

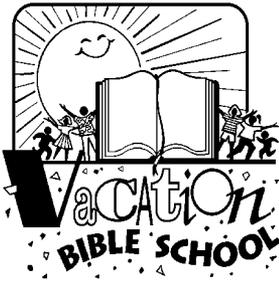
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Lessons from the Life of  
**JOSEPH**



**Our Theme:**

**"Your Will Be Done"**



# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**Church Year:** Pentecost 11 / VBS Review

**Date:** August 12, 2012

Welcome to our service this morning. Today we will be reviewing the lessons from this week's Vacation Bible School. Our children learned about the life of Joseph. From his life we learn that God has an ultimate plan for all His people. We, as Christians, can have confidence that no matter how difficult things might seem to get during life, ultimately everything works out for our good. Because the Lord has given us the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, it is the Lord's will that we rely upon and trust in His grace during all tribulations. This is why we are undertaking the theme this morning taken from the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Your Will Be Done." You will notice that there is a fitting connection between the lessons from Joseph and the various petitions of the Lord's Prayer, giving us all an opportunity to publicly confess what we learned about these in Luther's Small Catechism. Our children will be participating throughout the service. May your worship be blessed and may His will be done!

## "Your Will Be Done"

**Worship Preparation:** ..... Psalm 77, TLH p. 139

**Opening Prayer:** ..... Luther's Morning Prayer

**C:** In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We thank You, our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept all harm and danger away from us last night; and we pray that You would also protect us today from sin and every evil, that our lives and all our behavior may please You. Into Your hand we entrust our bodies and souls and everything else. Let Your holy angel be with us, that the devil may have no power over us. Amen.

**Hymn:** .....TLH 457: What A Friend We Have in Jesus

**Invocation:** .....Luther's Explanation to the Address

P: We begin our service in the name of the  
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

P: Through faith in Christ Jesus, who paid the full penalty of judgment for our sins by dying on the cross, we are now children of God. He has granted us access to Him by addressing Him in the Lord's Prayer as "Our Father, who art in heaven." What does this mean?

**C: With these words God tenderly encourages us to believe that He is our true Father and we are His true children, so that we may ask Him boldly and with complete confidence as dear children ask their dear father.**

**Responsive Psalm:** .....Psalm 105:1-5, 16-22

P: Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name;

**C: Make known His deeds among the peoples!**

P: Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;

**C: Talk of all His wondrous works!**

P: Glory in His holy name;

**C: Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!**

P: Seek the LORD and His strength;

**C: Seek His face evermore!**

P: Remember His marvelous works which He has done,

**C: His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,**

P: Moreover He called for a famine in the land;

**C: He destroyed all the provision of bread.**

P: He sent a man before them; Joseph; who was sold as a slave.

**C: They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons.**

P: Until the time that his word came to pass,

**C: The word of the LORD tested him.**

P: The king sent and released him,

**C: The ruler of the people let him go free.**

P: He made him lord of his house,

**C: And ruler of all his possessions,**

P: To bind his princes at his pleasure,

**C: And teach his elders wisdom. ...**

P: Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name;

**C: Make known His deeds among the peoples!**



**Hymn:** .....TLH 529:1,3,5: I Leave All Things to God's Direction

## 1. Your Will Be Done . . . In Adversity

**Sermonette:**..... Genesis 37:3-4, 18, 26-28; 39:1-2

**Our Confession:**...Luther's Explanation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Petition

P: What is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

C: **Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.**

P: What does this mean?

C: **God's good and gracious will is certainly done without our prayer all by itself, but we pray in this petition that it be done among us also.**

P: How is God's will done?

C: **God's will is done when He breaks and stops every evil will and plan of those who do not want us to hallow His name or let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, of the sinful world, and of our own flesh. His will is also done when He gives us strength and keeps us firm in His word and in faith for as long as we live. This is God's good and gracious will.**

**VBS Recitation:**..... Romans 8:31b; Romans 8:28

Children (All): If God is for us, who can be against us?

Children (Grades 3-8): And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

**Hymn:**..... TLH 427:3-5: How Firm a Foundation

## 2. Your Will Be Done . . . In Temptation

**Sermonette:**..... Genesis 39:6b-12

**Our Confession:**...Luther's Explanation to the 6<sup>th</sup> Petition

P: What is the 6<sup>th</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

C: **And lead us not into temptation.**

P: What does this mean?

C: **God indeed tempts no one; but we pray in this petition that He would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our flesh do not deceive us nor lead us into misbelief, hopelessness, or any other shameful or sinful acts. And although we are tempted by them, we ask that we win in the end and keep the victory.**

**VBS Recitation:**..... Matthew 26:41

Children (Grades 3-5): "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

**Hymn:**..... TLH 517:1,3: The Will of God Is Always Best

### 3. Your Will Be Done . . . In Service to Others

**Sermonette:**.....Genesis 42:6-7a; 45:1-8

**Our Confession:**....Luther's Explanation to the 1<sup>st</sup> Petition

P: What is the 1<sup>st</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

C: Hallowed be Thy name.

P: What does this mean?

C: God's name is certainly holy all by itself, but we pray in this petition that we also keep it holy.

P: How is God's name kept holy?

C: God's name is kept holy when the word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also live a holy life according to it. Help us do this, dear heavenly Father. But whoever teaches and lives contrary to the word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father.



**VBS Recitation:**.....John 13:34a

Children (Grades 1-2): "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; ..."

**Hymn:**...TLH 424:1-3: My God, My Father, Make Me Strong

### 4. Your Will Be Done . . . In Forgiving Others

**Sermonette:**.....Genesis 50:15-21

**Our Confession:**....Luther's Explanation to the 5<sup>th</sup> Petition

P: What is the 5<sup>th</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

C: And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

P: What does this mean?

C: We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look on our sins nor deny our prayer because of them. We are not worthy of things for which we are asking, neither have we deserved them. However, we ask that our Father would by His grace give us what we ask even though we sin often every day and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. We too will from our hearts gladly forgive and do good to all those who sin against us.

**VBS Recitation:**.....Ephesians 4:32

Children (Grades 6-8): And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

**Hymn:**.....TLH 412: May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill

## 5. Your Will Be Done . . . In Final Victory

**Sermonette:**.....Genesis 50:24-26

**Our Confession:**...Luther's Explanation to the 7<sup>th</sup> Petition

P: What is the 7<sup>th</sup> Petition of the Lord's Prayer?

C: **But deliver us from evil.**

P: What does this mean?

C: **We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil to body and soul, property or reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a joyful end and take us in grace from this valley of sorrows to Himself in heaven.**

**VBS Recitation:**.....John 14:19b

Children (K, Pre-S, & younger): Because I live, you shall live also.

**VBS Hymn:**.....TLH 528:1-2, 10: If God Himself Be For Me

**Hymn:**.....TLH 651:1,4: Be Still, My Soul

**Offering & Prayer:**

**Lord's Prayer:**.....Solo

**Benediction:**.....Luther's Explanation to the Doxology

P: Now receive the Lord's blessing: Fear not, for the LORD is with you; Be not dismayed, for the LORD is your God. The LORD will strengthen you, Yes, the LORD will help you, The Lord will uphold you with His righteous right hand.

C: **His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

P: What does "Amen" mean?

C: **"Amen" means that I should be certain that these petitions are really heard by the Father in heaven; for He Himself has instructed us to pray in this way and promised that He will hear us. "Amen, amen," that is, "Yes, indeed, it shall be so."**

**Hymn:**.....WS 785: Children of the Heavenly Father

**Silent Prayer:**.....Luther on "Thy Will Be Done"

*O Lord God, heavenly Father, I am Thy creature; do Thou with me whatever Thou dost please; it is all the same to me, for I know that I am surely Thine. And if it please Thee that I die this hour or suffer some great misfortune, I would still be very glad to suffer it. Never do I want to consider my life, honor, goods, and whatever I have as higher and greater than Thy will. Thy will shall please me at all times throughout my life.*

# ✠ *THE ANNOUNCEMENTS* ✠

- ◆ **Vacation Bible School:** Thanks to our children for presenting to us truths from God's Word. They also colored our bulletins this morning. It was wonderful to have them participate in Vacation Bible School this past week. We had the opportunity to minister to 25 young souls with an average daily attendance of 22. A big "thank you" to our teachers, teaching assistants, craft coordinators, and providers of snacks. Such efforts are only successful by the volunteer services of our members.
- ◆ **Our Christian Day School:** Grace Lutheran Church believes that a thorough Christian education is rudimentary for the spiritual growth and preservation of faith of all Christians, children no less. This is why we support and operate a Christian Day School. We teach grades K through 8th. We welcome all parents, even non-members, to consider this as a valuable resource for the upbringing of their children. If you are interested in enrolling, please speak with Mrs. Janelle Hein or Pastor Hein. Our school year begins on August 27.
- ◆ **Thanks** to those who helped out with the school work day yesterday!
- ◆ **Wedding:** The congregation is invited to the wedding service of Alex Baker and Bonnie Story on Sat., Aug. 18, 2 pm. May the Lord richly bless their day, but more importantly their lifetime together in the Lord.
- ◆ **Service Schedule:** Please keep in mind that the service schedule will be changing on September 9. Sunday School and Bible Class will begin at 9:00 a.m. with regular morning worship at 10:00 a.m.
- ◆ **Sunday School Teachers:** Sunday School begins the Sunday after labor day and we are looking for volunteers to teach. It is a great opportunity to instruct our youth about the truths of scripture. If you are interested please let Rick Nelson know so he can hopefully find a place for you on staff. He is interested in full time teachers, part time (half time) and substitutes.
- ◆ **Snell Memorial Golf Tournament:** This is scheduled for Sat., Sept. 15. More information is found in the brochures by the guest book.
- ◆ **Volunteer:** Many of you may know Frieda Aden, an elderly member from Okabena who attends our services at Grace. She fell last week and was hospitalized for a few days. Frieda isn't at the point where she needs full time care like a nursing home. But she would like to have someone around, perhaps two or three times during the week to just visit with her or perhaps do a few little things for her. Frieda's daughter who lives in Colorado was wondering if the congregation would have anyone willing to do this. If you are, please speak with Pastor for further details.



*For the  
Children*

## ✝ TODAY AT GRACE ✝

Organist: Sue Nelson

Elder: Phil Radichel

Ushers: Pat Paplow, Dan Degnan, Brian Eichstadt, Eric Eichstadt, Ryan Oman, Brandon Paplow

Counting Team 3: Don Auel; Brian Eichstadt; Jack Kirkham; Benno Sydow; Brandt Wendland

Church Cleaners: Ochsner

## ✝ NEXT WEEK AT GRACE ✝

Ushers: Roger Ochsner, Jeremiah Boe, Don Dahlin, Arnold Gehrls, Bob Maki, John Maki, Joel Stifter

Counting Team 4: Ed Lentz; Roger Ochsner; Al Rosendahl; Dave Rust; Lynn Sandhoefner

Church Cleaners: B. Rust

## ✝ OUR SCHEDULE ✝

**Sun., Aug. 12:** 9:00 am – Worship Service

11:00 am – Council Meeting

**Sat., Aug. 18:** 2:00 pm – Baker/Story Wedding

**August 20:** 10:00 am – ILC School Opening Service

7:00 pm – Grace School Ice Cream Social

**August 27:** 8:00 am – Grace School Opening Service

**Wed., Aug. 29:** 4:00 pm – Public School Catechism Begins

**Sun., Sept. 9:** 9:00 am – Bible Class & Sunday School

10:00 am – Worship Service (Normal Schedule Resumes)

**Wed., Sept. 12:** 7:00 pm – Midweek Bible Class Resumes

**Last Week's Stats:** July 29, 2012 Sun.: 97

Sun. Offering:	Grace:	\$2,035.80	CLC:	\$600.00
Weekly Need:	Grace:	3,030.00	CLC:	960.00
-Under / +Over:	Grace:	-994.20	CLC:	-360.00
Year-to-Date Offering::	Grace:	\$85,997.64	CLC:	\$27,837.00
Year-to-Date Need:	Grace:	93,930.00	CLC:	29,760.00
Year-to-Date (+/-)	Grace:	-7,932.36	CLC:	-1,923.00
Other Offerings:	Living Faith:	0.00	Tuition Aid:	400.00
GLC Other:	MDF:	0.00	Kinship:	50.00
ILC Student Aid:	ILC Bldg.	140.00	IIF:	40.00
			CEF:	0.00

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

# G R A C E

# **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

## **Part 8**

### **FORMAL EDUCATION: PUBLIC EDUCATION VERSUS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION — MAN-CENTERED VERSUS GOD-CENTERED:**

The ancient Greeks considered it a philosophic axiom that “man is the measure of all things.” They believed man to be the center of his own universe. If man would use the intelligence that he possessed and if he applied it to harness nature about him, he could create for himself a full and satisfying life. Thus man became his own god. The modern name of this philosophy is humanism.

During the Middle Ages this Greek ideal of a man-centered, self-sustaining life waned as man turned upward and away from his environment, and sought fulfillment in mystical experiences of one kind or another. The Renaissance brought back the Greek ideal of self-centered and self-sustaining man who conquers his environment, creates his own world, and is a master of his own fate. The modern technological achievements which have made travel to the moon almost routine are evidence of this philosophy and its outward success [a reminder that this was written in 1972].

The mythology of evolution has given a pseudo-scientific basis for humanism. That man was created by God is rejected. Children are taught to believe that life appeared spontaneously on this planet, that a process of evolution began by means of natural selection in an environment characterized by a struggle for survival. All this means that man is believed to have powers within himself to adapt to his environment, to conquer it, to solve all his problems, and thus to create fullness of life for himself. “Ever upward” is the slogan. God is unnecessary — actually a childish superstition. Heaven is a dream for the sluggish who refuse to create their own heaven on earth. A Savior? What for? Since man believes that he can pull himself upward by his own bootstraps.

This is — without exaggeration — the philosophy underlying the textbooks used in the public school and the instruction that public school teachers receive in our universities and [often] pass on to their students. Man is god!

Our Christian Day School [when having one] rightly considers this philosophy a continuation of man's rebellion against God — a continuing attempt to be "as God." God created this universe, and He made man. He still upholds the universe and preserves man. This world is not run by unchanging laws of nature that blindly and relentlessly grind out cause and effect uniformly. We have a Father in heaven who opened a path through the sea to save His people, who nullified the laws of nature in saving the three men in the fiery furnace, and who sent an angel to protect Daniel in the lions' den. Our God is bigger than His creation. He can and does help when man appears to be beyond help — in time of sickness, in storms, while traveling. He is ever and always "*a very present help in trouble*" Psalm 46:1.

Man is not morally self-sufficient. Left to his own devices man plunges downward as the condition of public morals testifies on all sides. Man tends to self-destruction — over-eating, over-drinking, over-smoking, misusing drugs, and so on and on. Man builds centers of medical research, hospitals to cure the sick, but man keeps dying. Man cannot escape from his own sin. He tries to deny and rationalize and forget his own guilt, but it clings to him and torments him. Man can put off dying, but death inevitably grasps him in its final embrace. What a picture of complete and unrelieved failure! What man needs is God's Savior — God's own Son. Only God's Son could live a morally right life in the sight of God. Only the death of God's Son was sufficient to remove the stain of mankind's guilt.

Man is not spiritually self-sufficient. He is dead spiritually — unable to take even the feeblest step toward his God, inclined always and without fail to unrighteousness — a hopeless slave to the humanistic religion of "do-it-yourself; save-yourself." Only the Spirit of God can breathe life into the spiritual corpses ruling this earth, roaming the streets, and messing up their lives for time and eternity.

To worship God as Creator and Preserver of this universe and man; to bow the knee before Jesus Christ as Savior from sin, death, and hell; to rejoice in the Spirit as the Giver of new life — this is to live a truly God-centered life. This life we preach and teach!

## **LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH:**

We frequently hear of drives, walks and other activities promoted to raise awareness of a disease as well as to raise money in pursuit of a cure for some particular disease. Perhaps most of us have participated in or have contributed to such a worthy cause.

A recent report of a leading cause of death inspired a thought.

Though in a different context, we considered that in spite of all the efforts to overcome poverty, all the programs initiated, and all the money spent, poverty is still among us. Mary had just poured precious oil on Jesus' head. The disciples saw it as a waste because the money spent on the oil could have been given to the poor. In context Jesus was not expressing lack of concern for the poor but spoke to the beautiful expression of love that filled the heart of Mary. In her defense, Jesus responded that the disciples would not always have His physical presence to which they could respond with their love and kindness as Mary had. On the other hand, the poor are "always with you." The nature of things in this world is that the poor are always with us (Matthew 26:11, Mark 14:7).

The nature of things in this life is that every living thing dies. As we seek remedies for disease and the temporal causes of death the reality is that the most advanced medical procedures and processes will not eradicate death because death is the earned wages (Romans 6:23) for man's rebellion against God (Genesis 3). Death in all its manifestations – spiritual, physical, eternal – is a divine judgment. But what is the leading cause of death? It is sin! As the disciples were admonished to recognize the priority of the moment, so in the face of death which is always "among" us in spite of the best efforts to eradicate it, we are admonished in Scripture to address the immediate priority. We do not overcome disease or death by treating the symptom but by identifying and overcoming the cause.

In addressing even the leading cause of physical death in this world, the overriding priority is that we recognize the root cause of all death in order to escape the more serious death which is eternal death! Because it is not the Lord's will that any should suffer eternal death, Jesus said, "Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:17) ... repent of your sin and forsake the love of sin, and believe the good news which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

The heart and soul of the gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ, upon whom the Father laid the sins of the whole world. Jesus bore the

complete burden, guilt, and punishment of our sin. In bearing our sin He bore our death. By His resurrection from the dead, He restored life, so that though disease robs us of life on earth, it cannot rob of eternal life those who have been saved from spiritual death and are alive in Christ by the power of the Spirit. Lazarus went the way of all flesh because he was sick, yet in God's plan his sickness was not unto eternal death. Lazarus would live! Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." (John 11). Job recognized that there is life after death. The believer in Christ lives the measure of his allotted days with anticipation, but not hopelessly, "All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes" (Job 14:14). We shall all be changed and have real life because, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:51, 54). Jesus overcame death by addressing the leading cause of death. Jesus, the Lamb of God, took away the sins of the world (John 1:36). As the cause is taken away so is the consequence! Death has no more dominion over Jesus (Romans 6:9). As we are in Christ through faith the consequence of sin has no more dominion over us.

While physical death is all around us until the end of time, and will eventually claim us, unless the Lord returns first, it cannot rob us of life! The Lord God has replaced the wages we earned with the gift He has given: eternal life (Romans 6:23).

Sin, the leading cause of death, has lost its power; it is a thing of the past having been overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ through His perfect life, His substitutionary death, and His resurrection. The foreboding grave is not a black hole, but the portal to eternal life for each believer in Christ!

The Lord Jesus Who says, "Son (Daughter) be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2) assures us that where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation. He guarantees that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Spread the good news. The leading cause of death has been identified, and it has been rendered powerless by our Lord. Blessed are all who repent and believe the Gospel! They have life and shall experience it in all its heavenly glory eternally!

Written by Rev. Daniel Fleischer, July 2012

## **God Makes Afflictions Serve Our Best Interest**

*Note: In the mysterious alchemy of God even the evils and ills of life which pain us must turn to good and help us on our way to perfection. This hallows the memory of past afflictions. So it did for Joseph, Martin Luther points out. In the light of this discovery that man of God found it doubly easy to forgive his brothers (Gen. 45:7).*

It is not the nature of sin to produce anything good; this is the effect of divine goodness, which can turn evil into good .... This doctrine is intended only for Christians, for the children of God. They can submit to whatever evils come their way, hide their grief, and with confidence expect a thousand advantages in place of one disadvantage or loss. For we believe in God, who is the Creator Omnipotent, producing everything out of nothing, the best out of evils, and salvation out of things that are utterly desperate and hopeless.

## **The Paradoxical Ways of Our God**

*Note: The manner in which God often leads His own does not make faith any easier. Martin Luther calls attention to this (Gen. 37:31-33).*

Thus God humbles His own in order to exalt them; He kills them in order to bring them back to life; He puts them to shame in order to glorify them; He casts them down in order to raise them up. But doing this is art and knowledge at their best, a fact which is usually not learned and understood without great labor and then only by very few. Yet it is true and certain, as the example before us testifies; for what is said in Ps. 105:21 is true: God made Joseph lord of Egypt and master and savior of many people. How? By selling him, casting him off, and killing him. These are works of God which cannot be understood until they have been completed and finished. Meanwhile, however, during their performance, they cannot be understood except by faith.

## **God's Purpose: Strengthening Us by His Word**

*Note: Such being the greatness of God's love for us, He must intend something good when He sends us affliction. Both Joseph and his brothers in the end found how true this is. This is the lesson Martin Luther draws from their story in his lectures on Genesis (45:3).*

The ultimate purpose of afflictions is the mortification of the flesh, the expulsion of sins, and the checking of that original evil which is embedded in our nature. And the more you are cleansed, the more will you be blessed in the future life. For without a doubt glory will follow upon the calamities and vexations which we endure in this life. But the prime purpose of all these afflictions is the purification, which is extremely necessary and useful, lest we snore and become torpid and lazy because of the lethargy of our flesh. For when we enjoy peace and rest, we do not pray, we do not meditate on the Word but deal coldly with the Scriptures and everything that pertains to God or finally lapse into a shameful and ruinous security.

## History Teaches Ultimate Benefits of Affliction

*Note: Luther remarks that neither Joseph nor Jacob could see the glorious end God had in store for them when the murderous plots of the brothers brought them affliction after affliction. But we should not fail to profit by their experiences, says he in the beginning of his lectures on the story of Joseph's troubles, so rich in lessons.*

As often, then, as we are afflicted and tried, we should look at this example, courageously resist our complaining and indignant flesh, and say: Why God has forsaken me so, I do not know; but I do not doubt that the purpose of my Father is best, is the wisest and the most beneficial, although my flesh does not see it at all but murmurs and struggles against the spirit. Nonetheless, this cross must be borne and overcome with faith and patience; for I see the marvelous, controlling plans of God at work in the lives of the holy fathers ....

## Hold On to Patience

*Note: At times we may see God's plan even in this life. Joseph did so in Egypt. He teaches us patient endurance, says Luther in his lectures on Gen. 41:40.*

From this example [the life of Joseph], which is full of all virtues, let us learn to understand the divine wisdom and goodness and the way in which God guides us; let us learn to wait without end; and let us learn that no time of tribulation and trouble can be so great and so long as to break us or drive the Word of faith from our hearts, that Word which is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). Therefore we should hold out.

## "Ye Meant Evil, but God Meant It unto Good"

*Note: However painful it may be, cross-bearing, like all affliction, is of great spiritual benefit to a Christian. It is, Luther says in his exposition of John 15:1, like the pruning of a vine. Whatever the designs of those may be who make the believer suffer for his religion, God makes good come of it. We see this in the statement Joseph made to his brothers regarding their deed: "Ye Meant Evil, but God Meant It unto Good"*

All the sufferings of the Christians produce this benefit: they only further our Christian life and bring forth fruit in the Christian's fuller understanding and firmer confession of the Word, in his more certain hope, and in a wider spread of the kingdom of Christ. To be sure, the world intends to do us a very bad turn, but it does no more than what the church sings of the martyrs ... They do not know that, without being aware of it, they bring the Christians to eternal joys through martyrdom and death, so that such a martyrdom is nothing but taking a person gently by the arms and leading him to heaven, as one leads a bride to the dance. This is the purpose the suffering serves which the world inflicts on Christians: God converts the wrath into an instrument working for their best, as the pious patriarch Joseph told his brothers: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). You wanted to kill me that I might not become your master, and you sold me to the Gentiles; but by the very means you used to prevent it you made me a master.

For God is a Master who can cause what would hinder and harm us, to further and profit us; what would kill us, to serve to bring us to life; what would move us to sin and condemn us, to strengthen our faith and hope and to cause our prayer to be all the more effective and all the more richly answered.

# The Example of Joseph in Egypt:

*Note: Luther adduces Joseph as providing an instance of untiring prayer.*

For about thirteen years Joseph cried and continued to pray God to help him. But the longer, the worse; the more he prayed, the worse he fared. To this day this is what happens to Christians. When they have called and cried for a long time to God, they feel no improvement, but things grow worse, as they did with Joseph. If God had liberated Joseph, Jacob, his father would no doubt have been glad; but Joseph would have remained a shepherd. However, since the help was delayed so long, he became a lord over all Egypt, so that certainly no greater man can be found in Holy Scripture, no one who rose higher as world ruler than did Joseph.

Thus God still intends to deal with us. After He has denied us our petition for a long while and always said no, but we firmly cling to the yes, it shall finally be yes, and not no, for His Word will not lie: "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He will give it you" (John 15:16). But our reason is highly offended at this delay and would gladly have God answer us promptly. So it is necessary not to be offended. Let our Lord God say no and suspend the answer of our petition for a year, two years, three years, or longer still, and let us only watch that hope and faith in His promise are not torn from our heart. Something will come of our prayer in the end, and God will give us far more than we asked Him to give.

## The Story of Joseph an Illustration

*Note: Luther points out why at times God does not promptly give what is asked, using Joseph as a case in point in his lectures on Gen. 41:40.*

It is the nature of God not to give in accordance with our weak petitions. Just so Joseph desired liberation and return from his prison to his father. He pleaded for nothing greater. Then God in heaven lets him burn incense and sweet-smelling things for a while but replies with the words of Paul: You know not what you are asking; I am in the habit of giving above and beyond what you ask and understand; therefore I must detain you somewhat longer; you will have to wait a while; I desire still more of those wisps of ascending incense (your prayers). Later, however, Joseph received what he did not understand, hope for, or ever had dared ask for.

These are certainly great and admirable examples, which we not only should learn for ourselves but also should place before others that we may recognize the divine wisdom, goodness, mercy, and power, which are very definitely on our side.

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