph was as much as saying: *I see that God would take away the reliance which I placed upon my father; for God is a jealous God, and will not suffer the heart to have any other foundation to rely upon, but Him alone.*

Thursday, July 12 th - Genesis 41: 52

The name of Joseph's second son was Ephraim, meaning, *doubly fruitful*. As with the name of his first son, Scripture also records with the naming of this second son Joseph's reasoning that guided his choice of the name. Joseph recognized that his God had made him fruitful. Ephraim would thereby serve as a living testimony to the blessing of the Lord that makes a man truly rich and joyful even in his affliction. There is a connection between Joseph's being in the land of his afflictions and this fruitful issue. Had he not been sold into Egypt and led by God through his testing course, he would not have had Asenath as his wife, nor Ephraim as his son. There is always a connection between the crosses we bear and the crowning rewards we receive.

Friday, July 13 th - Genesis 41: 52

There is more to Ephraim's name than an acknowledgement of fruitful reward issuing from a course of afflictions. Joseph does not simply speak of afflictions, but rather of the *land* of his afflictions. Therefore,

the fruitful blessing of the son is seen and said by Joseph not only to issue from his sufferings, but also to have come to him in the land of his sufferings. We can understand Joseph referring to Egypt as a land of his afflictions if he only had in mind his slavery and imprisonment. Egypt, however, was not only the land of his humiliations, but also the land of his exaltation. Yet even in his exaltation, Joseph still sees Egypt as the land of his affliction. Therefore, he testifies that his focus was on Canaan, and that focus accounts for his instructions that he should be buried in Canaan when the people of Israel would return there (Gen. 50:24,25; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32). Joseph, in fact, looked through and beyond Canaan to the eternal, celestial city whose architect and builder is the Lord (Heb. 11:10,16,22). We should see more of the blessing and blessed purposes of God in the people and places of our lives than we perhaps do.

Saturday, July 14 th - Genesis 41: 52

We see in Joseph's afflictions and rich rewards that the testing of our faith tunes us to be entrusted by God with plenty. That plenty comes to us to some extent in this life, but it comes to all who are in Christ fully and perfectly and lastingly in the glory of our eternal reign with Christ. Let us, then, be comforted now, in the land of our afflictions, with this certain knowledge and sure hope.

Sunday, July 15 th - Genesis 41: 53, 54

The years of plenty ended, not due to the working of natural forces or the mismanagement of men, but as a result of the sovereign will and working of God. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Only believers rightly perceive His governing hand wielding the natural phenomena and turning the hearts of men in the world, and only believers see that there is cause to bless the Lord for His giving and for His taking away.

Monday, July 16 th - Genesis 41: 53, 54

The years of plenty ended according to Joseph's word. The destructive forces of the famine were, in Egypt, softened on account of Joseph's wise administration. Because of Joseph, there was a vital distinction between life in Egypt and life in all other lands that were affected by the famine. The Word of God tells us to give wise and provident forethought to the needs that will eventually arise in our future years. We are bidden to learn from the ant how to store up present plenty for coming days of pressing need (Prov. 6:6-8). The parable of the ten virgins exhorts us to prepare for the day when some will enter into the joy of heaven's Master, while others will in dread and despair cry out for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb of God (Mt. 25:1ff; Rev. 6:16).

Tuesday, July 17 th - Genesis 41: 55

This verse informs us that the privative effects of the famine eventually came to be felt in Egypt, as those effects had been felt in the other famished nations. The vital difference was that in Egypt was a savior to whom the people could go for food. Even the king of the Egyptians was compelled to confess that he could not provide for his starving subjects, but he had the humility and compassion to send them to Joseph, whom Pharaoh had wisely exalted to serve as a minister of life at such a time as this. When we exalt Christ as Lord of our lives, we not only find that we have an abundant provision for ourselves through our saving Lord, but we also have One to whom we can send others for salvation.

Wednesday, July 18 th - Genesis 41: 56, 57

The hungry people of Egypt went to Joseph and were not disappointed in the provision he could make for

them. The savior whom the Lord had raised up in Egypt had vital substance to give to a needy people. Word of this source of salvation spread to other nations, whose people began to flock to Egypt where, by the gracious provision of God through His servant, Joseph, there was food for the hungry. This influx of people into Egypt would create the net that would draw Joseph's brothers and his father into the land of life-saving provision and, for them, more. There in Egypt would take place a blessed reunion and reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers that would be sweeter and more satisfying than bread alone. We never know to what blessings the Lord is drawing or driving us by means of the painful curses he ordains.

Thursday, July 19 th - Genesis 42: 1, 2

The scene shifts back from the splendor and wise, life-saving administration of the exalted Joseph in Egypt to the deprived misery of Joseph's father and brothers in Canaan . Now it appears clearly how wrong those treacherous brothers were when they reckoned that they were better off without Joseph than with him. So, too, do those reckon wrongly who regard the nearness of Christ to them to be a curse rather than a blessing. Those who dwell in the Church and amidst the ordinances of God's grace, and yet drive away the living Substance of salvation, will be poor and miserable, like the complacent Laodicean church (Rev. 3: 14-22).

Friday, July 20 th - Genesis 42: 1, 2

Joseph had been delivered by his brothers to bondage and degradation, if not to death. But God had preserved, delivered, and exalted him, and made of him an instrument for the salvation of many. The Lord had done this because He had compassion for Joseph, but also because he had compassion for Joseph's sinful brothers. In these verses, we see that while Joseph lived as an exalted ruler in Egypt , his brothers were enduring a paralyzed and impoverished existence in Canaan . Justly had these treacherous men been reduced to this miserable condition. No one who knew them would take pity upon them in this, their well-deserved weakened and unworthy state. Yet, our God regards just such ones who are without strength as objects of His saving love and provision. While we were helpless, Christ died for the ungodly; and while we were sinners deserving death, God demonstrated his love for us by giving Christ to die for us (Rom. 5:6,8).

Saturday, July 21 st - Genesis 42: 1, 2

Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt . We may wonder why he had not heard that his son, Joseph, was also in Egypt . By the time the famine began, Joseph had been a free man and exalted ruler in Egypt for seven years. Surely he could have sent word to his father with news of his situation, if not have gone to Canaan himself. Yet, when Joseph named Manasseh he declared, *God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household*. In other words, they had as much as put him to death, and he, in a sense, counted them as dead to him. It would therefore be up to God to resurrect them all together, and to reconcile them by His wise, holy, and transforming working. Joseph knew that in God's timing and way they would be resurrected, for Joseph never forgot the dreams God had given to him of his family bowing before him. It is often right for us to let estranged brothers stew in the misery of their own sinful making rather than to try in our own time and way to make their corpses live. The father of the prodigal let his son dwell in death until God brought him to life and back to his home family.

Sunday, July 22 nd - Genesis 42: 1, 2

These verses paint a scene of desolation and misery. Joseph's brothers are sitting lifelessly staring at one

another, beholding in each other nothing but mutually miserable, impotent, and sorry comforters. In contrast to the painful poverty of what his sons saw in each other, Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt . It was not the virile sons, but the old father who perceived provision for their perishing lives. Jacob alone exercised faith, by which eyes are opened to perceive the manna that the Lord always hides from sight but reveals to faith.

Monday, July 23 rd - Genesis 42: 1-4

Jacob orders his ten sons to go to Egypt to buy the food. This vital mission called for sons, not servants, and required total commitment. Jacob did, however, hold his youngest son, Benjamin, in reserve, as the treasure without which he thought he could not live. Benjamin was the youngest, and hence most vulnerable. He was also the sole surviving son of his beloved and deceased wife, Rachel, according to Jacob's erroneous reckoning that counted Joseph as being deceased. Finally, Jacob probably had learned from the painful experience of his having sent his treasured Joseph to find his brothers, not to trust those brothers in association with whom Joseph had been lost. This was mission in which no higher hope was placed than that of their obtaining food to help them survive. Little did they suspect that they would find Joseph to be their gracious and exalted savior. Our hopes in our Lord's grace and provision are always too low, never too high.

Tuesday, July 24 th – Genesis 42: 42: 5, 6

In these verses, according to God's revelation to Joseph, ten brothers bow to the one brother they had regarded as an irksome dreamer. We see in how these brothers come among the common crowds (all of whom were starving) the poverty of their carnal pride and the emptiness of their worldly wisdom. In contrast to these poor brothers, prostrated by their sins, we see Joseph raised up not as a ruler, but as *the* ruler in Egypt. The world was coming to Egypt because Joseph was there with the blessed and vital fruits of his godly grace and wisdom. Had his brothers not driven Joseph into Egypt, the world would have been coming to Canaan for the blessing of salvation. Surely this warns us not to drive Jesus out of our congregations, lest those seeking salvation from Him seek and find Him in other congregations.

Wednesday, July 25 th – Genesis 42: 7

Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt to buy from strangers and foreigners physical food for their perishing bodies. Joseph would in due course provide them with such food in abundance and at no cost. However, Joseph would dispense to them greater riches than mere daily bread. He begins to minister these rich blessings to them immediately, by serving them great helpings of apparent curses for the trial and triumph of their faith. Thus, he begins to treat them differently from the way he treated the common crowds. As Jesus at first disguised His saving mercy from the Canaanite woman to prepare her to receive from Him more mercy than she at first sought from Him, so Joseph treats these brothers from Canaan as though they were strangers deserving harsh treatment instead of the helping provision of food. Faith alone can perceive the rich blessing wrapped in such apparent curses.

July 2007

Thursday, July 26th - Genesis 42: 7

The hungry sons of Jacob came to Egypt seeking food. Joseph recognized his brothers and determined to test them before he treated them to the food they sought and to much more than what they sought. The initial testing he administers to his brothers is part of the abundant provision he will make for them. The first aspect of this provision is Joseph's disguise. Does this tactic provide for us a warrant to disguise ourselves from others, rather than disclose ourselves to them? The Puritan, Joseph Hall, rightly remarks: There must be much caution used in our imitation of the best patterns-else we shall make ourselves apes, and our acts absurdities. Rather than our taking from this verse that we should act like Joseph, we should understand from it how our Lord, of whom Joseph is a type and shadow, often ministers His love and blessed provision to us amidst the frowning of his testing providences. Consider how Jesus, with seeming harshness, ministered His mercy to the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:22ff).

Friday, July 27th - Genesis 42: 7-9

These verses not only tell us that Joseph disguised his fraternal love with a show of imposing and threatening harshness, but they also inform us why he did so. We are told that Joseph remembered the dreams he had about his brothers. In other words, Joseph was not prompted by vengeful hatred or cynical mockery, but he was guided by the Word and wisdom of God. He recalled the form of the prophetic divine revelation that came to him. His dreams were enigmatic glimpses of communication to be understood and accepted only by those humble and pure enough to receive and employ the gift of faith. Therefore, Joseph appears consciously to affect his disguise in order to try and purify the faith of his brothers (if they indeed had any faith). We should bear in mind from this that behind our Lord's frowning providence there shines His loving and gracious blessing that can only be apprehended by our exercise of faith.

Saturday, July 28th - Genesis 42: 7-9

The profound and godly wisdom of Joseph enabled him not only to make provision for the Egyptians, but also to make provision of a superior sort for his brothers. Joseph understood the rich blessings of life that the Lord wrought for His people through their sufferings. He therefore began, being moved by wise and holy love, to employ the paradox of blinding men to blessing in order to open the eyes of their hearts to it. Joseph's disguise would serve to clear away the clouds of his brothers' darkened understanding whereby they had previously misperceived that their bowing to their brother would be a loathsome curse. Here they would be humbled to bow to an imposing foreigner in fear and hunger, and would come to see and delight in the truth that they in fact bowed to a man whom they knew, namely, their own brother, who loved them and who graciously and generously would provide for them from his position of exalted and reigning richness.

Sunday, July 29th - Genesis 42: 7-9

We are told that when Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them. For their part, the brothers did not recognize Joseph, even without the disguise of his harsh treatment of them. The righteous always perceive more things, and those things more accurately, than do the ungodly, who are blinded by their own sinful pride and prejudices that darken men's eyes and deprive them of true understanding. Our Lord opens the eyes of our hearts, whereby we perceive more clearly than we could do by sight alone (Eph. 1:18-23).

Monday, July 30th - Genesis 42: 7-9

What are we to make of Joseph's harsh treatment of his brothers? He certainly was giving them a taste of the harsh treatment they had dished out to him years prior to this encounter. Was Joseph repaying their evil with his own sinful retaliation? Was he speaking the truth in love when he, knowing who they were, charged them as spies who had come to exploit the weaknesses of Egypt? There is nothing in the narrative of Scripture that would lead us to believe that Joseph acted out of such sinful passion. Instead, we shall perceive when we consider the whole course of his treatment of his brothers that godly wisdom and gracious, fraternal love guided the treatment that Joseph administered to them. By the way Joseph treated them, he was holding up to their eyes a clear picture of their sinful treatment of him, not to condemn them, but to lead them to repentance. Thus, he who had been charged by his brothers as being a spy coming to them with intention to make an evil report of them to their father (Gen. 37:2,19), are given a taste of being similarly charged falsely so that they would come to themselves in this far country and repentantly return to their heavenly Father and estranged brother. The painful blows our Lord at times rains upon us, come lovingly to cure us, not angrily to crush us.

Tuesday, July 31st - Genesis 42: 10, 11

The brothers of Joseph answer the charges against them with sincere proclamations of the truth-almost. They do come as servants, humbling themselves before a foreign ruler; their business was the purchasing of food; they were not spies; and they were all sons of Jacob. Even their claim to be honest men applied at this point, in that they were here dealing honestly with the Egyptian ruler who was charging them. But the whole truth was that they were brothers of this ruler, not just his servants, and they had not always been honest in their dealings with him or with their father. Joseph's dealings with them would progressively reveal these fuller truths to them, and they would come to accept them by their rightly repenting of their sinful deceit and rejoicing in their restoration to the brother they had wronged. Our heavenly Ruler knows best how to speak to us the truth in love, and wisely to reveal it for our healing and restoration.

Wednesday, August 1st - Genesis 42: 12, 13

Joseph repeats the charge that his brothers are spies. Once again, they respond by giving more information about their father and family. Perhaps the reason they made mention of young Benjamin and lost Joseph was to arouse sympathy and pity in this harsh ruler. They mentioned their home in Canaan to assure the Egyptian that they did not come from a country that had intentions of conquest of his land. These brothers were trying to express as honestly as they could who they truly were, but the harsh ruler before whom they were standing willfully and against all evidence stuck to his charges against them. Now they were coming to understand how their godly brother Joseph had felt when they rose up against him without cause. Thus, they get a taste of the justice they deserve before they have the grace and love they do not deserve lavished upon them by Joseph. Harsh providences whet our appetites for sweet grace.

Thursday, August 2nd - Genesis 42: 14-17

Joseph determines to test the sincerity of the claims of innocence that were being made by his brothers. The fact was that although he had recognized his brothers, he did not know whether their moral dispositions had changed. They certainly had shown themselves capable of extreme abuse against a younger brother and of employing deceit against their father. Thus, when Joseph heard that Benjamin was in Canaan with his father, he apparently determined to have his youngest brother brought to Egypt, thereby at least securing the welfare of Benjamin were it still necessary to shield him from the abuse of his older brothers. This wise and godly man practices discretion with others of unknown moral character,

lest he injure himself by entrusting himself to wicked men, or fail to secure the welfare of others who might be suffering at the hands of the wicked.

Friday, August 3rd - Genesis 42: 14-17

By his demand that his brothers elect one of their number to retrieve Benjamin while the others be confined in an Egyptian prison, Joseph was offering one of his brothers not only a test, but also another opportunity to care for, instead of abuse, his brothers in need. The welfare of the nine, by this test, would be made to depend upon the brotherly love, diligence, perseverance, and successful return of the one. Meanwhile, the nine would dwell in the darkness of an Egyptian prison, in which darkness Joseph had perceived the growing light and love of his God, and where they, too, could come to perceive the Lord were they so inclined to do.

Saturday, August 4th - Genesis 42: 14-17

Joseph is by just and gracious design making the miseries of his brothers mirror their sins. They are charged with having evil intentions, as they had charged him with evil desire to be exalted over them. They are put into a dark prison, as they had thrown Joseph into a dark hole before they sold him into grim slavery. They had deprived Benjamin of a brother, and now they risked losing Benjamin to this Egyptian ruler. At times our miseries are made by our Lord to mirror our sins so that we might be brought to repent of our sins.

Sunday, August 5th - Genesis 42: 18-20

It was famine brought on by the providence of God that drove Joseph's brothers to their reunion with Joseph. They were dealt with harshly by their disguised brother, and were maneuvered into a test in which their miseries mirrored their sins. By this course of trials they were being humbled and their pride was being put to death. In these verses, however, we are told how they were granted by Joseph new liberty and a glimpse of new life. The harshness of Joseph was softened when he declared that he feared God and that his fear of God would lead him to let them live if they performed according to his directions. The brothers should have found comfort in Joseph's profession of faith in God, but only if they, too, feared God and trusted Him to enable them to obey this ruler's commands. They certainly did not fear God when they sold Joseph into slavery. This test would reveal whether or not they feared God now, thus attaining the beginning of wisdom and peace that passes understanding.

Monday, August 6th - Genesis 42: 18-20

The new terms Joseph made for his brothers were more liberal than the original terms. In v.16 we read that there were to be nine brothers held in prison while one returned to Canaan for Benjamin. Now in v.19 we learn that nine are to return to Canaan and only one is to be kept in prison. The sanction for the one kept in Egypt, however, was increased. Previously, failure of the one to return would have meant life in prison for the nine. According to the new terms, failure of the nine would bring about the execution of the one remaining in Egypt. The previous miseries of the brothers mirrored their sin, but did not so clearly focus on the single person against whom they had sinned. This new test would reveal whether they cared for the one brother enough to ransom him at the cost of great trouble to themselves, or whether they were still as sinfully self-centered as they had been when they sold their brother Joseph to satisfy their own desires. Our trials reveal by degrees where we stand in relation to sin and righteousness, God and man.

Tuesday, August 7th - Genesis 42: 18-20

When Joseph declared that he feared God, it should have eased the anxiety of these brothers, but at the same time it raised the seriousness of their failing this test. To sin against a brother is one thing, but to sin against the God whom we should fear and trust and obey is something infinitely greater. These brothers had to sell God into the slavery of their own sinful suppression of the truth in order to sell Joseph into slavery. This test would reveal whether those brothers would fear, trust, and obey God, even if it killed them, in order to redeem their brother. How far will we go to be our brother's keeper and to honor and obey our God?

Wednesday, August 8th - Genesis 42: 18-20

According to the first terms set for these brothers, nothing was said about grain being sold to the one brother returning to Canaan. The implication was that even that provision depended upon the one returning to Egypt with Benjamin. The new terms allow the nine brothers to buy grain to take back to Canaan for their father and families. Here is another sliver of grace that shines through the disguise of Joseph's harshness. If the brothers had faith in the Lord, they would make much, not little, over such crumbs that were falling to them from the table of their heavenly Master who ruled over this Egyptian ruler.

Thursday, August 9th - Genesis 42: 21

The godly wisdom of the hard course of testing to which Joseph subjected his brothers is vindicated when we see from this verse that clear conviction of sin begins to form in the souls of Joseph's brothers. Years had passed since they had sinned against their brother, and whatever guilt they may have felt was surely dulled with the passing of time. Yet, such passing of time cannot clear a man from the objective guilt of his sins. Our God is gracious when He deals harshly with us, convicting us of our sins so that by our faithful repentance and confession of sin we may be lastingly forgiven and not simply for a time forgetful of our sin.

Friday, August 10th - Genesis 42: 21

In this verse, the first fruits of godly conviction begin to show in Joseph's brothers. Due to Joseph's wise, godly, and gracious testing of them, they confess their consciousness of their sin against Joseph. Their confession is not vague and general but specific and pointed. They acknowledge their heartless perception of Joseph's deep anguish, as well as their refusal to heed his repeated cries to them for mercy. They also reveal their consciousness of the just retribution of God when they acknowledge that their current distress at the hands of this Egyptian ruler was brought upon them justly by the God of all judgment. At times, only harsh treatment wisely administered to those hardened in their sin will open their eyes to make them see their guilt and need of divine mercy.

Saturday, August 11th - Genesis 42: 21

Joseph had declared truly that he feared God. It was his fear of God that prompted him to declare his dreams to his father and brothers. It was his fear of God that led him to resist the alluring temptations of Potiphar's wife. It was his fear of God that motivated him in Potiphar's household as well as in jail to serve with diligence and gracious generosity, knowing that he was serving the Lord above his earthly masters. At this point of conviction for Joseph's brothers, it may well have been the first time that they feared God, having Him in their thoughts as the living, holy judge of heaven and earth and not an empty concept in their heads or a meaningless word in their mouths.

Sunday, August 12th - Genesis 42: 22

From the convicted chorus of confession there arises a single voice. Reuben speaks as the best of a bad

lot. Respecting the sin of these brothers against Joseph, Reuben was relatively more innocent than his nine brothers. That slightly greater degree of innocence gave him relative relief from his guilty distress. He therefore recalls how he had pleaded to save Joseph's life (Gen. 37:21,22). That recollection emboldened him to chide his brothers. Yet, his slightly greater righteousness was inadequate to acquit him of his complicity in the sin of the fraternal confederacy against Joseph. Thus, although he was convicted with fewer lashes of his conscience, still he who rides with outlaws must suffer the punishment that comes upon outlaws.

Monday, August 13th - Genesis 42: 23, 24

While the best of the bad lot of brothers was speaking, the best of all these brothers is made to weep. The brothers' confession of sin had taken place while they were in Joseph's presence. They spoke freely, thinking that Joseph was an Egyptian who needed his interpreter to understand them. In fact, Joseph understood their words and the deep significance of them. Accordingly, he cried tears of joy because he was seeing the first rays of the rising spiritual conviction that had come upon his brothers who had so grievously sinned against him. The righteous do well to rejoice at the sorrow of the wicked when it is the godly sorrow of repentance.

Tuesday, August 14th - Genesis 42: 23, 24

Although Joseph shed tears of joy over his brothers' coming under conviction for their sin, he maintained his testing disguise so that they might be perfected by their trial. He therefore hid his tears from them, not allowing them to perceive any tender sympathy in him, although his tears issued from the wells of his deep love and tender compassion for them. In this behavior, Joseph is like our Lord whom he foreshadows as a type. Our Redeemer is ever our sympathetic high priest who yet, at times, for His wise, loving, and holy reasons, withdraws from us the light of His countenance for the testing and purifying of our faith (1 Pet. 1:3-9).

Wednesday, August 15th - Genesis 42: 23, 24

Although Joseph was touched by his seeing his brothers' godly conviction of sin, still he rightly, wisely, and lovingly continued to test them. Therefore, he chose the one who would remain in the Egyptian prison while the nine were freed to return to Canaan for Benjamin. The one chosen was likely the worst of this bad lot of brothers. Simeon had led the treacherous charge against the men of Shechem (Gen. 34:25-31). Would the nine brothers care enough for Simeon to redeem him by their returning with Benjamin to Egypt and to the jurisdiction of this harsh ruler? If so, they would demonstrate how greatly they had changed from when they refused to care for godly Joseph's distress into which they had wickedly plunged him.

Thursday, August 16th - Genesis 42: 25, 26

The rays of grace had already begun to shine through the dark clouds of Joseph's harsh appearance before his brothers. Joseph had indicated to them that he feared God, he had eased the terms of their testing, and he had allowed them to purchase grain for their starving families in Canaan. Now Joseph adds grace upon grace. The cost of the grain that his brothers had bought openly is restored to them by Joseph secretly. Here let us note what Joseph's brothers in due course came to appreciate, namely, that there is more blessing and loving consideration for them in this Egyptian ruler than appearances would indicate. Similarly, there is more care and loving kindness and glorious blessing for us in Christ than the seeming costliness of our following Him and bearing our cross for Him would indicate. We truly bear no cost in the working out of our salvation, although at times we can feel that we are called to bear the cost of sacrificial service.

Friday, August 17th - Genesis 42: 26

Joseph's brothers departed from Egypt burdened with more blessings than they realized. So it is for all believers throughout their pilgrimage in this world. We may at times think that our Lord has allowed us only the barest necessities for our lives, when, in fact, He has richly burdened us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

Saturday, August 18th - Genesis 42: 27, 28

When Joseph's brothers discovered the money in the sack of one of them, their misery increased rather than diminished. Grace freely given, when fearfully received, can be construed as a complicating curse sent to compound our distress rather than to comfort our sorrows.

Sunday, August 19th - Genesis 42: 27, 28

The surprise treat that Joseph's brothers discovered issued from the gracious and loving generosity of the brother they had wronged. It also formed a part of Joseph's wise testing of his brothers. With the grain in hand and the money they paid returned, what incentive did these sons of Jacob have to return to Egypt and face the harsh ruler that had imprisoned them and threatened to do worse to them? Their only motivation would be their commitment to redeem their one imprisoned brother. Joseph's test of the returned money provided them the opportunity to act purely on that godly impulse.

Monday, August 20th - Genesis 42: 28

Joseph's brothers were deeply dismayed over their discovery of this blessing that they misconstrued to be a curse. We read that inwardly their hearts gave out, as though some malignant force had snatched the life out of them, while outwardly they trembled. Most sobering of all, they sensed the judgment of God in this, as though He had superintended that to the charges of their being spies should be added the charge of their being thieves destined to be caught with incriminating evidence of their crime. Without the eyes of faith, men are blinded to the grace of God and perceive only their guilt in His just and holy sight. They also perceive the Lord's blessings to be compounded curses that have been sent by God to crush them.

Tuesday, August 21st - Genesis 42: 28

The returned money does signify something far different from what Joseph's brothers construed it to indicate. It was a token not of their curse and doom, but of greater provision yet to come to them not from a harsh foreign ruler but from their loving brother. That loving brother had been resurrected from the death to which they had consigned him, not to condemn them, but to forgive, comfort, and love them. We have yet to perceive or possess all of the loving blessing that our Savior has in store for us and indicates to us by His pledges and tokens.

Wednesday, August 22nd - Genesis 42: 28

This verse portrays to us how guilty sinners respond when they find themselves in the hands of a gracious and giving Savior. They suspect the worst from those tokens that point to the Lord's best. Yet, these brothers are at this point under conviction of sin, wherein they believe that all things inform against them. Moreover, they rightly understand that, due to their guilt, all things should inform against them. Apart from the Lord's converting mercy, all things would rightly inform against us, pointing to the guilt of our sin against God and man, and portending our judgment and condemnation. However, by the Lord's mercy we come to believe and understand rightly that all things indicate our Lord's goodness to us and work together for our good, not our well-deserved harm.

Thursday, August 23rd - Genesis 42: 29-31

With their misery compounded by their misconstruing their blessings to be their curses, the brothers of Joseph return to Canaan and report to their father all that had happened. If their discovery of the blessing of the returned money was to them such a cause for dread and vexation, and if they were indeed honest men, as they claimed to be, we may well wonder why these men did not return to Egypt and endeavor to clear up this mystery. The reason they returned to Canaan rather than to Egypt was surely that they were in a guilty, fearful state, and fears are never safe guides for them or for us.

Friday, August 24th - Genesis 42: 29-34

Jacob's sons report faithfully regarding the treatment they had received in Egypt and the terms imposed upon them by the harsh Egyptian ruler. But while they tell the truth, they do not declare the whole truth. For example, they did not tell their father that they had seen Joseph, neither did they declare to him that he had wept over them, nor that he had blessed them by returning their money to them. They did not tell these things because they did not yet know fully about Joseph's person or works, and because they regarded the money as a curse to be suppressed. We experience the blessings of God far more often than we realize. While we try faithfully to testify to those blessings, they are deeper, more extensive, and far more wonderful than we know or can tell. The truth we know about our God and His saving work for us is great; the whole truth regarding His person and work will take us eternity to know and to tell.

Saturday, August 25th - Genesis 42: 35

At this point, Jacob's sons discover the fuller extent of Joseph's kindness to them. All of them had all of their money that they had paid for the grain returned. Joseph had literally provided them the means to sustain their lives at no cost. Yet, they were dismayed at this discovery. Grace abounding can at times heap grief, not gratification, upon those of little faith.

August 2007

Sunday, August 26 th – Genesis 42: 35, 36

The fears of Jacob and his nine sons blinded them to the kind and gracious generosity of Joseph and riveted their attention on this great blessing as though it were an awful curse. Therefore, with their discovery of the money, dismay obliterated any sense of delight. Jacob's sons could only think that they had been cruelly framed, while Jacob himself thought that the sons he had long suspected of murder had now proven themselves to be thieves. Our fears mislead us badly, compelling us to regard tokens of our Lord's gracious blessing as portending dreadful curses that are surely to come upon us.

Monday, August 27 th - Genesis 42: 36

Jacob cries out, expressing the cause of his dismay over the money. He charges his nine sons with having bereaved him of Joseph. With this charge, the pent-up suspicion Jacob had held for years that his ten older sons had been responsible for Joseph's death now bursts forth. The deception of these guilty sons had not convinced their father that Joseph had died by accident, but had only led him to conceal his belief in their guilt. Surely this explosion of the father's wrath and grief should teach us how wrong but also how inadequate are the devices we concoct to cover our sins. Let us thank our heavenly Father that He has not concealed but has cleansed our guilt by the blood of His only begotten Son.

Tuesday, August 28 th - Genesis 42: 36

We can surely understand the dismay of Jacob. Yet, the Word of God has given us perception into truths to which Jacob was blinded by his weak faith and fearful apprehensions. He thought and so he cried out that Joseph was dead. The truth was that Joseph was not only living but was reigning as an exalted ruler of Egypt. Jacob also gave Simeon up for dead, expecting him to have been executed as soon as the stealing of his brothers had been discovered by the Egyptians. The truth was that Simeon was alive, being preserved by Joseph for greater blessing. Finally, Jacob complained that were he to let his other sons take Benjamin to Egypt, that youngest apple of the patriarch's eye would also be plucked by the Egyptians who were surely enraged over the theft of his brothers. The truth was that Benjamin would be embraced by Joseph and treated preferentially (Gen. 43:34; 45: 14,15,22). In all of these specific details, Jacob was badly mistaken. In the sum of them he was also wrong. All of these things were not orchestrated against him, as he regarded them to be, but were working for him by the gracious determining of his sovereign God. Our fears and our grief without hope do not barely mislead us; they badly mislead us.

Wednesday, August 29 th – Genesis 42: 37

Once again it is Reuben, the best of the bad sons of Jacob, who speaks as he had done when he and his brothers came under conviction of sin in the presence of Joseph (v.22). The proposal Reuben makes manifests his sincerity as well as his commitment to fulfill the Egyptian ruler's instructions and to redeem Simeon. Yet, Reuben's proposal is also rash and excessive. He had no right to pledge the lives of two of his sons. Furthermore, from Jacob's perspective, this was simply a desperate and foolish proposal that promised only to add two more deaths to the already crushing burden of his bereavement. Sincerity in our dealings is good and necessary but it must be combined with wisdom and loving consideration for all involved.

Thursday, August 30 th – Genesis 42: 37, 38

We see that Reuben's proposal prompted Jacob only to entrench himself in his resistance against his allowing Benjamin to be taken by his brothers to Egypt . The reason Jacob gives is that he had suffered enough grievous diminishment and that he was determined at this point to cut his losses and cling to the remnant he retained. He therefore displays a survivalist mentality when he was, in fact, called and equipped to be more than a conqueror through his God. Jacob's resistance may be reasonable, but it is not the result of his faith. Behind and above his mistrust of his older sons, Jacob is showing a lack of trust in the Lord.

Friday, August 31 st - Genesis 42: 37, 38

When we say that Jacob is determined to cut his losses, we should note how radically he reduces that which he is determined to preserve. He mentions that Benjamin's brother, namely, Joseph is dead. Then Jacob concludes by saying that Benjamin alone is left. Earlier, when Jacob concluded that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, he refused to be comforted by all of his sons and daughters (Gen. 37:33-35). There it appeared that he regarded one Joseph as better than all of his other children. Here Jacob makes it very clear that he valued Benjamin as being the only son he had remaining alive, the others being entirely disregarded. Once more we maintain that Jacob's attitude is understandable, but we further maintain that he is failing by faith to reckon rightly that his God could and would give him so much more than this one son to whom he was determined to cling at all costs.

Saturday, September 1 st - Genesis 42: 38

Jacob is willing to live with a token of all of his sons and lose the rest. He refuses to venture that token in order to obtain the treasure of having all of his sons living together in happy and blessed security due to the provision of the exalted and reigning Joseph, whom Jacob believed to be dead. Where is the faith of this man who had previously wrestled with and prevailed over God to obtain the blessing of the Lord that makes rich, with no sorrow being added to it (Gen. 32:24ff; Prov. 10:22)? Jacob's fear of going down to Sheol in sorrow was condemning him to live a life of reduced circumstances and sorrow in this world. But the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob demonstrates to us through His testing and abundantly blessing dealings with these patriarchs that He has more to give to us than we can ask or think. Let us, then, learn to live lives not reduced by our fears but expanded by our trust and hope in the God of all blessing.

Sunday, September 2 nd - Genesis 43: 1, 2

Although Jacob took a reducing and sorrowful counsel of his fears, thereby remaining stout in his refusal to let his older sons take Benjamin back to Egypt , we see in these verses that the Lord can prompt obedience to His will despite the refusal of His people. If Jacob will not exercise his faith, then God will employ a famine. Accordingly, we see that when the sacks of his sons are emptied of all grain, and when the stomachs of his family are painfully empty, then the closed mind of Jacob begins to open to the necessity of his sending his sons back to Egypt . If the eyes of Jacob's heart had been opened to and focused upon his God rather than fearfully upon the idol he had made of his youngest son, he would have seen this necessity and would have hastened to send Benjamin with his other sons to Egypt , there to receive more blessing than he could at this point contemplate. We delay, if not lose, blessing by our fearful living, while we hasten our enjoyment of blessing by our faithful living. Our God is determined to revive our drooping faith so that through our exercising it we may be greatly and speedily blessed.

Monday, September 3 rd - Genesis 43: 1, 2

Although Joseph had secretly provided Jacob and his family with much grain, the famine outlasted the food. Jacob appeared resolved to sacrifice Simeon in Egypt if only the food would have outlasted the famine. The Lord of all blessing, however, overruled and prodded Jacob through this prolonged trial to seek more grace and greater blessing. Similarly, our trials which we dread are the Lord's prods to drive us to abundant blessing and deeper delights.

Tuesday, September 4 th - Genesis 43: 1, 2

Jacob commanded his sons to return to Egypt to purchase more grain. If he wanted to eat and to live, he had no choice but to direct them back to Egypt, for that land alone possessed a supply of food during the famine. What Jacob did not know was that the only reason Egypt had food was due to the fact that his son, Joseph, whom he regarded as having been dead for years, was very much alive and reigning wisely and vitally over Egypt. The sources of God's blessing contain so much more blessing than we with our little faith perceive from our weak apprehensions of the outer traces of those sources.

Wednesday, September 5 th - Genesis 43: 1, 2

A little food was all that Jacob sought from Egypt. He did not suspect that he would receive from Egypt vastly more than he sought or imagined. Our Lord has great blessing hidden not from us but for us in some most unlikely places. Little do we know the manifold blessings that are stored for us when we bear our crosses daily, thinking that thereby we may receive a little blessing, only to find ourselves in a sea of lavish and delightful divine provision.

Thursday, September 6 th - Genesis 43: 3-5

Judah counters his father's directive with a reminder that a man is more essential to their mission than money, making it clear that Benjamin was necessary for the Egyptian ruler's acceptance of the rest of the sons of Jacob. This was a painful reminder to Jacob, and he regarded it as almost unbearably costly, for according to his reckoning Benjamin was his only son (Gen. 42:38). Yet, the patriarch would be compelled reluctantly to risk his son, Benjamin, in order to save the lives of himself and of his other sons and their families. Our acceptance by God also requires our coming to Him in the name and by the work of a certain man, namely, God's only begotten Son, whom He gave freely and lovingly not to save Himself, but to save us.

Friday, September 7 th - Genesis 43: 6

Here Jacob laments that his older sons had disclosed to the Egyptian ruler that they had another brother. He blames them for what he regards as their inconsideration that allowed the disclosure that, in turn, brought on his misery. With this cry, we perceive Jacob reverting to his old faithless way of concealing the truth in order to deceive others, just as he had done when he disguised himself as Esau before Isaac. The withholding of the truth about Benjamin would seem to Jacob to have been prudent and easy enough to have accomplished before a foreign ruler who knew nothing about the patriarch and his sons. Yet, had his sons attempted this ploy, they would have been easily found out by that ruler who happened to be their brother Joseph. Man's sinful devices are seen to be wrong and woefully inadequate by one who can see through them, and certainly by the God who sees and knows all things.

Saturday, September 8 th - Genesis 43: 7

The sons of Jacob together respond to their father's complaint, telling him that the man with whom

they had to deal was determined and capable to perceive the truth regarding the existence of Benjamin. They testify that they had been interrogated by a man who seemed able to discern all things, while his own identity and agenda remained a mystery to them. It is always right and the best policy for one to come clean before a man of apparent omniscience, and certainly before the God of true omniscience.

Sunday, September 9 th - Genesis 43: 8, 9

Judah here speaks with clear determination. He obviously has come to see and accept the facts that his sons must take Benjamin with them if they are to return to Egypt with a hope of success in their goal of purchasing food, and that they will all die if they either do not return or return without Benjamin. Judah further pledges his life to ensure the safety of Benjamin. Here is evident faith that shows in a deed of costly promise. It will bear its ripe fruit in Judah 's offer to perform on this pledge when he begs for the seemingly offended Egyptian ruler to take his life instead of the life of Benjamin (Gen. 44:18-34). Faith prompts us to regard others as more important than ourselves, and to give ourselves, even in sacrificial service, to serve and even to save others (Phil. 2:3-8).

Monday, September 10 th - Genesis 43: 10

Judah concludes his proposal and pledge with an argument regarding the counter-productiveness of delay. He asserts that they could have made two trips to Egypt for provisions within the span of time they had wasted in their delay. That delay was, of course from Jacob's perspective, due to his dread of losing Benjamin. The truth was, and would soon be seen to be by Jacob and by all of his sons, that instead of their delay preserving Benjamin from death, it had been depriving them of their reunion with Joseph, who was alive, exalted, and reigning in Egypt while waiting graciously and lavishly to pour blessings upon his father and brothers. The clouds of our Lord's darkest providences, which we so much dread, are indeed rich with mercies that shall be lavished upon us.

Tuesday, September 11 th - Genesis 43: 11-14

So decisively has Judah 's argument and faithful pledge aroused Jacob from the doldrums of his faithless fears that we see him springing into action and equipping his sons with everything he reasonably could offer to ensure the success of their mission. That his wise and practical provisions issue from his awakened faith is indicated by the way Scripture uses not his old name, *Jacob*, but his God-given name, *Israel* (Gen. 32:28; 35:9-12), for once again Jacob was beginning to strive by faith with God and would again prevail.

Wednesday, September 12 th - Genesis 43: 11, 12

Jacob provides presents for his sons to take to the Egyptian ruler. He gathers some of the finest products of the land of Canaan . The list given in v.11 consists of sweets and spices, but nothing of substance for, of course, the famine had stripped Jacob's family of food. Yet, we should note from this that affliction rarely if ever reduces the people of God to such extremity that they have nothing to offer as tokens of respect to an earthly ruler. This is even more the case with our offerings to the King of kings, who accepts with pleasure two pennies if they are given to Him in faith and loving gratitude.

Thursday, September 13 th - Genesis 43: 12

Jacob adds to the sweets and spices he sends with his sons double the money he had sent for the first purchase of grain. He does so probably not in an endeavor to have his sons purchase double the quantity

of grain, but more likely in anticipation of higher prices or as provision for any extortion the Egyptians might have been inclined to practice. Jacob rightly demonstrates the premium he places upon life-saving food, and not upon unrighteousness mammon. Should we not be willing to sacrifice all sorts of material possessions, even to lose our lives, in order that we might feed on the One who is the living bread that came down from heaven?

Friday, September 14 th - Genesis 43: 12

In addition to the double amount of purchase money, Jacob had his sons take back the money from their original purchase that they had found in their sacks of grain. Now that Israel is being guided more by his faith than by his fears, he has better and truer perception regarding that hidden money. Rather than think that his sons were thieves, he considers that the money may have been mistakenly scooped along with the grain into his sons' sacks. His perception was better but it was still not perfect. The money was returned not due to a mistake, but rather due to the mercy of Joseph. What our faith begins to see as light will grow ever brighter when we act in accordance with what light we can see, however dimly we may see by it at first.

Saturday, September 15 th - Genesis 43: 13

To the tokens of sweets and spices and the supply of money Israel adds his highest earthly treasure. Benjamin was the brother of Joseph and stood as the shadow of the son whom Israel had loved above all others and whom he now regarded as dead. Benjamin was also his youngest son, as well as the only other son of his most beloved wife, Rachel. It appears that this dark divine providence was demanding all from Israel . But when God takes away from us, He does so to give back to us more and better.

Sunday, September 16 th - Genesis 43: 14, 15

To the gifts and to the treasure of Benjamin that are entrusted by Israel to his other sons to be delivered to the Egyptian ruler, the supreme treasure of a benediction was added by the patriarch. In this benediction we should perceive how quickly and fully Israel 's fears have been vanquished by his resurgent faith. These presents and this prayerful benediction resemble the presents he had prepared and the prayers he had offered as he returned from Haran to face his brother Esau (Gen. 32:9-18). Israel rightly recalled that his cries to God had been answered with a pacified and graciously welcoming Esau, and he now revives the pattern that had resulted in such blessed issue then. The compassions of our God never fail. Let us see to it that our cries to Him for those compassions never cease.

Monday, September 17 th - Genesis 43: 14, 15

Israel invokes the power of God Almighty to overrule the apparent harshness of the Egyptian ruler, filling him instead with compassion for Israel 's sons. Scripture has revealed to us that before this prayer was made, God had answered it, giving to Joseph a most tender, loving, and compassionate regard for his brothers. Yet, the manifestation of that compassion was stopped up by the disguise of Joseph's harshness. In answer to Israel 's prayer, Joseph's great compassion would gush forth in a flood of tears and joy when his brothers next saw him. The compassions of our God are infinitely deep, and our cries to Him for those compassions draw them from Him to us in abundant measure.

Tuesday, September 18 th - Genesis 43: 14, 15

The form that Israel asks God to make the Egyptian ruler's compassion take is the release of Simeon and

the return of Benjamin. This release would take place in a way that far exceeded the blessing here invoked. The sons of Israel would be freed not from the Egyptian ruler to return to Canaan , and to famine, and to hunger. Instead, they would be released from the guilt of their sin against Joseph, and by his gracious and generous dealings with them, they would be freed from all hunger and want for the rest of their lives in Egypt . We have been released from our sins by our Savior, not to be liberated from Him, but to find our greatest and most satisfying freedom in union and communion with Him.

Wednesday, September 19 th - Genesis 43: 14, 15

Israel invokes God's best, but he also prepares for the worst when he says, *if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved*. His words do not express any lack of faith on his part, but rather issue from his strong trust in the Lord. Israel is here expressing what Esther expressed when she declared that she would speak to the king and perish if she would perish (Esther 4:16). He is saying what Job said when he said that if God should slay him, yet would he still trust the Lord (Job 13:15). Israel is declaring his freedom from fearful self-regard. He is decreasing in his own eyes and God is increasing. Hence, he is submitting himself to the sovereign wisdom and holy love of the Lord, accepting that if his God should deny the blessings here invoked, it would be because He had greater blessings to give him through the cross of his sons' deaths. Israel 's words echo and foreshadow the words of our Savior who prayed: *Not My will, but Thine be done*.

Thursday, September 20 th - Genesis 43: 15-17

Israel 's sons leave Canaan to return to Egypt , being prepared with presents, with Benjamin, and with their father's benediction. They are prepared for anything and everything except for what they actually encounter, namely, the lavish graciousness of their brother Joseph, who had been preserved and exalted and restored to them by the grace and sovereign power of the Lord. We shall always be prepared for everything more than we are prepared for the magnitude of the divine grace we shall receive in Christ. We are not prepared to receive such grace because it is the last thing we deserve and the last thing we expect but the first and foremost thing we receive from our God.

Friday, September 21 st - Genesis 43: 16, 17

The key feature that Joseph noted upon his brothers' return was not their presents but rather the person, namely Benjamin, whom they had brought in accordance with the instructions Joseph had given them. The fact that the nine older brothers had safely brought with them their youngest brother, and Joseph's only full brother, indicated that the older sons of Israel had passed a critical test of obedience. Before this Egyptian ruler, all of the presents in the world would have meant nothing had Benjamin, the one thing necessary, been lacking. With Benjamin in their company, a feast was ordered by this ruler. Before the King of kings there is only one thing necessary for us to be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and that is that Christ, our hope of glory, be in us and we in Him (Rom. 8:9).

Saturday, September 22 nd - Genesis 43: 16, 17

The sons of Israel came to Joseph hoping to buy grain and to have their brother Simeon restored to them. What they receive is far above their expectations. They will find eventually that they will purchase nothing, for food in abundance and houses will be given to them. This lavish giving begins with a feast, prepared for them at Joseph's house, indicating the Egyptian ruler's determination to honor and bless them. We shall never receive less from our gracious God, but shall always receive more than we ask or expect.

Sunday, September 23 rd - Genesis 43: 18

In this verse we are told how Israel 's sons made the worst of Joseph's best intentions and provision. They feared that Joseph intended to enslave them in retribution for their having possessed the grain purchase money in their sacks. They also figured that the Egyptian ruler had an eye for their donkeys. Here their fears take a ridiculous turn. The rich and exalted ruler of Egypt was not in need of a few hungry donkeys to enhance his majesty. Nor was it Joseph's plan to frame his brothers for a crime in order to add their hungry and weak bodies to his army of slaves. Joseph's intention was to set his brothers free from the guilt of their having sinned against him. Our guilty fears make absurd and unsafe guides for us.

Monday, September 24 th – Genesis 43: 19-22

The fearful brothers of Joseph hasten to explain their plight to Joseph's servant. Hereby they were seeking to profit from their appeal to a slave, in contrast to Judah's earlier proposal that they should profit from their selling their brother Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37: 26,27). Accordingly, these once proud brothers humble themselves and bow not only to Joseph, but also to Joseph's servant. They confess in detail and in truth their plight, trusting in his sympathy and compassion and ability to help them. They would find the slave to be a man deserving of such trust, for this slave was but a reflection of his sympathetic, compassionate, and helping master, as that master is a reflection of our sympathetic and helping High Priest (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15,16).

Tuesday, September 25 th – Genesis 43: 23

The servant of Joseph begins to relieve the fears of the prostrate brothers of Joseph. He begins by commanding that peace vanquish their fears. The basis of this peace is rightly and most solidly founded upon the God of grace and peace. The servant therefore explains that what these men had with dread and trembling considered a complicating curse for them was, in fact, a gift of God's blessing that was designed to fill them with gratitude, peace, and joy. This Egyptian slave thus ministers to the sons of the covenant lessons in the liberating truth and grace of the God of their fathers. Accordingly, he shows himself to be more of a son of Israel than were they at that time.

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Wednesday, September 26 th – Genesis 43: 23

The sons of Israel thought that they had paid a price for the grain they had received. However, as Joseph's servant makes clear to them, their God had turned their payment of money to a man they mistakenly thought was a foreign ruler into precious treasure for themselves. This is ever the method of transaction in the Kingdom of God . If we lose our lives for Christ's sake, we find that they are preserved and returned to us greatly enriched (Mt. 10:38 ,39).

Thursday, September 27 th - Genesis 43: 23

The servant of Joseph declares to the sons of Israel that he had their money. From Gen. 42:25 we learn that strictly speaking, Joseph had actual possession of the money, and that this servant had the money in trust as a steward of his master, and that he disposed of it according to his master's directives. Joseph's brothers were until this point ignorant of all of this gracious orchestration that was working together for their good. Their money and their lives could not have been placed in better and more blessing hands. As Francis Thompson, in his poem titled *The Hound of Heaven*, has the Lord declare to the penitent: *All which thy child's mistake/Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;/Rise, clasp My hand, and come!*

Friday, September 28 th - Genesis 43: 23

Because Joseph had seen that his brothers had brought Benjamin with them, as he had earlier commanded them to do, the instructions he gave to his house steward were not only that he should prepare a meal for these compliant sons of Israel , but also that he should release Simeon to them. Accordingly, the steward brought Simeon to his brothers, restoring to him his life and his liberty and to a reunion with more of his brothers than he thought possible. This action of releasing Simeon was done by Joseph in accordance with his own promise to them that he would release their brother if they complied with his command to bring Benjamin to Egypt (Gen. 42:19,20,24). Many promises of blessing are contingent upon men's obedience to stipulated conditions. If we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, seeking by God's grace to do all that our Lord commands us to do, we shall find that our Lord not only keeps His promises to bless us, but also He provides ever, only, and always better than His Word of promise.

Saturday, September 29 th – Genesis 43: 24

This verse details further provision that Joseph, through his servant, made for the sons of Israel . They were cleansed of the defilement they had accumulated on their journey to Egypt . This was not only for their refreshment, but was also a requirement so that they would not appear in the presence of the exalted Egyptian ruler ashamed of themselves and dishonoring and offending him by their unclean appearance. This cultural convention points to the requirement that all who would appear before the glorious and exalted King of kings must be pure and blameless in His sight. It also indicates that the provision for such cleansing is graciously provided by the King Himself.

Sunday, September 30 th – Genesis 43: 24

No only were Joseph's brothers refreshed and cleansed, but also their donkeys, for which they had feared, were fed by their gracious and impeccably considerate regal host. None of their fears were

realized. In truth, those fears could be said to have provided infallible guidance to truth and blessing for these men, so long as they thought and followed the opposite of those fears. We, too, shall find that the gracious blessing of our Lord will vanquish all of our fears, great and small.

Monday, October 1 st - Genesis 43: 25

The sons of Israel were being blessed and comforted as they awaited their meal with the Egyptian ruler. In return, they rightly responded by preparing the gifts they were to give to that ruler. Yet, they remained somewhat in suspense as Joseph by design delayed his coming to them. Would all of this surprisingly gracious treatment prove to be but a disarming prelude to their captivity and miserable slavery, or did it all portend greater blessing to come? Like Israel at the Red Sea , and like Mordecai when Haman was preparing to hang him, and like Peter in prison under a death sentence from Herod, these sons of Israel were suspended between the poles of horror and honor. Neither their logic nor their fears would resolve their tension; only faith in their God who was working all for their good would do that. We are shown this because we live our lives in similar tension, and our gracious heavenly Father has shown us that all things will turn out for us infinitely and eternally better than we can ask or think.

Tuesday, October 2 nd - Genesis 43: 26

Israel 's sons have cleansed themselves with water provided by the servant of the Egyptian ruler so that they would honor that ruler by their fresh appearance and not offend him by their defilement. In this verse we find them doing more to make themselves as ready as possible to stand before this ruler. At his appearance, they offer to him the present they had prepared and brought with them for this occasion (v.11). This present served as a token of their gratitude for all the ruler's mercy expressed in his allowing them to purchase grain. They also bowed before him as an act of respect for his majesty and authority. There is nothing casual or contemptuous in all of their deportment, as there had been when Joseph had first declared to them his dreams (Gen. 37:8). Here is a second and more grand fulfillment of God's Word to Joseph through his dreams (cf., Gen. 42:6). It is to God's glory that it is so, and it is also for the highest gain and good for Joseph's brothers. Similarly, our own highest good is united to our glorifying our Redeemer, who is the King of all kings.

Wednesday, October 3 rd - Genesis 43: 26, 27

Joseph's brothers bow to the position this Egyptian ruler occupies, while not knowing anything about his person. When they lived in close and conscious fraternal relation with Joseph, why were they blinded to the possibility that their brother could attain such exalted position? Surely it was due to their jealous hatred of and sinful contempt for his person. It was also due to their contempt for the grace and power of the Lord, who ultimately raises men up or brings them down. Despite their sinful contempt, God had raised up Joseph, and here the Lord prostrates his brothers before him. Yet, Joseph does not in return treat his brothers with contempt. Rather, he graciously demonstrates his care for them, as he inquires about their welfare and the welfare of their father. Again, we know how these brothers deserved and dreaded the worst, and yet we see how they receive the best from this exalted servant of the Lord.

Thursday, October 4 th - Genesis 43: 27, 28

To Israel 's sons it would have appeared remarkable that this exalted Egyptian ruler should inquire of them regarding the welfare of their father. Yet, they little suspected the filial tie that bound this ruler to their father. Joseph and his father had been soul-mates (Gen. 37:3), and thus this question regarding the welfare of Israel was far more than courtly politeness. Joseph intensely loved and cared for his father,

even more than did Israel's other sons who had prostrated themselves before Joseph. In the same way, our exalted Lord loves and cares for our nearest and dearest relations far more than we do. We can trust our loved ones to Him.

Friday, October 5 th - Genesis 43: 28

In this verse, the second dream of Joseph (Gen. 37:9-11) begins to be fulfilled, as Israel, through his sons, bows to Joseph. Thus is God's Word increasingly and perfectly fulfilled. Not one iota of Scripture will fail. We may not have dreams like Joseph, but we have many more and clearer promises in God's Word that are great and precious and should be, accordingly, prized and relied upon by us.

Saturday, October 6 th - Genesis 43: 29

After asking about his father's welfare, Joseph saw Benjamin and took steps to further his brother's welfare by invoking the blessing of God upon him. The Lord's blessing was the supreme provision and greatest treasure Joseph could give to his brothers and father. Without that blessing, the most he could have done would have been to provide temporary relief from their physical hunger. With that blessing they would gain provision for time and eternity, and they would have food for their bodies as well as for their souls. The Kingdom of God's gracious blessing is the first thing our Lord gives to us, and it should be the primary thing we seek for ourselves and seek to give to others (Mt. 6:33).

Sunday, October 7 th - Genesis 43: 29

When Joseph invoked the blessing of God upon Benjamin, he was speaking in terms that all of the sons of Israel should have understood. Joseph may have been disguising himself from his brothers, but he was not hiding his faith in their God from them. The fact that this Egyptian ruler was calling upon the God of grace should have caused these men of the covenant of God's grace to marvel and at least begin to perceive spiritual affinity between themselves and this ruler, if not their natural fraternal relation. For his part, Joseph was wisely determined to let his light shine and to demonstrate that he and these men were spiritual brethren, before he revealed to them the natural relation which they had previously held in hateful contempt.

Monday, October 8 th - Genesis 43: 29, 30

Joseph was deeply stirred at this point. He was overcome with strong emotions of joy and gratitude. It was not only his seeing his brother Benjamin that caused this overwhelming stirring in Joseph's heart, but rather it was seeing his brother before him with the blessing of God's grace upon him that caused the fount of Joseph's great heart to overflow. For when Joseph spoke the words of blessing he surely realized that the blessing of God had been upon him through all of his trials and triumphs to bring him to this point of being an instrument of divine blessing for his brothers. Nothing in all of the world melts our hearts as does our deepening realization that we have been loved, guided, upheld, and sanctified throughout the course of our lives because we have been all along—often despite contrary appearances—objects and instruments of the love, wisdom, and power of our Lord.

Tuesday, October 9 th - Genesis 43: 30, 31

While Joseph was revealing to his brothers his faith in the God of grace, he determined to continue concealing from them his personal identity and his natural relation to them. Therefore, he chose to hide his tears from them, for they would have revealed to his brothers more than Joseph chose to reveal to

them at this point. There was yet more testing for the sons of Israel to endure (cf., Gen. 44), and the open tears of the one testing them would at this point have militated against those tests. Yet, we should count ourselves privileged to know of these tears before Joseph's brothers knew of them. Such knowledge points us to the blessed assurance that our Lord is exceedingly more tender toward us than His wise but testing providences may indicate to us.

Wednesday, October 10 th - Genesis 43: 31-34

When Joseph gave the order to serve the meal, we do not find Scripture simply recording that they ate or even what they ate. Rather, the Word of God details for us how they ate. No doubt the provision was fine and lavish, but these are men eating together, indeed brethren, and not animals feeding at a trough. Therefore, our attention is drawn to the fine and significant details that form an essential part of all meals served by refined and considerate hosts. At the marriage feast of the Lamb we shall not feed as a chaotic mob, but shall find that order and godly decorum will abound along with the food, and that such order will enhance, not dampen, our unspeakable joy.

Thursday, October 11 th - Genesis 43: 32

This verse notes the order of the seating at the meal Joseph provided for his brothers. Joseph, as befitting his exalted position, ate as the singular occupant of his table. His Egyptian servants ate at their own table, as they regarded themselves to be superior to the Hebrews. Joseph's brothers ate together at their own table. These men, therefore, were eating in the same house and so were not separated from one another. Yet, they ate at separate tables and so were distinguished from each other. Joseph would not force reconciliation between these different men, nor would he reduce them to an artificial equality or uniformity. It is right in any society that proper distinctions should be observed. Part of the order of heaven is that there will be the greatest and the least there, and all that are between them.

Friday, October 12 th - Genesis 43: 33

In this verse, particular notice is given regarding the seating arrangement of Joseph's brothers at their table. The remarkable thing that astonished the 11 brothers was that Joseph had seated them in exact order from oldest to youngest. They could not have imagined how this Egyptian ruler came to know the precise order of their births. It must have seemed to them that this man had powers of magical insight (cf., Gen. 44:15). Of course we know, because Scripture has revealed to us, that the basis of Joseph's knowledge was his fraternal relation to these men. Similarly, our sovereign Redeemer knows all about us and where we belong not only due to His omniscience, but also because of His being our older Brother due to His incarnation (Heb. 2:11-18).

Saturday, October 13 th - Genesis 43: 34

The amazingly gracious condescension, intimate knowledge, and loving generosity of this Egyptian ruler for these Hebrew brothers continue to be manifested in this verse. It was not the Egyptian servants of this ruler who served them, nor were they left to serve themselves. Instead, none other than the exalted ruler humbled himself and served them personally with the food from his table. In this way, Joseph was revealing his true identity to them in his deeds of kindness and by his sharing with them his own fare, as he should have done not with servants or strangers but with brothers. This giving of his food also was a fulfillment of the prophetic dream where it was Joseph's sheaf (signifying food) that was exalted above the sheaves of his brethren (Gen. 37:6,7). Who would not with sincere and grateful devotion bow down to one who stoops from his exalted position to serve and nourish those who hunger and thirst? Who

would not bow even more so to our heavenly Lord, who loved us and gave His body and blood to be our food and drink (Jn. 6:51 -56)?

Sunday, October 14 th - Genesis 43: 34

While Joseph was graciously generous to all of his brothers he was exceedingly so to Benjamin, providing for him a portion five times greater than the portions given to the rest of his brothers. We may wonder why Joseph made this remarkably uneven distribution. Perhaps he was testing the other ten brothers to see if they had repented of their sinful envy and hatred against him when he was the special object of his father's loving attention. Perhaps he was offering compensation to the brother he reckoned had been belittled by his older brothers. While either or both of these reasons could be true, there should be no doubt that Joseph lavished his fare upon Benjamin primarily, if not exclusively, because he loved him best. Grace is never disbursed according to such things as merit and equity. A little grace is as undeserved as is a great amount of grace. It is the prerogative of the giver of grace to determine the measure of his giving. This is surely the lesson of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, where those last hired seemed to receive unfairly generous compensation in comparison with those first hired (Mt. 20:1-16).

Monday, October 15 th - Genesis 43: 34

We in our egalitarian culture are prone to assume that preferential treatment is wrong. However, the Bible is full of teaching that shows us that our salvation is a matter of the Lord's sovereign discrimination and preferential treatment of His elect. Before they were born, our God loved Jacob but hated Esau (Rom. 9:10 -16). The Word of God abounds with favoritism. God favored Israel over the nations; Moses over Miriam and Aaron; David over his older brothers; Peter, James and John over the other disciples, and John was His especially beloved disciple. However, while greater and lesser expressions of grace may be dispensed, there is no one who is the loser because some receive greater grace. As Joseph and all of his brothers feasted and enjoyed blessed liberty together, so shall we all feast and rejoice together at the Lamb's wedding supper, regardless of the reality that there some of us will be greater and some lesser recipients and trophies of God's grace.

Tuesday, October 16 th - Genesis 44: 1, 2

Joseph's brothers had enjoyed with and received from the Egyptian ruler far better things than they had feared or even hoped. They all were not only allowed safely and freely to leave Egypt and return to Canaan with the grain for which they had come back to Egypt, but they were also feasted by and with this exalted Egyptian ruler in his own house. But this joy would come laced with the sorrow of further testing for them. This would be the final test for Joseph's brothers, and it would be for them a test that would result in life or death for one of them. As we shall see it to be so for these brothers, so we should reckon it to be so for us, that the Lord tests His people, not to deprive them of blessing and joy but to deepen and enrich both for them.

Wednesday, October 17 th - Genesis 44: 1, 2

Joseph heaps abundant blessing upon his brothers. The amount of grain they are given is limited only by their carrying capacity. It is not at all confined by the limits of their ability to pay. From this we should reason that our Lord exercises us with painful trials in order to try and expand our capacity to contain His blessing. In fact, as was previously done, Joseph arranged for his house steward to return to his brothers, in addition to the grain, all of the money they thought they had paid for it. Once again, this gracious ruler

lovingly saw to it that his brothers lives would be sustained without cost to them, while the money they thought they had spent was returned as treasure in their sacks (Gen. 43:23). Similarly, all that we think we spend in our Lord's service is transformed by Him into investment which returns to us bountiful treasure (2 Cor. 9:6,7).

Thursday, October 18 th - Genesis 44: 1, 2

In addition to the grain and money returned to his brothers, Joseph also directs his house steward to place the silver cup from Joseph's own table into Benjamin's bag. In view of the preferentially abundant provision Joseph had made for Benjamin at the meal (Gen. 43:34), we might conclude that this cup was but added treasure for Joseph's most treasured youngest brother. However, the cup turns out to be a thorn among the roses of Joseph's lavish provision. It was not placed in Benjamin's sack as a treasure but rather as a test, the nature of which unfolds in the following verses. Not all of Joseph's provision is pleasant, but all is given with wise and purposeful design. The same is true of our Lord's provision for us.

Friday, October 19 th - Genesis 44: 1, 2

We may incidentally observe how utterly faithful the house steward is in carrying out Joseph's instructions. When his lord makes his will clearly known, this servant obeys all directives immediately and fully. He does not let his own reasoning or personal preferences or passions impede his service. If his lord has said it, he will do it. Therefore he serves as a perfectly responsive instrument in his master's hand. We, too, would better serve our Lord if we trusted and obeyed Him with all our heart and refused to let our finite and fallible understanding distract, delay, or prevent us from doing His ever wise and holy will (Prov. 3:5,6).

Saturday, October 20 th - Genesis 44: 3

Joseph's brothers were sent on their way blessed with treasure that was apparent to them. They possessed the grain for which they had returned to Egypt ; they also had with them Simeon who had been released from jail, as well as Benjamin, for whose welfare Judah had pledged himself (Gen. 43:8,9). They were more blessed than they knew, for they also carried with them the money they had paid for the grain. They were also burdened by a concealed test that would soon be sprung upon them. Finally, they were leaving Egypt astride the donkeys they had feared that the Egyptian ruler would confiscate from them. Our affairs are ever only partly apprehended by us. There are always in all of our lives hidden things of which our Lord knows and which He has ordained. We cannot know what they are until they come to light and exert their abounding or abasing power upon us. We can know that all of these things are made by our God to work for our good.

Sunday, October 21 st - Genesis 44: 3, 4

Joseph ordered a quick and hot pursuit of his brothers. They had barely exited the city when their arrest order was issued. Some tests and trails come upon us slowly and gradually, while others strike us suddenly. How and why and when our trials come are matters determined by our Lord, just as this swift trial was determined by Joseph who ruled as lord over Egypt . For all of our trials we need the Lord Jesus as our Advocate, for apart from His pleading for us, guilt would surely be found in us, whether we were conscious of it or not.

Monday, October 22 nd - Genesis 44: 4, 5

The charges are stated against Joseph's brothers. They are charged generally with repaying evil for the good they had received from Joseph. Specifically, they are charged with stealing the cup of the ruler of Egypt. It was not just any personal and cup, but it is here represented as the specially precious cup that the Egyptian ruler would certainly perceive to be missing and thus would surely divine from its absence that his most recent guests had stolen it. Thus, the men are charged with ingratitude and stupidity in their having stolen when they had been given so much, and in their having stolen something that would so quickly have been missed and known to be in their possession. All sin is wrong and stupid, even as this contrived charge of sin makes the brothers of Joseph look wrong and stupid.

Tuesday, October 23 rd - Genesis 44: 4, 5

The brothers of Joseph in this instance are not guilty of sinful ingratitude and of having brutishly deprived Joseph of what was his by right. Yet, they were guilty of having sinfully deprived him of his liberty, family, land and people for years. The stupidity of that sin is seen in the way that God preserved the man they would have destroyed, and exalted the one whom they had abased.

Wednesday, October 24 th – Genesis 44: 6

The house steward arrested and charged Joseph's brothers as he had been instructed to do. Even though he knew that his master had manipulated the assignment of Benjamin's guilt, the servant renders unquestioning obedience to his master, and such obedience serves well Joseph's purposes. This house steward may have acted from a motive of self-preservation, fearfully knowing that he would be punished if he deviated from his master's instructions. He may have served as a morally blind drone, having been reduced to being such by his slavery under Egyptian oppression. He may also have been truly a free man in the Lord, serving his master and spiritual brother, Joseph, who could well have led him to know the Lord. One day we shall know whether this servant is or is not our brother in Christ. What we do know now is that his obedience to the morally mystifying instructions of his master, served effectively to fulfill Joseph's wise and loving purposes for his brothers. Surely we should follow his example and trust, obey, and follow the Lamb of God, who is our Lord, wherever He might lead us.

Thursday, October 25 th – Genesis 44: 7

Here is the initial response of Joseph's brothers to the charges against them. They declare in strong terms their innocence. The humbling irony for them is that despite their subjective sincerity, they are objectively guilty of having Joseph's cup with them. We are not competent judges of our own innocence. As clear as our consciences may at times be, the omniscient Judge will always find sin within us, lurking in deeds of transgression we have done in ignorance, or in thoughts and intentions we have yet to bring captive to Christ. The blessed side of this truth is that when our heavenly Judge declares us to be blameless in His sight on account of our being in Christ, we may joyfully and gratefully be assured that there is nothing in or about us that can warrant any charge against us (Rom. 8:33,34).

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Friday, October 26 th – Genesis 44: 7, 8

Joseph's brothers not only speak strong words in denial of the charge against them, but they point to works they had done that gave credence to their denial. Thieves do not return money as these men had done after they had discovered it in their sacks of grain. And yet, while these men were innocent of the current charge of their having stolen the treasured cup from the Egyptian ruler, they were all guilty (except for Benjamin) of having stolen from Joseph the prime years of his life, and of having stolen from their father the son he treasured most. Many men can point to their innocence in small matters, but yet remain guilty of grievous sin in great matters. Furthermore, there are times when the providence of God will have them suffer for their greater offenses through the wrongs they endure in the smaller matters wherein they are actually innocent but are considered guilty.

Saturday, October 27 th - Genesis 44: 9

In this verse, Joseph's brothers make the strongest assertion of their innocence. So sincerely confident are they that they are not guilty as charged that they find themselves together in covenantal cohesion wherein they pledge that if the cup is found with one of them then they all will suffer. According to their terms, the guilty one shall die and the rest of them shall become slaves. Such sincerity is a fine thing. But as we shall see, men can be sincerely wrong. Thanks be to God that our justification does not depend upon our own fallible feelings but rather upon the certain and unshakeable righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

Sunday, October 28 th - Genesis 44: 10

As Joseph had previously eased his own initially harsh sanctions (Gen. 42:14-20), so now his servant counters the pledge of Joseph's brothers with a less severe sanction. The one who is found to possess the cup will be the slave of Joseph, while the innocent brothers will be free. Even these reduced terms will prove intolerable for Joseph's brothers to bear. Much more intolerable would have been their bearing of the more extreme terms they had proposed. The chastisements of the Lord are difficult enough for us to bear, but the full divine judgments that we rightly deserve are inconceivably worse.

Monday, October 29 th – Genesis 44: 10

In this verse we begin to understand the point of this test that Joseph had devised for his brothers. Although the brothers urged death for the guilty, the sanction would be slavery, for Joseph's brothers did not kill him but sold him into slavery. The man to whom guilt would be imputed was, by Joseph's doing, Benjamin, who most closely resembled Joseph. Benjamin was Joseph's only full brother and was, besides Joseph, the only other son of Rachel, whom Jacob loved most. Benjamin had furthermore become Jacob's favorite son in the family place made vacant by Joseph having been sold by his older brothers into slavery. Here Joseph reconstructs a test that very closely resembles the one that his older brothers faced years before when they gave in to their sinful impulse to do away with Joseph. In his subjecting his brothers to this test, he was giving them a second opportunity to act in godly fashion toward a younger brother. We should not be surprised to find our Lord providing us with second and third opportunities to do right in situations where we previously had done wrong.

Tuesday, October 30 th – Genesis 44: 11, 12

These verses show us that men who sincerely and strongly maintain their innocence can be found to be guilty of hidden sin that is unknown to them. Not one of Joseph's brothers expected that the cup would be found in his own bag or in that of any of his brothers. But in this day of judgment, when all that is hidden comes to light, the awful truth is openly and undeniably revealed. We do well to judge ourselves critically (1 Cor. 11:31 ,32), asking our Lord to show us our hidden sin (Ps. 139:23,24), so that we might ever stand blameless before Him.

Wednesday, October 31 st - Genesis 44: 11, 12

Joseph's brothers offer a voluntary disclosure of their possessions, being confident of their innocence. An orderly and thorough search is made and the shocking discovery of Benjamin's guilt comes to light. Yet before the cup is discovered in Benjamin's sack, each brother, beginning with Reuben and descending to the youngest, came up clean. The confidence of these brothers must have risen with each one passing inspection. But it was the last sack searched that disclosed the guilt. Of course Joseph had planted the cup, and his servant, who had carried out his master's orders, knew from the beginning in which sack the cup had been placed. The whole exercise was designed to undermine carnal security in Joseph's brothers, wherein they were trusting in their own righteousness that happened to obtain in this one instance. Men will not stand in the day of God's judgment because they happened to be innocent of some sins on some days. They must be clothed in Christ's righteousness every day, or else to their shock and dismay they will find that even their good works will be counted by the divine Judge to be works of lawlessness (Mt. 7:21-23).

Thursday, November 1 st - Genesis 44: 11-13

The utter conviction of Joseph's brothers is evident in how they respond to this discovery of the cup in Benjamin's sack. Negatively, they do not distance themselves from their youngest brother, accusing Benjamin of being a thief. Nor do they protest that a trick was being played upon them by Joseph's house steward as previously had been done with the return of their money. Positively, they manifest brokenness and humbly submit to the charge and surrender both Benjamin and themselves to Joseph's servant. This last act of surrendering themselves they were not obliged to do (v.10), but by their returning with guilty Benjamin to the city where Joseph lived and ruled, they were graciously and lovingly committing themselves to familial and covenantal solidarity with their brother. This was radically different from what they had done years ago with Joseph, and was part of the first fruits of their repentance from that earlier sin.

Friday, November 2 nd - Genesis 44: 11-13

When Joseph's brothers opened their sacks, each discovered that his did not contain the stolen cup, but also that his contained the money that had been returned to him (v.1). The lack of the cup would have brought to each relief; the provision of the money must have filled each with surprise and delight. But all was dashed by the cup being found in Benjamin's sack. One sin in the camp of God's people ruins all blessing and robs the people of their joy. We must be diligent not only to judge ourselves, but also to confess our sins to one another and to keep each other accountable to trust in and obedience to the Lord.

Saturday, November 3 rd - Genesis 44: 14

This verse records the final and fullest prostration of Joseph's brothers before him. Previously, they had bowed in perfunctory politeness as part of a business transaction (Gen. 42:6). Afterward they had bowed in respect before Joseph (Gen. 43:26). Now they bow in total brokenness and deepest fear before

an exalted ruler whom they had seriously offended. Here they do not bow so much as throw themselves in utter prostration at Joseph's feet. Their worst fears seem at this point to be coming upon them. Yet, they shall soon find that it is precisely at this point of their self-mortification that they begin to be forgiven, reconciled, and raised up in new life and abundant blessing. The wounds of true godly sorrow are the most healing incisions we can receive.

Sunday, November 4 th - Genesis 44: 15

Joseph maintains his disguise and therefore, as all Egyptian rulers would do, he claims to have divine powers such as omniscience. Through his having set up Benjamin's guilt and by his swift arrest and discovery of this imputed guilt, he acted in a way that gave credence to his claim. All of this is designed to bring his brothers to an inescapable acceptance of the fact that they could not hide anything from this Egyptian ruler. We have our dealings not with a man devising tests and manipulating situations to give the appearance of his perfect insight, but rather we have our dealings with the omniscient God who knows our deeds, thoughts, and intentions (Heb. 4:12 ,13). It is folly for us to attempt to hide our guilt from Him.

Monday, November 5 th - Genesis 44: 15

Joseph does know all things that pertain to his brothers, as he claims to know. His knowledge results not merely from his having manipulated Benjamin's guilt, but ultimately from his knowing, trusting in, and relying upon his God, who is truly omniscient. In the light of the Lord, Joseph sees light (Ps. 36:9). He knows not only all about the current situation, but he also knows the plans and purposes he has to bless his brothers. He has confidence in those benevolent plans because he trusts the Lord who gave His covenant promise to be the God not only of Jacob but also to his descendants, most of whom now lay prostrate before Joseph, being conscious of their guilt and expecting a lifetime sentence to slavery. Little did they suspect that they were here on the verge of abundant blessing. However the Lord's dark providences may indicate otherwise, His plans and purposes for us are ever and only to bless us and to give us a hopeful future (Jer. 29:11).

Tuesday, November 6 th - Genesis 44: 15, 16

Joseph invites his brothers to confess their sin, warning them that he could divine whether or not they were telling the truth. The brothers in truth could have still maintained their innocence, rightly claiming to have no knowledge of how Joseph's cup came to be in Benjamin's sack. They also could have maintained the innocence of the majority while turning over Benjamin as the only guilty party. Instead, Judah continues to take the lead, as he had been doing recently, although he was not the oldest brother (Gen. 43:8; 44:14), and makes an unconditional confession of the guilt of all these brothers of Joseph. Such utter brokenness and acceptance of responsibility for sin before the offended Egyptian ruler would be the last thing that men would manifest if they still nurtured any sin in their hearts, but it is the first fruit of God's gracious work of conviction and repentance in sinners.

Wednesday, November 7 th - Genesis 44: 16

Judah's confession begins with three questions, all of which expect the answer: *Nothing*. The sinner caught in his sin but still determined to cleave to his sin will protest his innocence or seek to mitigate his sin. Think of those who will respond to their exclusion from the kingdom of heaven by claiming that they had served in Jesus' name (Mt. 7:21 -23). However, the sinner under godly conviction confesses that he can in no way be justified in God's sight. We do well to nullify all excuses for our sin rather than to seek

feebly and hopelessly to nuance our sin.

Thursday, November 8 th - Genesis 44: 16

Judah makes an unconditional and full confession of guilt in this matter of the stolen cup. Was this an excessive confession? Were Judah and his brothers going too far to surrender themselves to slavery? In the precise and formal instance of this cup they were going too far. Yet, they rightly recognized that their sin and guilt far transcended the pilfering of a small material item. They confess to great and corporate sin because they were guilty before God of great and corporate sin in the matter of their having stolen Joseph away from his father who loved him immensely. Our sins are all far greater than we allow ourselves to believe, and we only see their true magnitude when we prostrate ourselves before the God against whom we commit all of our sin.

Friday, November 9 th - Genesis 44: 16, 17

Judah confesses that he and his brothers were guilty of sin before God. Joseph counters this confession and softens the consequences of their guilt by saying that only Benjamin would be regarded as guilty while all of his brothers would be considered innocent and restored to their freedom. The irony was that Benjamin was the only brother of Joseph innocent of the great sin of having sold Joseph into slavery. Benjamin was a youngster at home with Jacob when that sin had been committed. Of course, Joseph knew this. But there are times when it is fitting that the innocent should suffer for imputed guilt while the guilty are allowed to go free. That is precisely what our God has done by the imputation of our sin to His Son so that we might be freed from the guilt of our sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

Saturday, November 10 th - Genesis 44: 16, 17

This offer of freedom to the sons of Jacob, who had been guilty of the heinous sin of their having sold Joseph into slavery, was the final test in the course of testing the faith and repentance of these guilty brothers. Would the men who had sold their brother into slavery, simply to be rid of his presence that annoyed them and to make some small profit from his sale, leave a brother in an apparently justly deserved slavery in order to save their own lives and maintain their own freedom? The easy way would have been for them to disengage from this difficult and dangerous situation. The right way would be for them to lay down their lives, if necessary, for their brother. Why does Joseph so thoroughly test their repentance? Why does God test our professed amendments? Surely it is to purge what is impure and refine what is pure in that treasure of repentance.

Sunday, November 11 th - Genesis 44: 18

The final test that Joseph set for his brothers results in the full flowering of their faith. Once again it is Judah who leads the way. It was fitting that he from whose tribe our Lord would descend after the flesh should most reflect the self-sacrificial character of his greater Son. The other brothers, however, stand in solid agreement with Judah and appear determined to sink or swim with him. Here, at last, they show themselves to be true sons of Jacob, who had wrestled with God and would not let Him go without securing a blessing from Him. In this case, Judah and his brothers will not take the offered freedom, but remain engaged with this mysterious ruler until he should let Benjamin go. Such was the selfless blessing they sought, and this seals the credibility of their faith and repentance.

Monday, November 12 th - Genesis 44: 18

Judah did not lead his brothers out of the Egyptian ruler's court into the freedom the ruler had offered them, but instead he approached the ruler to plead for Benjamin's freedom at the cost of his own substituted slavery. Here is Judah's action that is infinitely different from his earlier sinful proposal that he and his brothers should profit from the sale of Joseph into slavery (Gen. 37:26,27). Now Judah pleads to be made a slave so that his brother, Benjamin, might profit by his being released from his bondage and slavery. Surely this radical change reveals the mind of Christ dwelling and being operative in Judah (Phil. 2:1-8).

Tuesday, November 13 th - Genesis 44: 18

Although Joseph had lifted Judah from his prostration and given him freedom to go in peace, Judah used his freedom not to depart from the Egyptian ruler but rather humbly to approach him. The father of the royal tribe of Israel approached this ruler in a most respectful manner, showing that his heart remained in humble prostration before Joseph, and therefore in a deeper fulfillment of the dreams that the Lord had given to Joseph of his brothers bowing to him. Judah calls Joseph *my lord*, and equates him to Pharaoh, while he refers to himself as *your servant*. Judah would soon discover that his highest place was at the feet of this great and gracious ruler. Our highest place is at the foot of the cross of our redeeming Lord.

Wednesday, November 14 th - Genesis 44: 19-29

In these verses, Judah reviews how Benjamin had come to be in Egypt. First, Joseph is reminded that it was due to his own command that Benjamin now stood before him in Egypt. Next, Judah says something about the cost to his father in his having agreed to let his youngest and most beloved son be taken to Egypt. Benjamin is described as the little and beloved child of his father's old age (v.20). He is further said to be the one son without whom Jacob could not live (v.22). Furthermore, the essence of Jacob's own heart-rending protest is given in vv.27-29. Finally, Judah implies that the compliance that he and his brothers gave to Joseph's demand and Jacob's directive for them to purchase more grain, was the instrumental cause of Benjamin's being in Egypt. In this review, Judah does not fault Joseph or Jacob, but seeks rather to give to this ruler an understanding of the factors that led to the pledge Judah had undertaken to ensure Benjamin's return to his father. Due to the demands of these parties, it had been necessary for Judah to pledge himself for Benjamin. Now the surety asks permission to fulfill his pledge. He who had profited from selling one brother into slavery now begs to bear cost to free another brother from slavery. What a change had come over Judah!

Thursday, November 15 th - Genesis 30, 31

Once again Jacob is made to bow to Joseph when Judah refers to his father as the servant of this disguised Egyptian ruler (Gen. 43:28). Accordingly, the second dream of Joseph is confirmed in its fulfillment (Gen. 37:9-11). Judah ties into a single bundle the interests of his father, Benjamin, and Joseph. Significantly, Judah excludes himself from these interested parties. His personal role will be that of one who substitutes himself to bear Benjamin's punishment, so that Jacob would live, and Benjamin would live with him. The Egyptian ruler would manifest the glory of his justice in punishing Judah, while also manifesting the glory of his grace in restoring Benjamin to the father who is acknowledged to be this ruler's servant. Well does Judah portray the concern of his greatest descendant, our Redeemer, who served for His Father's glory and His brethren's good in reconciling them to the Father, all at the cost of His own life.

Friday, November 16 th - Genesis 44: 32-34

Here Judah comes to the main point of his appeal as he informs this offended ruler of the fact that he had offered to be surety for Benjamin. Accordingly, Judah asks permission to stand as Benjamin's substitute and to bear the cost of Benjamin's crime. Judah volunteers to give himself into slavery in order to purchase Joseph's younger brother out of a life's sentence to slavery. Here is the fully developed fruit of genuine and deep repentance. That such fruit is to be found in Judah and his brothers, for whom he speaks, is the result of the working of the Lord's redeeming grace that it is a wonder in our eyes when we behold it in one like Judah . It is no less a wonder when we find such blessed fruit in our lives.

Saturday, November 17 th - Genesis 44: 33, 34

The fact that Judah offered to lay down his life for Benjamin must have made a profound and favorable impression upon not only Joseph, but also upon Joseph's younger brother. It was a lasting impression as well. Centuries afterward, when the tribes of Israel divided, Benjamin alone remained true to Judah . The costly love of our Lord establishes ties that bind together those who give and receive it.

Sunday, November 18 th - Genesis 44: 33, 34

In v.33, Judah regards his brothers—especially Benjamin—to be of greater importance than himself. In v.34, Judah reveals that his highest regard is for his father. This father is the same man who loved Joseph above all, and whom Joseph loved above all. Now we see that the same Spirit that bound Jacob and Joseph together is dwelling and operative in Judah as well. Judah speaks wisely and pleads tenderly and effectively as he appeals to the mercy of this Egyptian ruler. But the ruler is not a strange, foreign potentate. He is a brother who himself loves Benjamin and the father of all of these brothers deeply. Yet here Judah outshines even Joseph, who was involuntarily sold into slavery whereas Judah freely enters into that miserable estate to save a guilty brother. Joseph was delivered into his bondage in the path of his doing his duty for his father; Judah enters into his bondage out of costly love for his brother and his father. Christ in Judah here shines forth as the only hope for reconciliation between the heavenly Father and His guilty people. By such costly reconciliation, mercy triumphs over justice and death and bondage are vanquished.

Monday, November 19 th - Genesis 45: 1-3

At this point, in response to Judah 's demonstration of nothing less than the sacrificial and saving love of Christ, Joseph can no longer conceal his love beneath the dark cloud of the law's loud thunder. Therefore, his own loving heart is opened to his brothers. Joseph's love was sealed up in him as a rock that Judah struck, causing that love to pour out in a flood of tears and cries for joy and thanksgiving. Little do we suspect the fountain of tender lovingkindness that fills our Lord's heart, until we come to Him in repentance and commitment to sacrificial service.

Tuesday, November 20 th - Genesis 45: 1-3

With Judah 's demonstration of the sacrificial love of Christ, Joseph's heart was deeply touched. Yet before he bursts forth with tears of joy and disclosure of his true identity, Joseph dismisses all of the Egyptians. The treasure of his love is not to be poured out on all people, but only upon those in the covenant family of faith. There may for a time seem to be a more familiar relationship between our sovereign Lord and the world over which He sovereignly reigns. Yet, in the day when we know Him fully, even as we are known fully by Him, we shall realize that His electing, redeeming love is for us, and not for the world (Jn. 17:9).

Wednesday, November 21 st - Genesis 45: 1-3

Joseph weeps openly before he employs words to declare his identity to his brothers. As Judah had put on Christ, deepest forgiveness burst forth from Joseph like a flood. Joseph's was no reluctant or reserved forgiveness, but was free, full, and hearty. Through all of the tests Joseph had employed, the sin of his brothers had been impressed upon their hearts and minds. But that working of conviction over their sins was only the prelude to those sins being forgiven and forgotten by Joseph and by Joseph's God. What a deep and lastingly wonderful healing has come from the wounding wrought by Joseph's tests that led to his own tears of joy.

Thursday, November 22 nd - Genesis 45: 3

This verse records the opening words through which Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers, as well as his true relation to them. First, he declares to them his name, *Joseph*, a name they had not taken onto their lips for years. Next, he mentions his father, who was the father for whom Judah and his brothers had come to regard with new sacrificial love. Joseph and his brothers could now refer to Jacob as being *our father*. If their father would have rejoiced to have Benjamin safely returned to him, how much greater would their father's joy be to find that Joseph was restored to him from slavery, imprisonment, and virtual death? Here suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, the Egyptian ruler was transformed into one more near and dear to them than they could have conceived. May our Lord open our eyes to see Him with and for us in ways above what we ask or think.

Friday, November 23 rd - Genesis 45: 3, 4

Joseph's brothers are initially astonished and dismayed at this inconceivable revelation. We are told that they were dismayed, which is far from their being filled with joy over this revelation. Perhaps some of their dismay was due to their incredulity over the fact that was before them, as Jesus' disciples cried out in dismay when they saw Him walking on the stormy sea, thinking He was a ghost (Mt. 14:25-27). But when wise and loving Joseph, with the profound inerrancy afforded him by his pure heart, mentions the incident of their having sold him into Egypt, he puts his finger on the true source of their dismay. They knew that they stood before the brother they had so grievously injured, and that he was not only alive and free, but also exalted with power and authority to punish them. Yet his telling them to come closer to him was not a command to face their punishment, but an invitation for them to taste the sweetness of greater grace.

Saturday, November 24 th – Genesis 45: 4, 5

As his brothers draw closer to him, Joseph continues to comfort them with words of abounding truth and grace. It was an undeniable truth that they had sinned greatly against Joseph. Because this was true, Joseph mentions it twice in these verses. But where the truth of that sin was great, the higher truth of God's abounding grace was greater. It is to that higher truth that Joseph points them when he tells them that God had sinlessly used their sin to send Joseph into Egypt to be an instrumental savior for the entire family of Jacob. Therefore, Joseph speaks so as to vanquish their fears and grief over their sin, as he points them to the God who had fully forgiven their sin and even sinlessly used it for saving ends. If God had so forgiven them, Joseph as much as says: *Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.* Let us, therefore, know and draw comfort and joy from the prevailing truth that where our sin increases to our grief and bitterness, God's grace abounds all the more to our exceeding great joy (Rom. 5:20,21).

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Sunday, November 25 th – Genesis 45: 4, 5

The closer Joseph's brothers come to him, the more clearly they see God. That is so because Joseph was a man of tried and true faith in the Lord, and he testifies to the Lord's sovereign and graciously saving work in and through all aspects of his life, including even his brothers' sinful selling of him into slavery in Egypt . Scripture holds up Joseph to us not so much as an extraordinary man of faith over whom we marvel, but more as a pattern of one who trusts the Lord and therefore sees the Lord's good hand guiding his life. We are encouraged to follow the example of Joseph's faith (Heb. 13:7), and become ones ourselves who see the Lord's working for us and show the Lord's working to others.

Monday, November 26 th – Genesis 45: 4-9

In these verses, Joseph reveals not only that he is the brother of Jacob's other sons, but also and especially that he is a trusting and obedient son of God. Repeatedly in these verses Joseph declares that God had sent him into Egypt for gracious and saving purposes (vv.5,7,8), and that God had exalted him to his high position in order that he might preserve and abundantly bless his family (vv.8,9). Joseph did not deserve or fabricate such a God-centered life; he simply saw and accepted it by faith, lived by its invigorating truth, and declared it to his brothers so that they, too, would join him in grateful rejoicing that their Lord was causing all things to work together for their good. Our Lord does no less for us (Rom. 8:28). Do we see it and, trusting that it is so, live by its liberating power and encourage our brethren in Christ to see and believe it?

Tuesday, November 27 th - Genesis 45: 4-9

When Joseph declared to his brothers that God had superintended all that had brought them together to the point of their reconciliation and salvation from the famine, he was declaring to them the essential truth of which he had become firmly convinced and in which he had steadfastly trusted. Such knowledge of and grateful submission to the sinless superintending of the Lord over all the details of their lives—even and especially over the sinful and painful details—was the only thing that could keep Joseph's brothers from being crushed by their sense of the guilt of their sin. It was the only thing that kept Joseph from being filled with bitterness and anger toward his brothers. When we view ourselves and our brethren through the sovereign, wise, and loving operations of our Lord, we will also be kept from bitterness, grief, and anger, and will be filled with loving gratitude for our God and loving grace for our brethren.

Wednesday, November 28 th - Genesis 45: 5-7

When Joseph reveals to his brothers that God had sent him to Egypt to be instrumental in saving their lives, he adds testimony regarding how great was the need his brothers had for that salvation. We learn from v.6 that the famine had lasted at this point two years. Those two lean years had been sufficient to drive Jacob to send his sons to Egypt twice to buy grain. Yet, Joseph tells his brothers that more years of famine were yet to be added to the two years that had already threatened his father's family with starvation. By God's grace and Joseph's dependence upon it, Joseph knew the full extent of the famine's severity beforehand, and had made wise provision for his family to be sustained throughout its entire course and beyond. Similarly, our Redeemer has not saved us from small annoyances or petty threats, but from massive forces that, apart from Him, would certainly overwhelm us (Ps. 124). Great is our plight, but greater by far is our Lord's deliverance.

Thursday, November 29 th – Genesis 45: 8, 9

In v.8, Joseph declares not only that God had sent him into Egypt , but also that the Lord had exalted him greatly in Egypt . The son of Jacob who had been despised and rejected by his brothers and sold by them into slavery did not only survive his ordeal, he emerged from it by the exalting hand of God as a wise and caring father to Pharaoh, as the lord of the household of Egypt's king, and as the ruler over all of Egypt. He was therefore abundantly equipped to preserve and bless his needy father and brothers and their families. Our Savior is infinitely more exalted than was Joseph, having all authority in heaven and earth to exercise for our deliverance and blessing (Mt. 28:18).

Friday, November 30 th – Genesis 45: 8, 9

Joseph's exaltation did not puff him up in arrogant pride, but humbled him and filled him with loving gratitude to God who had been so lavishly merciful to him. Accordingly, he who was so deeply conscious of the love and mercy he had received from his God, hastens to lavish loving and merciful blessing from his exalted position upon his family. Far from his imposing a just punishment upon his brothers, he employs them as messengers of salvation when he sends them to his father with an insistent invitation for him to come to Egypt . Although Joseph acknowledges that God had made him ruler over Egypt , he addresses himself to Jacob as *your son Joseph*. As a son, Joseph lovingly honors and serves his father and his brothers, for love is the tie that ever binds the family of the redeemed in Christ (Jn. 15:9-12; 17:22 -26; 1 Jn. 4:7,8).

Saturday, December 1 st - Genesis 45: 9

Joseph tells his brothers to hurry in their mission to summon their father to Egypt . He further instructs them to tell Jacob not to delay in his coming. Why this insistence upon haste? It surely was not because Jacob was in imminent danger of starvation, but rather because Joseph desired to complete and perfect the reconciliation that had taken place between himself and his brothers by including his father in their loving communion as soon as possible. It is with loving desire that our Lord bids us to come to Him quickly, while He acts on His determination to come quickly to us (Rev. 22:17,20).

Sunday, December 2 nd - Genesis 45: 10, 11

Joseph's invitation to his father and brothers was not for them merely to visit him. Joseph indicates that he was making permanent provision for them to live the rest of their lives with him in Egypt . He had prepared a place for them, their families, and all of their possessions. All of this was intensely personal, as Joseph reveals that the arrangement was so that they all could be near him. He pledges himself to make continual provision for them throughout the remaining years of the famine. Their nearness to Joseph would be for their great good, just as the nearness of our God to us is for our everlasting good (Ps. 16). Joseph's tests had been preparing his brothers for lasting fellowship with him, but we further learn here that while he was preparing them for such communion with him, he was also preparing all that they could need or desire to live with him, just as our Lord is preparing us for heaven and is also preparing a place in heaven for us (Jn. 14:1-3).

Monday, December 3 rd - Genesis 45: 12, 13

In these verses, Joseph charges his brothers to be faithful witnesses to his sincerity in issuing this invitation. They had seen Joseph's splendor and had heard directly from him the invitation for their father, and all of his family, to dwell with Joseph and be saved from loss while enjoying abundant gain

through his provision for them in Egypt . If the wonders of the vision of heaven seem incredible to us, God Himself tells His inspired penman: *Write, for these words are faithful and true.* (Rev. 21:5). Our glorious inheritance is not too good to be true, but rather is too good not to be true when it is pledged to us by our God who cannot lie.

Tuesday, December 4 th - Genesis 45: 14, 15

After Joseph had given the blessed charge to his brothers, he broke out once more in demonstrative expressions of his love for them. He showed again his special loving regard for Benjamin, yet now none of his other brothers are jealous or take the slightest offense over such holy and loving discrimination. Here is love from God, and it shows us that the love of God can be poured upon us all in the body of Christ differently, with none of us suffering want because our Lord loves us to the fullness of our differing capacities and characters.

Wednesday, December 5 th - Genesis 45: 14, 15

Benjamin very likely had shed tears over what he had thought was Joseph's death and Jacob certainly wept many tears over the loss of his favorite son. No one, however, had shed more tears over the long separation between Joseph and his family than had Joseph himself. He who had sown copious tears of caring for his family, even though his brothers had hatefully rejected him, now reaps a bountiful harvest of tears of joy. The poor brothers who had shed no tears for the brother against whom they had sinned do not manifest such tears of joy at this point, but rather express their joy with words spoken to Joseph. Their words were, no doubt, expressions of repentance, contrition, and marveling gratitude for this blessed issue of events. Those who sow the most in the sorrow that we can too naturally count a curse to be avoided, will find that they reap most bountifully the deepest joy as their final reward (Ps. 126:5; Mt. 5:4, 10-12).

Thursday, December 6 th - Genesis 45: 16-20

These verses indicate the fact that Joseph had not presumptuously made his promise of land and lavish provision for his family, for we are informed that Pharaoh himself, by whose authority Joseph ruled over Egypt, took great pleasure in confirming Joseph's invitation to his family. Far from the king of Egypt being concerned with the greater responsibility to feed more mouths amidst the famine, he sees the relatives of Joseph as welcome assets to the land of Egypt . Pharaoh viewed their coming to his country as a good thing, not as an unwanted burden. This was so because he viewed them through his estimation of Joseph, whose wisdom, integrity, and graciousness he likely expected to find reflected in Joseph's family. Accordingly, Pharaoh was prepared to treat them as treasured and honored guests dwelling in the best part of his land, and thus he imperfectly reflects the exalted regard in which our perfect God holds us for Christ's sake (Eph. 1:6).

Friday, December 7 th - Genesis 45: 16-20

Pharaoh seconds Joseph's gracious summons. He commands Joseph to have his brothers not only to return to Canaan for their father, but also to return there laden with grain and goods for Jacob as tokens of the full riches that awaited him in Egypt . He promises to Jacob and to the families of Joseph's brothers the best land in which they would dwell and the choicest provision of the nation. So great was his longing to have and to honor Jacob's family for Joseph's sake that Pharaoh orders wagons to be used to carry abundant provisions and to provide comfortable carriages for Jacob's return to Egypt. The Bible teaches us that Jesus loves us, but also that the Father loves us with a love so lavish that He gave His

only begotten Son to have us (Rom. 5:8). Accordingly, we can ask and expect unimaginably great things of the Father through the Son (Jn. 16:24:27). Pharaoh's dealings with Joseph's family shows us a glimpse of this.

Saturday, December 8 th – Genesis 45: 21

Joseph and Pharaoh are shown to be working in a perfectly concerted effort to bless Joseph's father and his brothers. The men who had so badly treated Joseph, and who were consequently deserving of his righteous judgment, are served with rich blessing, abundant provision, and exalted status by these rulers of Egypt. This was so only because God had filled Joseph with that gracious generosity that prompts the Lord Himself to justify, perfect, glorify, and lavish every spiritual blessing upon those whose sins nailed His Son to the cross. What a salvation and what a saving God we have!

Sunday, December 9 th - Genesis 45: 21-23

These verses tell us of the provision Joseph made for his brothers and father. Grain is the last thing mentioned, not because it was withheld, but because it was so abundant and perpetually secured that Jacob and his family would no longer need to be concerned with their daily bread. The vision we are given of our eternal dwelling in heaven is one where feasting upon abundant provision replaces man's laboring and sweating for the production of his earthly fare. In addition, the focus is upon the precious and beautiful adornment of the city of God and its redeemed citizens (Rev. 21:9-22:5). Similarly, our attention is drawn to Joseph's provision of fine clothing for his brothers and donkeys laden with the finest things of Egypt and plentiful food for Jacob.

Monday, December 10 th - Genesis 45: 21-23

Joseph's brothers, prior to this blessed reconciliation with him, had resented the special love Jacob had for Joseph. That love was betokened in the special coat the patriarch had made for his most beloved son. Joseph's older brothers had stripped him of his coat, had torn and soaked it in blood to deceive their father. All of this wicked treatment Joseph repays with rich provisions for his brothers and especially with fine garments. Our Redeemer was stripped of His clothing and responded by clothing us in His perfect righteousness, and He tells us graciously to bless those who curse us, and to cover with prayer those who spitefully abuse us (Lk. 6:28).

Tuesday, December 11 th - Genesis 45: 21-23

Benjamin had not conspired with his older brothers to abuse Joseph. Nor was there any evidence that he shared the sinful envy that his brothers had over Jacob's special love for Joseph. Accordingly, Benjamin, who had more love for and less resentment toward Joseph than did his brothers, is rewarded with more garments and much silver. Whereas grace forgives sins and abundantly provides for needs, there is a special reward for faithfulness. The Apostle Paul speaks of those saved, yet so as through fire, and of those who receive rewards (1 Cor. 3:10 -15). Jesus tells us that those who receive Him and His servants shall accordingly be rewarded (Mt. 10:40 -42). Saving grace does not make how we live and serve the Lord to be a meaningless affair, but rather a matter of highest significance and consequence.

Wednesday, December 12 th - Genesis 45: 21-23

Joseph makes the most lavish provision for his father, whom he rightly honors according to the Fifth Commandment of the eternal moral law of the Lord. Joseph also delighted deeply in his giving most to

his father who had loved him most highly because the father and that son were soul-mates, sharing like precious faith in the Lord. This rich provision also served as an impressive token to remove doubts Jacob might have regarding the report of Joseph's exalted living. The token would also serve as an incentive for Jacob to come to the source of such blessing. If we have eyes of faith to see, we shall perceive that the way of our earthly pilgrimage contains tokens and incentives to make us heavenly-minded.

Thursday, December 13 th - Genesis 45: 24

This is a touching and encouragingly realistic verse. Upon all of the gracious provision Joseph had given to his brothers, he adds a final admonition that they should not become agitated and quarrel on the journey. Our gracious reconciliation with the Lord and with one another in the Lord is wonderful and abounding in blessed provision. But its highest blessing of our perfection in glory is yet to be. The new life we have now must be lived out in this old, fallen world with its devils and wicked men and the remnants of our sinful natures conspiring to tempt us. Therefore, our joy must be tempered with our vigilance. We must ever work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), while being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Friday, December 14 th - Genesis 45: 25-28

These verses record for us the reaction of Jacob when he received the good news about Joseph's living and reigning in Egypt . Jacob's initial response was one of shock and disbelief. Several factors contributed to Jacob's natural, but not very faithful, response. His sons who were reporting this news had proven untrustworthy in the past; therefore, he suspected the fantastic report they had brought with them from Egypt . Also, this report far exceeded Jacob's highest hopes. The best he had expected was for his sons to return with grain, the redeemed Simeon, and the preserved Benjamin. Jacob had come to terms with the lie that Joseph had been killed. He found it easier to retain belief in a dead Joseph than to welcome with joy and gratitude the truth of a living and exalted Joseph. We, like poor Jacob, hold on to hopes made weak by the persistent wearing away of our faith by the world's lies. Neither a living Joseph nor a resurrected Jesus are too good to be true, but rather are too good not to be true.

Saturday, December 15 th - Genesis 45: 25-28

From Jacob's initial reaction to the news of Joseph's living and reigning in Egypt we see how necessary the wise and loving gifts were that Joseph had sent with his brothers. The truth Joseph had instructed his brothers to declare as well as the tokens he had provided for them to give to Jacob all served together to overcome Jacob's unbelief. In similar fashion, Jesus provides us with the manifold ordinances of His grace. His Word and sacraments, prayer and fellowship with other believers all nourish our faith and vanquish our unbelief.

Sunday, December 16 th - Genesis 45: 25-28

Jacob's sons may have been untrustworthy messengers, but it was not these men whom Jacob was being told to trust. It was rather the words and works of the master who had sent them that called for Jacob's belief. Joseph's words to his father were that God had sent him into Egypt and exalted him as a ruler there (vv.5-9). Joseph also promised to Jacob the land of Goshen and perpetual provision for him there (vv.10,11), and told his brothers to declare his glory and to urge his father to hasten to him in Egypt (v.13). To the words of Joseph were added his work of providing tangible tokens of the veracity of his words. His brothers had been adorned in new garments, and given wagons full of grain, and donkeys packed with gifts. This manifold and persuasive provision is like the Word and works of our God, who

provides us with great and precious promises in the Scriptures of which not one jot or tittle will ever fail. Our Lord also lavishes kind blessings of His providence upon us to accompany His Word.

Monday, December 17 th - Genesis 45: 25-28

Once Jacob heard all of the words Joseph had spoken and saw the wagons Joseph had sent, he was convinced and believed the astonishing and joyful truth that his sons reported to him. The faith of Jacob fed upon Joseph's words and works and the patriarch's soul was revived. Once more Jacob believed that God could and would provide him with incomparable blessing, and he was prepared and determined, as an old man, to rise up with wings like an eagle and partake of those blessings. Accordingly, Scripture shifts from referring to *Jacob*, the supplanter who would take what he could, to referring to *Israel*, the prince of God who would inherit glorious and everlasting blessings from his heavenly Father.

Tuesday, December 18 th - Genesis 45: 25-28

When the stunned silence of Jacob yields to the faithful speech of Israel, we see how concerned and contented the patriarch is with the thing more important than the gifts. He looks beyond the splendor represented in the gifts and concerns himself only with his son, the giver. Therefore, Israel resolves with joy to go to Egypt not to receive mere gifts but to be restored to his son. Yet, Israel will see and receive in Egypt his son clothed in his glorious and manifold blessings. Israel will see in addition to Joseph, the Pharaoh who will warmly welcome the father of the son who had saved his nation. He will also see Joseph's sons whom he will adopt as his own (Gen. 48:8-22). When we seek first the one thing necessary, we receive Him and all that is His as well (Mt. 6:33). Those contented with and in the Lord are blessed with countless blessings, here and hereafter.

Wednesday, December 19 th - Genesis 46: 1

Israel not only believed the words and works of his son, but he acted upon them. His faith did not merely lead him to give mental assent to the truth, but inclined him to rely and rest upon the truth, and to appropriate and act upon it. Therefore, we find Israel not only determining to go to Egypt to see Joseph, but actually departing from his home to dwell in the land to which he had been summoned by the son whom God had sent before him to prepare for his coming.

Thursday, December 20 th - Genesis 46: 1

Jacob set out for Egypt. However, this necessitated his leaving the Promised Land wherein he had been called by God to dwell (Gen. 31:3; 35:1). Was Jacob therefore leaving the provision of God? Was he more determined to see his son in Egypt than to serve his God in Canaan? That Jacob's total commitment to obey Joseph's summons was a matter of faith and not selfish passion is evident from the fact that Scripture continues to designate him Israel as he makes his way toward Egypt. The truth is that while Israel was leaving the land of God's promise, he was not leaving the God who had promised him that land and all that it signified. It was Israel's total commitment to God that prompted him to bow to his son's summons, in fulfillment of God's Word in Joseph's dreams (Gen. 37:9-11).

Friday, December 21 st - Genesis 46: 1

God had clearly called Jacob to dwell in the Promised Land (Gen. 31:3; 35:1). Yet Jacob had determined to go to Egypt, where he knew there was food, and there to see his son and to be saved from the famine in Canaan by his son's provision. This seeming abandonment of the Lord's provision must have caused

tension within Jacob. Therefore, when he reached Beersheba , the southern boundary of Canaan , Jacob offered sacrifice to his God. Beersheba had been a place of godly devotion for Jacob's grandfather, Abraham (Gen. 21:33; 22:19), and for his father, Isaac (Gen. 26:23-25). When our way seems unclear and our motives mixed, we do well to recall that God purifies us and makes His way known to us when we are sacrificially devoted to Him.

Saturday, December 22 nd - Genesis 46: 1-4

We are told that Israel offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. This signifies to us that, prior to his leaving the Promised Land, Israel offered to his God his will through the sacrifices he made. Israel was, in this sacrificial devotion, aware of God's dealings with his father Isaac. He knew that God had forbidden Isaac to go to Egypt during a famine (Gen. 26:2), and that Isaac's total surrender to God was manifested in his willingness to let Abraham offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord (Gen.22). At Beersheba, Israel offered up his will to God's will and would do as God indicated, by going to Egypt or staying in Canaan. This surrender of himself to God is why Jacob is here called Israel , and it brings forth clear and confirming words from the Lord for Israel . If we are truly willing to do God's will, we shall be enabled clearly to know the divine will (Jn. 7:17).

Sunday, December 23 rd - Genesis 46: 1-4

In response to the sacrifices of Israel the Lord spoke to the patriarch assuring words that he was doing the divine will by his making his way to Egypt . The Lord does address the patriarch by his old name, Jacob, thus indicating that the faith of Israel was, in fact, mixed with some carnal and selfish considerations. But those very considerations were here being consumed in the sacrifices while the faith of Jacob was, by God's Word, being purified and strengthened. God would make Jacob an Israel yet, just as He will give us a new name and cause us to stand before Him on the final day blameless and with great joy (Jude 24).

Monday, December 24 th – Genesis 46: 1-4

The Lord designates Himself as *God*, meaning the One who is all-sufficient, and as *the God of your father*, signifying the Lord's covenant mercy to Isaac. No higher authority, no more mighty and merciful being, could possibly be speaking to and directing the steps of Israel. It was not Jacob's personal desire or Joseph's inviting directive, but it was the Word and will of this glorious and gracious God that was leading Israel into Egypt. Nothing can give us greater assurance, security, and enabling power in our walk than the Word of our God.

Tuesday, December 25 th – Genesis 46: 1-4

The first thing that God tells Jacob to do was to stop fearing. Here the dross of fear is being purged from Israel 's faith. Jacob may have feared the possible ascendancy of his old nature; he may have feared the idolatry of Egypt ; he may have feared the prophesied years of Israel 's enslavement and oppression in Egypt (Gen. 15:12-21). All of these fears God vanquishes with His Word of command. It is never right for us to fear anyone or anything except our holy and majestic God.

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Wednesday, December 26 th – Genesis 46: 1-4

After the negative words of God that command Jacob to stop fearing, positive promises are given by the Lord to the patriarch. These are great, precious, and potent promises that would serve to comfort, assure, and fortify Jacob as he left the Promised Land for Egypt. The first divine promise is that whatever spiritual dangers and temptations might be in Egypt for Jacob and his covenant family, the Lord would orchestrate all things so that this poor, nearly starving family would there be multiplied into a great nation. The greatness of Israel would consist not only in her numerical growth but also and especially would be due to her growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. While it is natural for us to dread situations that appear to be threatening, if the Lord has brought us into such situations, He will bring us out of them as ones made greater by His sustaining grace.

Thursday, December 27 th - Genesis 46: 1-4

The second great and precious promise is that the Lord would go down to Egypt with Jacob. This promise makes clear to Jacob that although he was leaving the Promised Land he was not moving away from God, but rather would be continuing to have communion with and enjoy the approval and blessing of the Lord. It should be the believer's greatest comfort to know that his Lord has promised never to leave or to forsake him (Heb. 13:5). When our Redeemer promises to be with us to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20), He informs us that He is with us as the one having all authority in heaven and on earth. If He is with us, who or what can prevail against us (Rom. 8:31ff)?

Friday, December 28 th - Genesis 46: 1-4

The third part of this rich complex of divine promises is that the Lord would bring Jacob up again. By this promise the patriarch is made to know that Egypt would not be his permanent home, but would serve provisionally to bless him and his family. There is a dual sense in which God would bring Jacob up again. First, the Lord is here speaking of the exodus He would effect centuries later through Moses, whereby the vast number of descendants of Jacob would be released from Egypt to return to the Promised Land. Jacob would, of course, have no living share in that exodus, as is intimated by the Lord indicating that Joseph would bury him. Joseph did, in fact, bury his father, not in Egypt but in Canaan in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah were all buried (Gen. 49:29-32; 50:12,13). But this divine promise was not simply that the Lord would return the corpse of Jacob to Canaan, for Canaan itself was but a pledge and token of the celestial city of which Jacob and all believers are citizens. Hence, while Joseph closed Jacob's eyes at his death in Egypt, God opened them in the upward and eternal glory of His heavenly presence. While believers are in the world by our Lord's ordaining (Jn. 17:15), they are not of the world but are destined for the celestial city of God.

Saturday, December 29 th – Genesis 46: 5

Jacob, after he received clear and manifold assuring promises from the Lord, arose to continue his journey out of Canaan and into Egypt. Whatever reservations he had once held regarding his sons and their urgings that he should go with them to Egypt, Jacob now submitted to them, entrusting his life and the lives of his entire family to their leadership on the way to Egypt. He submitted to them because he submitted to the wisdom, love, and power of his Lord, who had clearly promised sovereignly and graciously to lead, protect, and provide for Jacob and his family throughout the entire journey to and time

of their sojourning in Egypt. When we place all of our trust in and reliance upon the Lord, we, too, may confidently submit ourselves to those imperfect servants, whom He places over us.

Sunday, December 30 th – Genesis 46: 5-7

Jacob committed himself totally to the plans, promises, and provision of the Lord. This fact is made clear to us by these verses in which we are told that Jacob pulled up all stakes when he left Canaan, taking with him all of the persons of his extended family and all of the possessions that were theirs. Our God must be Lord over all we are and all we have. If we hold back any of ourselves, our family, or our possessions from Him and from His holy purposes for us, we seek to make Him to be Lord of nothing at all in our lives. If we hold back anything from Him, it is because we consider ourselves to be lords, not servants, with only a portion being probationally placed in God's care by our leave.

Monday, December 31 st - Genesis 46: 8-25

In vv. 5-7 we are told that Jacob left Canaan with all of his family. In vv. 8-25 we are given a specified account of names of the sons, grandsons, and some of the daughters and granddaughters of Jacob. We might assume that all of these persons mentioned actually departed from Canaan with Jacob. However, when we recall that Joseph was 17 when he was sold into slavery, and that if the time of Jacob's coming to join him was approximately 20 years later, it would seem that some of the grandchildren mentioned in vv.8-25 were born in Egypt. It seems unlikely, for example, that Benjamin, who was younger than Joseph, could have had ten sons by the time he was in his mid-30s. Yet, Scripture is not expressly saying that all of these children were born in Canaan and were taken to Egypt with Jacob. But because the fathers were with Jacob in Egypt, all of their sons, whether born in Canaan or not, were in Egypt. Our choices always affect our descendants for good or ill, so we do well, like Jacob, to choose good by our following the Lord.

Tuesday, January 1 st - Genesis 46: 8-25

This list of names may seem tedious and insignificant to us. However, each person named is known by and significant to God. Also, we find greater significance when we compare this list with the two lists found in Numbers 2 and 26. In Numbers, we find that the families of each son of Jacob had grown in Egypt from a handful to tens of thousands. The Lord loved and prospered His chosen few, nurturing them to a vast company even in the furnace of their afflictions in Egypt. He continues to try and multiply the people of His Church.

Wednesday, January 2 nd - Genesis 46: 8-15

The sons of Jacob are listed in order of their birth and grouped according to their mothers. The largest group was born to Jacob from Leah, Jacob's first wife, but not the one he loved as much as Rachel. The Lord compensated Leah with many sons due to her husband's lack of love for her. Of these sons, Simeon had the greatest number of sons (6), but one of them was born to a Canaanite wife Simeon had taken. Judah had five sons, yet two of them died in Canaan, obviously at young ages, while two of them resulted from Judah's incestuous relation with his daughter-in-law, Tamar. The covenant family was far from being a perfect, lovely, and holy family. Yet, these sinners were loved by the Lord and were made by Him to be lovely, and perfectly holy. Even their sins, God sinlessly used for His glory, the Lord Jesus being descended from Judah through Perez, who was one of the sons born to Judah by Tamar (Mt. 1:3).

Thursday, January 3 rd - Genesis 46: 15, 18, 22, 25

These verses give totals of the sons and daughters born to Jacob through each of his wives and concubines. The totals exceed the sum of the names listed under each mother. Hence the totals must include the daughters and granddaughters of Jacob that are not named in vv.8-25. Those female descendants of Jacob are not named here, as they were not heads of households as were their brothers. Yet, they, too, who were elected by God for salvation, are in the Lamb's book of life and are fellow-heirs of the grace of life with their brothers (1 Pet. 3:7).

Friday, January 4 th - Genesis 46: 16-18

Here the two sons of Zilpah, Leah's servant, are listed. Of these sons, Gad had seven sons, while Asher had four sons, one daughter, and two grandsons. The grandsons of Asher almost certainly were born in Egypt, but they who were carried there in the loins of their father are reckoned to be transported there with Jacob, for it was his choice to go to Egypt that determined their birth in that place. As we have seen, our choices affect our succeeding generations.

Saturday, January 5 th - Genesis 46: 19-22

In these verses, the sons of Jacob through his beloved wife, Rachel, are listed. Joseph and his sons, along with his Egyptian wife, are listed not because they left Canaan with Jacob, but because they were reckoned to be of Jacob's household in Egypt. For Joseph, the restoring grace of the Lord bridged all gaps of temporal and spatial separation, as it gave compensatory blessing to the last of Jacob's sons, Benjamin, who had ten sons of his own.

Sunday, January 6 th - Genesis 46: 23-25

These verses inform us that Bilhah, Rachel's servant, gave two sons to Jacob as did her mistress. As though to augment this small number of sons, the single son of Dan and the four sons of Naphtali are mentioned. From the total given of seven it was apparently the case that there were no female descendants through these two generations of these sons of Jacob. The Lord opens and closes the womb and we are usually not given the reasons for such divine actions, but there are good and holy reasons known only to our God.

Monday, January 7 th - Genesis 46: 26, 27

All of the members of Jacob's family came to Egypt with him. Some of them were born in Canaan and actually left the Promised Land with Jacob. Some, especially of the grandchildren, appear to have been born in Egypt. This accounting terminates with a list of what appears to be all those who were with Jacob in Egypt until his death. Those born after the patriarch's death during the centuries of Israel's sojourn in Egypt are reckoned in the census list found in Numbers 26. Scripture has sketched some of the characters listed in vv.8-25, while others are entirely unknown to us. What we do know about Jacob and his sons and their immoral, treacherous, and murderous dealings with women and the men of Shechem and especially with Joseph, reveals to us that all of these men were great sinners who received the greater grace of God that preserved their lives in Egypt and that gave them eternal life in Christ. As Scripture recognizes their sins, so let us acknowledge our sins; and as Scripture makes much more of divine grace that prevailed in their lives, so let us magnify the Lord's grace in our lives.

Tuesday, January 8 th – Genesis 46: 26, 27

There are two summary reckonings in these verses. In v.26 we are given a total of 66 persons who

came with Jacob into Egypt (or, in the case of some of the grandchildren, were brought into Egypt in the loins of their fathers). To this number is added in v.27 the persons of Joseph and his two sons, as well as Jacob himself, giving a total of 70 persons who composed the household of Jacob. Part of the significance of the different reckonings is that we are made to understand that Jacob lost none of his family, but rather saved them all and even added to their number by his going into Egypt in response to the invitation of Joseph and the encouragement of God. We only gain when we follow our Lord, even if He should lead us into the valley of the shadow of death.

Wednesday, January 9 th - Genesis 46: 26, 27

However the matter is reckoned, Jacob entered Egypt with a large family but not a nation of many people. The 66 people who were with him were actually a negligible company amidst the population of Pharaoh's nation. They were few and, apart from Joseph's provision, they were a starving people. They were far from being a great nation and farther still from the company of nations that God had promised to make of Israel (Gen 35:10-12). However, by the infallibly wise plan and the unfailingly effective working of God, these 66 persons who entered Egypt would emerge 400 years later as a vast multitude (Gen. 15:13-16; Num. 2 and 26). In the hands of the Lord, great things issue from small beginnings.

Thursday, January 10 th - Genesis 46: 26, 27

A few starving souls went into Egypt; a great and populous nation emerged from Egypt. This historical fact is especially remarkable when we consider that for much of the duration of Israel's stay in Egypt she was enslaved and oppressed. Samuel Rutherford well remarks concerning this: *The furnace is a thing void of reason and art, and so knoweth little that by it the goldsmith maketh an excellent and comely vessel of gold... God by crooked instruments, and fire and sword, shall refine a church and erect a glorious building, and these malignant instruments are as ignorant of the art of divine providence, as coals and fuel are of the art and intention of the goldsmith.* (Samuel Rutherford. *The Trial and Triumph of Faith*, pp. 323,324.) If we follow God into furnaces of His choosing, He will lead us into fruitfulness.

Friday, January 11 th - Genesis 46: 28

For more than 20 years Jacob had thought that his beloved son, Joseph, was dead. Jacob also, during all of that time, had suspected that his other sons had something to do with Joseph's supposed death. But the patriarch had learned through the report of his other sons that Joseph was alive and was dwelling and reigning in Egypt. Jacob's reliance upon his other sons continues as he is led by them to Egypt. It is Judah whom Jacob especially trusts as the leader of this expedition that was heading for an unspeakably sweet reunion between Joseph and his father. Judah, who had been instrumental in removing Joseph from Jacob (Gen. 37: 26, 27), now serves to lead Jacob to Joseph. Judah had begun this great work of restoration when he pledged himself to Jacob as surety for Benjamin (Gen. 43:8,9). Now Judah was serving as Jacob's eyes, and Jacob was trusting this son's leadership. This incidental detail of the holy family's trip to Egypt shows us how sweetly and strongly the Lord had healed the wounds that the sins of Judah and his brothers had caused their father.

Saturday, January 12 th - Genesis 46: 28, 29

These verses begin to describe the poignantly joyful reunion between the father, Israel, and the son, Joseph. Israel had entered Egypt and was led by Judah to Goshen, the portion of the land prepared by Joseph for his father and brethren. Joseph hastened in his chariot to meet his father, who in v.29 is called Israel, for by his revived faith he was once again acting like the prince God had made him to be. In every

way, the distance between father and son is diminished, as when the prodigal returned to his father and the father raced to meet him, and as when we long for the nearer presence of Jesus while he tells us that He comes to us quickly (Lk. 15:11-32; Rev. 22: 17, 20).

Sunday, January 13 th - Genesis 46: 29, 30

At last the long-separated father and son meet face to face and embrace. At once, all of the grief and despondency of their separation is swept away. No more are they held prisoners to grim and painful speculation about each other's welfare. No longer are they feeding on hopes that have been raised by the reports of Joseph's brothers. Now they see one another's faces and hold each other in loving embrace. Once again is the deep foundation of Joseph's great heart overflowing with tears of unspeakable poignancy. The weeping son held onto his beloved father until the tears of his sorrow were wiped away by unalloyed joy. Meanwhile, Israel confesses his utter contentment at seeing the face of his beloved Joseph. The great faith of Israel makes him content with this one beautiful sight, but he shall soon receive much more as he will live the rest of his days on earth in the blissful company of his favorite son who had become his savior. Here is a glimpse of all our sorrows being wiped away when we behold the face of our Redeemer (Rev. 22:3,4).

Monday, January 14 th - Genesis 46: 31-34

Amidst the deep mutual stirring of their emotions, as Jacob and his sons are joyfully reunited to Joseph, it is Joseph who does not lose sight of the fact that they are all together in the land of Pharaoh. Therefore, Joseph gives instructions to his father and brethren. He who had dwelt in and was now reigning over the land of Egypt and who knew well its king, not only had prepared a place for them in Egypt but continued to prepare them for their place in this new land. Our heavenly Joseph not only has opened to us the way to the throne of God, but He prepares us while we are in that way and will continue to be our guide and helper as we enter into the glory he has inhabited from eternity.

Tuesday, January 15 th - Genesis 46: 31-34

Joseph tells his father and brothers that he will introduce them to Pharaoh. Their meeting the king of Egypt will be an honor that will require care on their part. Accordingly, Joseph gives his family critical instructions as to how they are to present themselves to Pharaoh. No one who has any sense of due propriety would approach an earthly majestic king with casual attitude. Still less can we expect to approach the divine King of glory in any way other than through the mediation of the Son of God.

Wednesday, January 16 th - Genesis 46: 31-34

Joseph informs his family concerning how he will introduce them to Pharaoh. Then he instructs his family as to how they are to present themselves to the king of Egypt. Joseph tells his family to keep to their calling. They had been and still were men employed in the humble occupation of shepherding. They might aspire to be in higher station, and amidst Egypt's glories and their exalted brother's care, they might be tempted to despise their humble calling. Yet it will be that very calling that the Egyptians will despise and consequently determine to keep Israel's family separated from themselves. Accordingly, Joseph's family would live safely in Egypt while not being or becoming of Egypt. Likewise, the cross that we might at times be tempted to despise keeps us most effectively and safely serving fruitfully in the world while being safely separated from the world.

Thursday, January 17 th - Genesis 47: 1-6

This opening passage of Genesis 47 shows us that it is the meek that inherit the earth. How meek is Jacob? He and his sons are meek enough to bow to Joseph's superiority and thus to abide by his counsel. When they are introduced to Pharaoh, they do not boast of their great gifts nor do they vaunt their abilities so as to impress Pharaoh with a view to his exalting them as he had done with their brother Joseph. Instead, they say that they are humble shepherds and plead their need for Pharaoh's provision. As they hide themselves in Joseph, they are handed the best of Egypt. When we humble ourselves, God will surely exalt us (1 Pet. 5:6).

Friday, January 18 th - Genesis 47: 1

In this verse, Joseph announces to Pharaoh Jacob's arrival, telling the king of Egypt in what part of Egypt they were staying. It is significant that Joseph refers to his relatives in the terms *my* father and *my* brothers. The names of Jacob and his sons would mean nothing to Pharaoh, but because of their relation to Joseph they are highly esteemed by Egypt's king. As Jacob and his sons are nothing to Pharaoh apart from Joseph, so we are nothing and can do nothing apart from Jesus.

Saturday, January 19 th - Genesis 47: 1-3

Joseph took with him to Pharaoh's court a delegation of five of his brothers. Which five of his 11 brothers did he select for this introduction to the king of Egypt? Perhaps Reuben, the oldest, and Judah, the one who had led Jacob and his sons to Egypt and who had acted so nobly in pledging himself for Benjamin, who, as the youngest and dearest to Joseph, likely also was a part of the delegation. We cannot decide with certainty why Joseph chose only five or which brothers he chose and why. Perhaps they had become so crucified in their growing godly regard for one another that it did not matter who represented whom. There certainly is a sense in which when we are united in the truth and love of the Lord, one of us can accurately represent us all.

Sunday, January 20 th - Genesis 47: 1-3

Joseph's brothers told Pharaoh that they were shepherds, just as Joseph had instructed them to do. Joseph rightly knew that Pharaoh would expect to find that his brothers were as diligent and wise as was Joseph himself, and that it was likely Pharaoh would seek from these brothers candidates to serve in his court. The answer of Joseph's brothers indicated to Pharaoh that they were not vagrants there to drain Egypt of her resources. At the same time, because shepherds were despised by Egyptians, the designs the king may have had to employ any of Joseph's brothers would be forsaken and the covenant family would be safe from the contamination of Egypt's wealth, power, and false religion. We may feel that our Lord, by His providence, has confined us in callings too low for our liking. Yet, His calling is always the one where we can be most safe and sanctified.

Monday, January 21 st - Genesis 47: 4

Joseph's brothers have their access to Pharaoh only through the mediation of Joseph. They have standing in the king's court only by their relation to the king's favorite whom he had exalted and to whom he had given all authority in Egypt. For their own part, Joseph's brothers can plead only their need before Pharaoh. Their lives depended upon Pharaoh's merciful provision, and it is only for that provision that they ask. We stand before the Father only through the merits of the Son, while of ourselves we can only rightly speak of our utter need and misery apart from the Lord's mercy.

Tuesday, January 22 nd - Genesis 47: 4

In addition to their confession of need, Joseph's brothers ask for the land of Goshen as the place of their sojourning in Pharaoh's kingdom. Their request was not presumptuous, but rather was a matter of their claiming the express promise that Joseph had given to them (Gen. 46:34). They were therefore safe in making this request, for they rightly reckoned that Joseph would promise to them only what he could provide. By their believing his promise they honored Joseph by their trust and humbled themselves to be content with the portion he had allotted for them. By such asking they received a territory in which they would be most secure and satisfied. Their asking should serve as a pattern for our asking the Lord according to His revealed will and great and precious promises.

Wednesday, January 23 rd - Genesis 47: 5, 6

Pharaoh certainly did not consider the request of Joseph's brothers to be presumptuous. He had determined to offer Joseph's family the best land in Egypt (Gen. 45:16-18), and here he makes that offer while agreeing that Jacob's family could dwell in Goshen, which presumably was not the best part of Egypt. When Abraham and Lot agreed to separate, Lot chose the best land near Sodom. That carnal choice almost cost him his life, while it did cost him his possessions and his wife (Gen. 13:8ff; 19:12ff). All things may be offered and permitted to the Lord's people, but not all things are profitable. Goshen was the best place for Jacob and his family, though they could have dwelt in Pharaoh's court. We should always make our choices with a view to God's will for us, which is our sanctification, and never according to our own carnal desires (Jn. 17:17; 1 Thess. 4:3a).

Thursday, January 24 th – Genesis 47: 7

After the introduction of his brothers, Joseph then introduced his father to the king of Egypt. The best social conventions dictate that the most important persons arrive last at and leave first from a social occasion. Certainly it is propitious for the godly to act as God does and save the best wine for last. Jacob, despite his humble occupation, and current physical need, was the best wine Joseph could offer to Pharaoh. Jacob had wrestled with God and prevailed; Jacob had been blessed by God with great promises; Jacob had been given the royal name of Israel by God; Jacob, though he was a sojourner in Canaan and now came to sojourn in Egypt, possessed a glorious heavenly inheritance and enjoyed loving communion with the God of glory. Therefore, while Jacob was blessed by Pharaoh's temporal provision, it was the holy patriarch who gave the earthly king the greater blessing.

Friday, January 25 th – Genesis 47: 8, 9

To the Egyptian king, whose people tended not to be long-lived, the most remarkable thing about Jacob was his venerability. The Lord tends to satisfy those He loves with long life (Ps. 91:16), renewing the vigor of those who wait upon Him, causing them to gain new strength, to mount up with wings like eagles, to run without exhaustion and to walk without fainting (Is. 40:28-31). Pharaoh saw and marveled over this in Jacob. Are we such signs and wonders that point to the eternal life that God gives to His people (Is. 8:18)?