

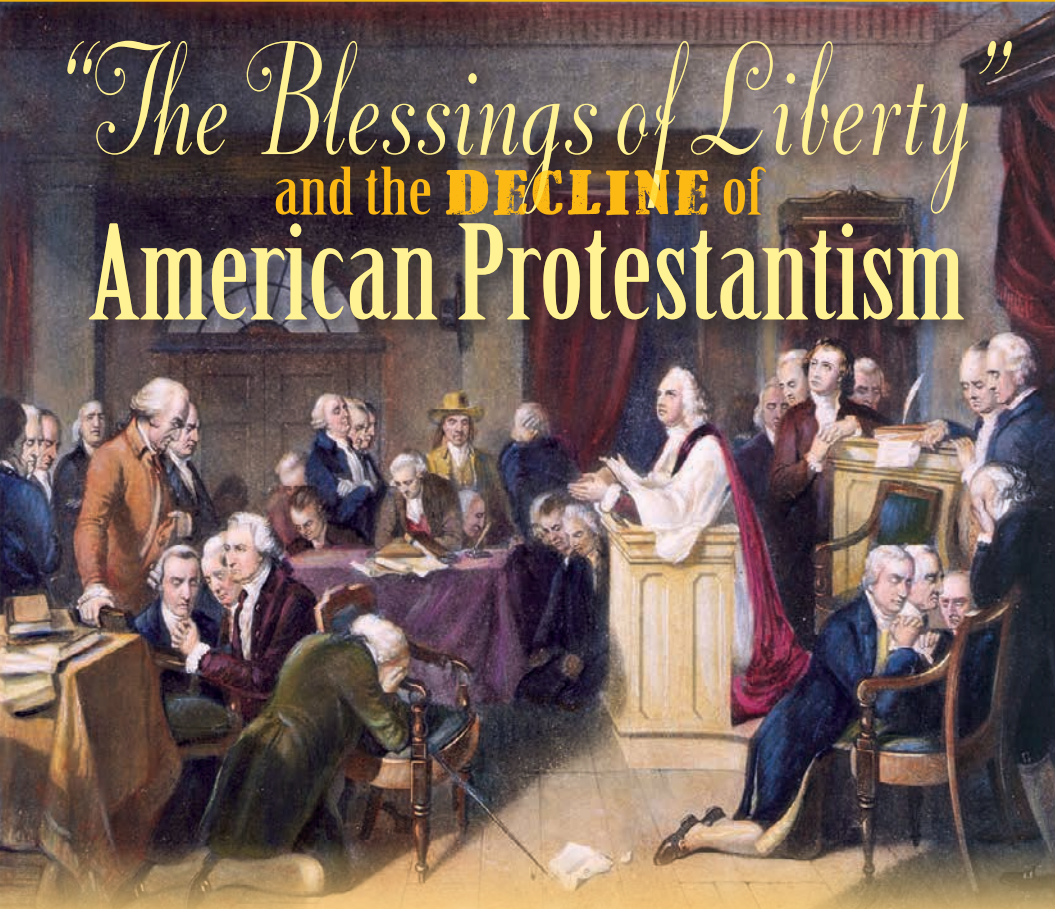
REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

WINTER 2013

"The Blessings of Liberty and the **DECLINE** of American Protestantism"



BY BRAD K. GSELL

Protestants Not a Majority in U.S., Study Says," read a large front-page headline in the October 10, 2012, issue of *The Charlotte Observer*. True Protestantism has long been in the minority in America, as the mainline denominations fell into apostasy in the twentieth century. However, this headline represents a defining moment in the history of the United States, and it is not at all for the nation's good.

When the Declaration of Independence was written, it was clearly articulated that our freedoms are not given to us by rulers, and are not a benefit granted by the State or the Church, but they are bestowed by God alone. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" were "among" these "unalienable rights."

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**Protestants not
a majority in
U.S., study says**

Estimated 46 million
Americans are not
affiliated with a church

**Southerners
and religion**

37% Percentage
of Americans
who say they attend a

BY MICHAEL GORDON
mgordon@charlotteobserver.com
America may still be a nation
"under God"

**Picture above: "The First Prayer in Congress,"
September 7, 1774, in Carpenters Hall, Phila-
delphia. Painted by Jacob Duché, 1848.**

*"But as for you, ye thought evil
against me; but God meant it unto
good, to bring to pass, as it is this
day, to save much people alive."*

Genesis 50:20

Joseph & His Brothers



*A Study in Forgiveness
and Reconciliation*

BY KEITH MCCOY

The topic before us concerns the great reconciliation which occurred between Joseph and his brothers after the terrible wrongs which occurred. We also will discuss why this restoration needed to occur.

Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 37:1-4: "And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

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Returning From the **DOWNGRADE**

by Mark W. Evans

The deluge of error destroying our land demands serious consideration. By increments, the professing church has yielded to unbiblical practices, such as:

- Believing a large crowd assures God's approval (Exodus 23:2; Matthew 7:13,14);
- Pursuing ecclesiastical unity at the expense of doctrinal and practical purity (2 Corinthians 6:14-18);
- Accepting the theological contradiction that liberalism and evangelicalism can co-exist as one Christian body (1 Timothy 6:3-5);
- Failing to discipline or separate from compromising Christianity (2 Timothy 3:5);
- Accepting the false premise that Biblical Christianity and Roman Catholicism are essentially the same (Revelation 18:4);
- Exalting religious feelings above purity of doctrine and practice (Isaiah 8:20);
- Confusing a religious "decision" with Biblical regeneration, repentance and faith (John 3:3; Acts 20:21);
- Minimizing or rejecting Biblical warnings against worldliness (1 John 2:15-17);
- Submitting the conscience to religious leaders instead of establishing Christian convictions through

diligent Bible study and prayer (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; Luke 11:9-13);

- Equating entertainment with worship (John 4:24);
- Trusting human devices, worldly methods, and money to build Christ's church (Psalm 127:1; 1 Corinthians 1:20,21; 1 Timothy 6:10-12; Revelation 3:17-22);
- Ignoring the Biblical standard for ministers and church officers (Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4);

**Our hope is in the Lord.
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generation to glorify Him.**

- Ignoring the Biblical standard for church membership (John 1:12,13; 10:1-5,29; Acts 13:38-43; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 2:12-14; Revelation 14:12);
- Seeking preachers who are administrators, have an attractive personality, and are able to please everyone, rather than seeking preachers who labor in God's

Word and prayer, expounding the whole counsel of God (Acts 6:4; 2 Timothy 4:1-5);

- Seeking the world's acceptance rather than God's approval (John 12:42,43; Hebrews 11:33-38; 13:12-14);
- Submitting the conscience to the "majority vote" of church assemblies, rather than standing upon the Word of God and "doing right, even if the stars fall" (Acts 5:29);
- Establishing church relationships with denominations defective in belief and/or practice (Romans 16:17; Galatians 5:9);
- Refusing to obey the Lord's command to "come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17,18).

Such changes have come through time. In many areas of our country it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a church faithful to God's Word. There is a dearth of serious Christians, determined to obey God regardless of consequences. If a Reformer from the sixteenth century or a Covenanter from the seventeenth century entered into most modern congregations, he would pronounce "Ichabod" upon the assembly. How did these things come to pass?

- Through apathy towards Christ, His doctrine and practice (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:15,16);
- Through love for the world (Colossians 3:1-10; Titus 2:11,12);
- Through the vain attempt to build Christ's Church by human devices (Jeremiah 5:30,31; Matthew 15:7-9);
- Through man-centered preaching (Galatians 1:10-12);
- Through infatuation with crowds, power, influence, and public favor (Zechariah 4:6; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5);
- Through compromise with false teaching and practices (2 Chronicles 19:1,2; Romans 16:17);
- Through failure to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27);
- Through failure to exercise Scriptural discipline (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13);
- Through failure to faithfully instruct future generations (Deuteronomy 6:3-9; Acts 2:39, 2 Timothy 3:14,15);
- Through failure to repent and return to Christ (Luke 13:1-5; Revelation 3:14-22).

How can such a downgrade be turned around? The answer is found in the five principles of the Reformation:

- Scripture alone (Jeremiah 23:26-29; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 4:1-5);
- Grace alone (Romans 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:8,9);
- Faith alone (Romans 1:16,17; 3:21-25; 5:1; Galatians 2:16);
- Christ alone (John 14:6; 15:5; Acts 4:10-12; 1 Timothy 2:5);
- Glory to God alone (Romans 11:33-36).

By these Scriptural principles, the Lord was pleased to overthrow civil and religious tyranny in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Oppressed men, women, and children read the Bible for the first time. Souls were set free by God's grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ, all to the glory of God. Sinners re-

pentened and believed that the Savior kept the law in their place and satisfied the infinite penalty for their sin on Calvary's cross. They were delivered from religious oppression that required financial payment and submission to unbiblical religious practices that filled them with fear and guilt. The Gospel brought them joy that no man can take away. The Bible was received as the only rule of faith and practice.

Heirs of the Reformation populated the colonies of our own land. They braved the frontiers, established their homes and worshipped their God. Their motive was to glorify God and to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Such liberty had not been known in the many centuries leading up to the Reformation. Rome's superstition and feudal system held mankind in servitude. Allegiance to Rome was enforced by physical punishment — even execution. Ownership of private property was for the privileged few.

Today, we are facing a similar plight as our politicians and many preachers believe it is proper for the government to deprive us of our property in order to subsidize unconstitutional and immoral practices. In the Reformation, it was the preaching of Christ and His soul-saving redemption that broke the chains forged by civil and religious tyrants. By reading the Bible, ordinary men learned the principles of true liberty and the power of God to defeat the schemes and scams of wicked men. "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Psalm 33:10).

Our hope is in the Lord. As dark as our hour may seem, we are to serve our Savior, knowing that the victory is certain. He is mighty to save and is able to raise up a new generation to glorify Him. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7). •

Obamacare: *The Continued Assault on Religious Liberty in America*

The Obama Administration continues its attack on religious liberty through its Mandate involving the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (often referred to as Obamacare).^{*} All businesses are being required to offer abortion-inducing drugs in their employee health plans, or face steep fines.

Thankfully, a federal judge has recently ruled that the government must give further exceptions to religious organizations. The case had been brought by Wheaton College and Belmont Abbey College.

Sadly, businesses owned by Christians have not fared so well in suits they have filed for relief. Rulings in these cases have placed faulty, unequal and unjust restrictions as to whom Constitutional protections will be granted. The First Amendment, which applies to ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS, has been grossly violated.

Of particular significance are two recent rulings against Hobby Lobby. The Green family, which built this successful chain of craft stores over the last 40 years, are devout Christians.

It is very troubling that Christian citizens and institutions are being forced to spend millions of dollars to defend their God-given liberties from the advances of the U.S. government.

As we go to press, Hobby Lobby is slated to be fined \$1.3 million PER DAY, unless the owners violate their consciences. Pray that an appeal filed with the U.S. Supreme Court will be heard and freedom will be restored. •

^{*}See "The Obama Healthcare Mandate: An Attack on Religious Liberty," *Redeeming the Time*, Volume 4, Number 2, Spring 2012, 2.

“Holy Chaos” and “Confusion” in the Presbyterian Church (USA)

In concurrence with the opening of the 220th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the “More Light Presbyterians” held its National Celebration Dinner on June 30, 2012. Advocating for more inclusion of homosexuality in the liberal denomination, the group chose Bishop Gene Robinson to have the keynote address. Robinson has created much upheaval in the Episcopal Church, after being the first openly homosexual man to be appointed as Bishop in the church.

According to *The Christian Post*, July 2, 2012, Robinson energized his audience by his complimentary declaration that: “It was not that many years ago when our churches, yours and mine and most others, were absolutely certain what God thought of us ... and because of your courageous work, there are a lot of confused people out there and that is a huge step forward.” He stated further: “I like to think of it as holy chaos.”

The Rev. Patrick David Heery, an ordained minister in the PCUSA, and editor of *Unbound* (described as “an interactive journal of Christian social justice”), commented concerning this: “[Robinson] referred to this confusion as the ‘holy chaos’ of people beginning to question what they once held certain. Chaos is of course not always popular among ‘decently and in order’ Presbyterians, but this was a night for a new kind of church.”

The *Pittsburgh Gazette* quoted Robinson as declaring: “We will live to see the day that the church of Jesus Christ, in whatever form it is, will repent from what it has done to



lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people the way it has repented of slavery.” He further stated that “We [the churches] taught them hate,” and stated that the churches are largely responsible for this terrible sin of “hate.”

The apostate who has willfully denounced and twisted the clear teachings of Scripture is certainly in “chaos” and “confusion,” but it is anything but holy.

EPISCOPAL BISHOP GENE ROBINSON:

“... because of your courageous work, there are a lot of confused people out there and that is a huge step forward.... I like to think of it as ‘holy chaos.’”

THE WORD OF GOD:

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple”

(Psalm 119:130).

“In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion” (Psalm 71:1).

The true child of God, believes that “the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The obedient Christian, instead of championing what God clearly calls sin, prays with David: “With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:10,11). Instead of confusion, David says, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130).

In defiant boldness against the Word of God, Rev. Heery ends his article in *Unbound*: “The change is not complete: there is still much work to be done. But, to borrow an image from Bishop Robinson, we are dancing to the center of the church, where we have known we always belonged.”

Pray that these false teachers will some day have true repentance in their hearts and will instead confess: “... our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God ... and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:25). •

Thanks to Elder Chris Salerno, of Bethany Bible Presbyterian Church of Glendale, CA, for providing some of the documentation used in this article.

THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY ...

Continued from page 1

When the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1787, the Preamble declared that one of the main purposes of the government was to “secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” The Liberty Bell, cast in 1752, was emblazoned with the words of Leviticus 25:10: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.”

The Protestant Heritage of Liberty

This great heritage of liberty did not just happen. It came largely from the Calvinists and other Protestants who were overwhelmingly predominant in the new nation. Roman Catholicism had its pope, and a long history of political tyranny. Islam believed in killing all “infidels” or converting them by force. Hinduism had its caste system where some were privileged merely by accident of birth. Other religions and political philosophies also had such beliefs.

The Medieval concept of “the divine right of kings,” which held sway for centuries in England and most of Europe, was still jealously guarded by the British royalty at the time of the American Revolution. One example of this philosophy can be seen in a speech to Parliament on March 21, 1609, by King James I: “The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth; for kings are not only God’s lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God’s throne, but even by God himself are called gods.... In the Scriptures kings are called gods, and so their power after a certain relation compared to the divine power.”¹ With the King officially declared to be the “Defender of the Faith” and “the Supreme Head of the Church,” any disagreement was apt to bring persecution and instantly made one



The fall 2012 meeting of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, was held at the Bible Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, NC, on September 28, 2012. The spring meeting will be held on April 5, 2013, at the Pilgrim Presbyterian Bible Church in Kingsville, MD.

a disobedient Christian in the eyes of both the Anglican church and the civil government.

But the seeds of liberty and justice were growing vigorously with the rise of Puritanism and Presbyterianism. During the historic Hampton Court Conference², held 167 years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, an exasperated King James I declared: “Presbytery

agreeth with monarchy like God with the Devil!”³

Just a few decades later, the historic Westminster Confession of Faith was produced in London. In stark contrast to the prevailing beliefs, these Calvinistic Protestants proclaimed that each person was individually responsible before God.

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THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY ...

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Chapter XX:2 stated: “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, in matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of [as a matter of] conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.” The Westminster Confession and catechisms were so widely studied and esteemed, that it has been oft repeated that many in America were “raised on oatmeal and the [Westminster] Shorter Catechism.”

The Coming of Protestantism to America

All across Europe, Protestants continued to suffer and to be killed for their faith. But, the news coming from the New World increasingly brought hope to many.

On April 30, 1562, Jean Ribaut, a French Calvinist Protestant (Huguenot), sailed across the Atlantic and entered what is now the St. Johns River, near Jacksonville, Florida. Upon landfall, under the leadership of a Huguenot minister, Ribaut wrote that: “...we fell to the ground a littell waye from them [Indians], to call upon the name of God, and to beseech him to contynewe [*continue*] still his goodnes towardes us, and to bring to the knowledg of our Savior Jesus Christ this pooer people.”⁴

This, reputedly, is the first recorded Protestant worship service in the New World, although there were other Protestants who were involved in expeditions at even earlier dates. Ribaut and company had sailed to America under the sponsorship of

Admiral Gaspard II de Coligny, himself a Huguenot, for the specific purpose of establishing a place where these French Protestants could come to escape persecution and live with freedom of conscience before God.

Over the next two centuries, thousands more fled to America to obtain religious freedom. Just a few of the groups which came, or developed after arriving in the New World, were: the Pilgrims (Separatists) of Plymouth Plantation; the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; the Scots-Irish Presbyterians, German Lutherans, Swiss Anabaptists, and English Quakers of Pennsylvania and the lower colonies; the Dutch Reformed of New York; Baptists of Rhode Island; and Congregationalists of Connecticut.

This flood of immigrants was so overwhelmingly Protestant that, by the time of the American Revolution, all non-Protestants combined comprised a mere two percent of the population!⁵ Of the Protestants, a very large majority of these were “Reformed” — members of the denominations influenced by John Calvin.

Certainly, there were many who did not live a godly Christian life. Clearly there were other competing worldviews and philosophies. Yet it was largely the Protestant — and, more specifically, the Calvinist — influence which brought us republican government and the greatest and freest nation in the history of the world.⁶

The “Presbyterian Rebellion”

During the American Revolution, this love of liberty by Protestants was not lost on the British government. King George III is widely reputed to have referred to the Revolution as “a Presbyterian Rebellion,” and similar sentiments were expressed by many others. Johann Heinrichs, a captain in the Hessian Jager Corps, wrote from Philadelphia on January 18, 1778: “Call this war, my dearest friend, by whatever name you may, only call it not an

American Rebellion, it is nothing more nor less than an Irish-Scotch Presbyterian Rebellion.”⁷ Horace Walpole, the Fourth Earl of Oxford, told his fellow members of Parliament that “Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson,”⁸ referring to Presbyterian minister John Witherspoon, President of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), and a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

A year before the Declaration of Independence was signed, Edmund Burke tried to warn the Parliament that “the people [of America] are Protestants, and of that kind which is the most adverse to all implicit submission of mind and opinion.”⁹ And, indeed, some of these early Protestant American patriots took as their motto: “No king but King Jesus!” — obviously in opposition to the concept of “the divine right of kings.”

It is this background that made the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution so crucial, and it is the direct historical antecedent (an official state-sanctioned denomination) to which the words of the Establishment Clause were directed. Sadly, what was intended to protect the RIGHTS of the people, has today been turned on its head to RESTRICT those precious rights.

A Republic With Limited Representative Government

These American Protestants believed that “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). James Madison, writing in *the Federalist Papers* #51, stated: “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary.” This led them to the wonderful system of checks and balances which is embedded in our Constitution. Since both the governed and those governing are all sinners, the Founders gave

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From Cradle to Grave

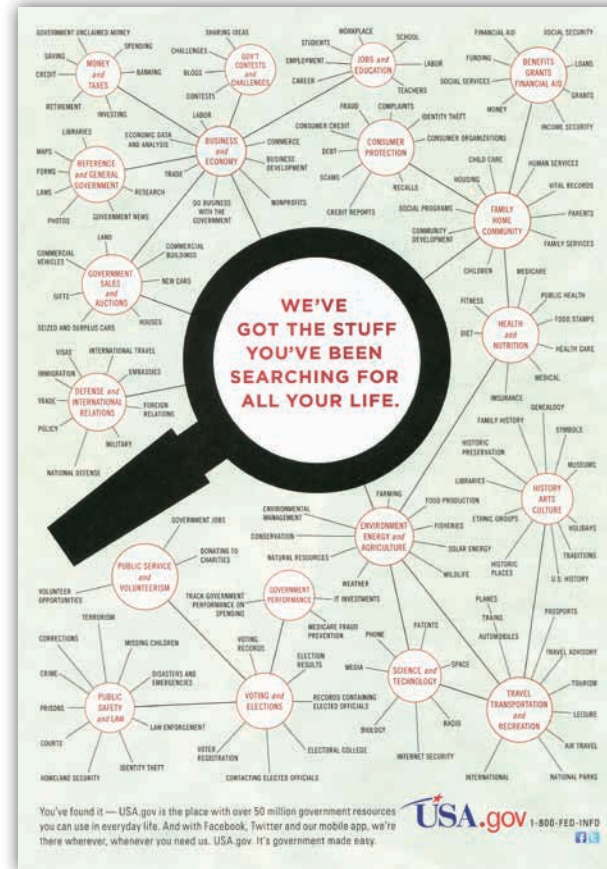
Trading Liberty for Free “Stuff”

Our Founding Fathers gave us a constitutional republic, with “government of the people, for the people and by the people.” It was established as a limited government with defined powers.

The Preamble of the Constitution states that the duties of the federal government are to: “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” All of these have to do with our rights, our safety and our freedom. All other rights and duties belonged to the individual states or to the people directly.

With America's spiritual and moral foundation in shreds, an entitlement society has developed, where many look to government to take care of them from "cradle to grave." Big Government has usurped the roles that God has given to our families and our churches. In the process, government now undermines and undercuts these institutions which are vital to any productive, well-ordered society.

Some have wrongly mischaracterized the Preambles' statement that the government is to "promote the general Welfare." This was strictly speaking of maintaining law and security so citizens would be free to work hard and enjoy the fruit of their labors. Dr. Edward Panosian, of Bob Jones University, wrote in the March/April 1976 issue of *Faith for the Family*: "... there grows a greater dependency upon government as it moves from her role 'to promote the general welfare' to promoting larger welfare rolls."



The ad reproduced above, designed for the U.S. government by the Campbell Ewald Agency, is clear evidence of what we are here describing. Every aspect of one's life is found in an interconnected web of government agencies and services (some of them legitimate; many of them not).

In a time of massive debt, the government is paying millions of dollars it does not have for ads to promote this “cradle to grave” society, which it cannot fund. (Take note of how many television and social media ads give a web address ending in “.gov”). This is just one more example of how the sins of the American people and its government are leading us closer to the calamity and destruction which always results from rebellion against God and the principles found in His Word. •

THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY ...

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parents, the United States became the most prosperous and inventive nation in the history of mankind.

In 1904 and 1905, German sociologist Max Weber wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. By no means a Calvinist, Weber thought it a “mystery” and “strange” that these beliefs could produce such a flourishing society. However, he recognized the obvious reason: “[To the Calvinist] The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability.”¹³

Man’s carnal nature makes him attempt to get as much for himself as he can for the least amount of effort — and no effort at all if he can accomplish it! However, the true child of God makes 1 Corinthians 10:31 his central motto for living: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” That’s why atheistic Communism and other totalitarian systems in the 20th century produced vastly inferior products and resulted in men working out of fear of punishment, rather than joyfully doing the best job they could do for God’s glory. Conversely, that’s why a Capitalism constrained by the Ten Commandments and other moral teachings of Scripture is the best system, resulting in the widest prosperity ever seen.

The Protestant way of life was characterized by these Scriptural principles: diligent, hard labor; unswerving honesty and integrity in all dealings, including business; constant motivation to improve and offer a greater product for less money — and all to the end that God might be glorified. Perry Miller, of Harvard University, wrote concerning this

that those who came to America: “... often followed spiritual dictates in comparative disregard of ulterior considerations.”¹⁴ E. Digby Baltzell, of the University of Pennsylvania, wrote that in America, positions of leadership were largely held by Protestants, and that their influence “governs the aspirations and values of the masses.”¹⁵ Think of the expense and frustration we all experience today with shoddy workmanship and materials, overcharging, low productivity, etc., caused by those who do not have the glory of God as their motivation!

Richard Green, of Oxford University, wrote concerning this in the 19th century: “It is in Calvinism that the modern world strikes its root; for it was Calvinism that first revealed the worth and dignity of man. Called of God, and heir of heaven, the trader at his counter and the digger in his field suddenly rose into equality with the noble and the king.”¹⁶ Even in Europe, centuries before the American Revolution, it was often the Protestants who were by far the most productive citizens. A case in point is the French Huguenots, who were the tradesmen, shopkeepers and laborers in 16th century France. With approximately 500,000 Huguenots fleeing religious persecution, France never fully recovered, as some of its brightest and most innovative citizens were no longer there to invigorate the social fabric and economy of the French nation.

Conclusion

The great effect of Protestantism — of Biblical Christianity — on the United States has largely waned. Not only has the official percentage dipped below 50%, but a headline in the *New York Times*, October 9, 2012, declares: “Percentage of Protestant Americans Is in Steep Decline, Study Finds.” The true Protestantism of the Reformation is actually a very tiny percentage.

The effects are being seen as our nation has become alarmingly awash in debt from, among other things, the massive welfare programs in what has become an entitlement society. Without the Biblical framework, more and more people have reverted to covetousness, jealousy, a desire to steal from one segment of society to enrich another, and a vote for the government officials who will give them the most “stuff.” Liberty has taken a back seat as trust in God has largely been replaced with trust in the government.

Some Christians may be quick to say that we should make it our life’s goal to bring Biblical principles into the arts, business, science, government, etc. Many who have put all their energies into such a supposed “cultural mandate” have been distracted and are now disillusioned. Certainly we should be good patriots. Certainly we should be diligent and honest in every area of our labors. Certainly we can have influence for good in the way we conduct our lives before others. Certainly we must “Strengthen the things which remain” (Revelation 3:2).

However, all of this is to no avail if we ignore the real problem — the age-old problem. Men and women are in sin and are in need of a Saviour! Our commission is to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Only the Gospel of Christ can change our society. Only the change brought about in each heart, one by one, will have any real effect on our nation.

We grieve at the wickedness we see around us — growing stronger and bolder by the day. Proverbs 29:2 tells us: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” However, we are not defeated! We must take courage and remember that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” (2 Corinthians 10:4) and that “... we are more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). •

¹C.H. McIlwain, ed., *The Political Works of James I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), 307.

²It was at this conference that Puritan John Reynolds petitioned King James I to authorize and sponsor a new translation of the Bible into English. The result was the King James Bible of 1611, which has been a blessing to the entire English-speaking world for over 400 years.

³Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes*, Vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), 708.

⁴Jean Ribaut, *The Whole & True Discoverie of Terra Florida* [1563], ed. Jeannette Thurber Connor (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1974).

⁵Benjamin Hart, "The Wall That Protestantism Built: The Religious Reasons for the Separation of Church and State," *Policy Review*, Fall 1988, 44.

⁶See "A Tribute to the 'Founder of America,'" by Howard Carlson, *Redeeming the Time*, Volume I, Number 3, Summer 2009, 1.

⁷*Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. xxii, 137.

⁸Paul Carlson, *Our Presbyterian Heritage* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1973), 13.

⁹*The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*, Vol. II (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887), 122.

¹⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559 Edition), 2 vols., ed. J.T. McNeill, trans. F.L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics, Vols. XX and XXI (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), IV.xx.2.

¹¹George Bancroft, *Literary and Historical Miscellanies* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1855), 406.

¹²Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Chapter XVII: "Principal Causes Which Tend to Maintain the Democratic Republic in the United States" (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899), 326-327.

¹³Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 108.

¹⁴Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts* (Cambridge: by the President and Fellows at Harvard College, 1933), xi.

¹⁵E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment* (New York: Random House, 1964), 12. Baltzell also wrote *Puritan Boston & Quaker Philadelphia*, which is a book of interest concerning this subject.

¹⁶Richard Green, *History of the English People*, Vol. IV (London: MacMillan and Company, 1896), 126.

Present With the Lord

DR. JOHN DEKKER, longtime pastor of the Cub Hill Bible Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, MD, went to be with His Saviour on Wednesday, December 26, 2012.

He was well known across America for his daily In Defense of Truth radio broadcast, which dealt with the issues of the day in the light of Scripture.

Until his health would not permit, he was a faithful member of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and took great joy in encouraging believers both in this country and around the world.

REV. HAROLD WEBB, a Bible Presbyterian pastor for many years, entered into the presence of Christ on Saturday, December 8, 2012.

Pastor Webb followed the Rev. Clyde Kennedy as pastor of the Tacoma, WA, Bible Presbyterian Church. Later, he served as assistant pastor of the Collingswood, NJ, Bible Presbyterian Church, during the ministry of Dr. Carl McIntire. He was a member of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church, and was vitally interested in its work and testimony.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).



As America pushed westward, it was considered of paramount importance that the principles of liberty go wherever the new nation expanded. Above pictured are several of the Scripture verses which adorn the walls in the rotunda of the state capitol building in Jefferson City, Missouri, on the banks of the Missouri River. From top to bottom: Proverbs 29:18, Proverbs 14:34 and Psalm 24:1.

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS ...

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Here we see the root of the problem. Jacob had shown favoritism. Remember that Rachel was Jacob's first love, and Joseph was the first born of Rachel. Even before the coat of many colors, the older children, especially, realized that once Joseph came along, their father loved him more than he loved them. Imagine the hurt. Imagine the consternation.

Of course the coat of many colors frustrated them more. Every time they saw that coat, they were reminded: "Daddy loves Joseph more than me." So they envied Joseph. They wanted their father's love — his full love, his best love. So, envy led to hatred, and hatred to bitterness. Look at verse 4: "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

I am told that the Hebrew could also be translated "could not speak peace to him." 1 Samuel 25:6 says: "And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." In ancient times in Eastern society, and perhaps even today, it was part of social etiquette to greet each other and wish each other peace. They couldn't even wish him peace. It showed the level of animosity that they felt towards their brother.

Look at verse 18: "And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him." Remember that they are out in the fields, and Joseph hadn't been able to find them. He finds out where they are, and they see him coming from afar. Verse 19 says: "And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh."

We don't know of any sin ascribed to Joseph, but when he was

a young man he wasn't completely thoughtful and circumspect in what he said to others. It probably wasn't the wisest thing to have told his brothers that he had a dream that they were going to bow down to him.

"Here comes the dreamer again. What's he going to tell Dad this time?" He was even wearing the coat of many colors. That might be how they spotted him "afar off." We see that things went down a bad path. They conspired to slay him. Instead

We see that for restoration to occur, the one who is aggrieved, the one who has been harmed, has to forgive those who have harmed him. We have to take the lead in restoration.

Galatians 6:1 says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

of appropriate speech toward their brother, they said, "He's not going to be around any more to be loved more than anyone else. We're going to kill him."

In verse 20, we see the conspiracy: "Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Of course, Reuben was the oldest and his job as the oldest was to protect the family — all the family, including Joseph. He should have protected the brothers from themselves. Reuben should have been able to say, "You are going to stop this nonsense right now. I'll have none of

it!" He didn't do that. He was his father's son. He connived.

Beginning in verse 21, we see his plan: "And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again." He had a plan. "I'll trick them, and come back later and rescue him." It would have been much better for all if he had said, "This is going to end right now!" His was the role of responsibility and leadership. He could have done that, but at least he kept them from killing him. Joseph apparently learned of that.

So we go from hateful speech, to plotting and conspiracy to murder, and we go from there to assault. Verse 23 says: "And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him." I don't suppose they came up to Joseph and said, "Hi, take off your coat and sit a spell. Let us hang that up for you." No, they grabbed him, they jostled him, they pummeled him, and they stripped him of his coat. So assault and theft were the next area of their crimes. Why? Because that coat was the symbol of their resentment.

Verse 24 says: "And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it." Here we see another sign of their cruelty — heartless cruelty. Verse 25 says: "And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead...." So, they sat down and ate a meal. Here's Joseph in the pit with no water and no food, probably bruised and maybe bleeding. Can you imagine him crying out to his brothers, begging to be let out. They're sitting there enjoying their food. The Bible

doesn't tell us, but you can imagine them saying, "This food's good, Joseph. Are you thirsty, Joseph?"

We don't know exactly what they were doing, but we know they were cruel to him. Later we find out that they knew that they were cruel to him. They had no compassion for him, and they had no compassion for their father either. Remember, they were going to tell their father that his beloved son had been killed, slain by an animal. "Do you know who's coat this is, father? We think it might be Joseph's. Look at this coat. It's soaked in blood." They would think, "We didn't lie. Father is just jumping to the wrong conclusion." So, Jacob the deceiver, is himself deceived.

We know that Joseph winds up in Egypt, and becomes a slave. However, he prospers. God prospers him. He is thrown into jail. All sorts of horrible things happen to Joseph. But, we see that something else is happening in Joseph's life as well.

We see that for restoration to occur, the one who is aggrieved, the one who has been harmed, has to forgive those who have harmed him. We have to take the lead in restoration. Galatians 6:1 says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; con-

sidering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

The sinner is not going to come and ask forgiveness, unless he's brought. How did we come to the saving knowledge of Christ? We couldn't come unless the Father first drew us to Him. God was the aggrieved party in our lives, and is so when we sin.

We see that Joseph had forgiven his brothers and all the others who had sinned against him. We see that in the naming of his children in Genesis 41. Joseph is now second in power only to Pharaoh himself. He was a rich and powerful man.

Genesis 41:47-52, says: "And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." Joseph forgave and forgot the pain and bitterness of the offense.

So, in so naming his sons, he is openly proclaiming that God made him forgive and forget his troubles, and that God had made him prosper in a land which had brought him nothing but trouble. He received multiple blessings.

We see also in this naming of his sons that Joseph had a humble spirit. For us to be able to restore others, we have to have humble spirits. Otherwise, our back will be up and we will not want to restore; we will not

want to forgive. We're tempted to seek revenge for the Reubens, the Judahs, the Dans, and the Potiphars in our lives. Hurtful words and deeds can lead to bitterness. It was Reuben who said, "Let's not kill him! Throw him in the pit!" Judah became motivated by the profit. "If we kill him, we get nothing. Let's get something out of our brother, this Dreamer!" So, they sold him as a slave.

Their actions were rooted in bitterness. Joseph could have remained bitter and ready for revenge. Hurtful words and deeds can lead to bitterness, but we can ask for God's help — just as Joseph must have done. God will help us to overcome any root of bitterness within us, and he'll bless us superabundantly. Remember that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

So, the famine strikes throughout all of the Middle East. Jacob is an old man by now. His sons were out and about, and certainly would have heard before Jacob that there was food in Egypt. It should have been their idea to go to Egypt, but Jacob had to tell them to go. Why do you think that was? I think that the guilt — 20-some-odd years later — was still eating away at the brothers.

Why is it most of the time when someone offends us, they don't come to us and ask for forgiveness? The guilt is driving them as well. They don't want to face what they've done. They don't want to face us. It is the same with us and the Lord. Why does God have to be the one that draws us? We don't want to face our guilt. We don't want to admit that we are sinners in need of a Saviour.

We see in chapter 42:6 that Joseph has the chance for revenge. "And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's

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REDEEMING THE TIME

Editor: Brad K. Gsell

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brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.” Ah, the dream came true, didn’t it? They didn’t know it at the time, but the dream had already come true.

We know this because verses 7-10 say: “And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.” They thought, “How can we convince him?” So, they added more detail to their story.

In verse 11, they tell him: “We are all one man’s sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.” They were making the point that they were not coming as agents of a foreign power. They were all from one family. One family wouldn’t come to spy on the land. That would be a big risk for one family to take for another nation. They could all be wiped out at once.

Joseph has the chance for revenge. He could have revealed himself to them and pronounced victory: “Here you are bowing down, you cowards! Now you’re going to pay! You’ve fallen into my hands at last!” He could have had them tortured. He could have done all sorts of things to them.

But no, instead, he devises a test to see if they could be reconciled and to gather more information. In the process, they reveal something to him — that his father is still alive. He

finds out also that Benjamin is still alive. Joseph could have imagined: “If they went after me, who’s logically next? Benjamin is logically next. Benjamin might have been dead, but he finds out that he is still alive.

Joseph is going to continue to test them, to give them a means to realize their sin, to realize their crime, and to turn from it. If we don’t turn from our sins, our Father will take us out to the woodshed, won’t he? He’ll chastise us. Well, Joseph gives us a picture of that here. He gives them a taste of their own medicine. But, even in that, he is merciful. Instead of throwing them all in jail, Simeon is shackled in their midst and thrown into prison.

We can see that our attitudes are critical in our Christian walk. Joseph models humility, supportiveness, mercy, grace, generosity and unselfishness.

He puts Simeon in jail for three days. But, he assured them, “for I fear God.” He assured them that he feared the same God that they worshipped, and that he was going to treat them honestly and fairly. But, he also forces them to return with his little brother, Benjamin. He told them: “You are not going to see my face again, unless you bring your brother with you.” He wanted to see how they were treating Benjamin. He wanted to see what was going on in their lives.

Well, we see in Genesis 42:21-24 that the brothers have a breakthrough. They seem to pronounce their own guiltiness to Joseph, unknowingly. Remember that Joseph was speaking to them through an interpreter. They had no idea that he understood Hebrew. In verse 21, they say: “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he be-

sought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.” This is where I get the idea that Joseph cried out pitifully for aid when he was down in the pit. The brothers recognized that they were guilty, that they were responsible before God, that there was no one else to blame.

Isn’t that what we have to do to be reconciled to God? We have to admit that we are sinners, we are responsible for our actions. For there to be reconciliation, we have to admit what we have done. When we wrong someone and do not go through the necessary process to make things right with them and God, we often become subject to the very distress we have put them through — by our own guilt, by God’s chastisement.

The brothers are saying that they were feeling the same distress that Joseph had felt, and that they had seen in his face. Imagine, as they pulled him out of the pit, Joseph might have had a look of hope: “Finally, they are going to let me go.” But, what did they do? They said, “See you, Joseph. You’re gone.” He was put in chains and sent away.

What’s amazing is who is the one making this declaration for all the brothers? It’s the same one who had said, “Let’s not kill him. Let’s get a profit by selling him.” It’s Judah. There is an amazing transformation going on here. There has been a real change in heart and attitude. Of course, that is what God does for us. We have to admit our sinfulness and guilt to be saved, forgiven, and restored to fellowship. When we as Christians sin, we know that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The Prodigal Son is another Biblical example. He is the picture of a Christian, who goes off, backslides, away from his Father. What was his father doing the whole time he was away? He was looking for his son



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"For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" – Revelation 1:9

to return, wasn't he? When he saw him afar off, did he say: "Ah, that lousy son! Tell my servants to make him crawl and kiss my feet"? No, the father said, "It's my son!" He ran toward him.

The Bible says: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). That should be how it works horizontally as well. If we restore someone, they are going to "draw nigh," make a move towards us, and we can then pull them in.

So, Joseph becomes a picture of grace. Starting in verse 25 we see that all the brothers but Simeon are allowed to leave. Instead of revenge, there is amazing grace, despite the brothers' great cruelty. Not only do they have food, but they find their money restored. But, instead of being happy at the surprise, what is their reaction? They are frightened. "What's God done to us?" Very of-

ten, guilty people are frightened by good things happening to them, especially from those whom they have affronted.

Matthew 5:44 says: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." That's what we are supposed to be doing. That's the standard which Christ holds us to, and that's where we can see restoration. Often lack of restoration is our fault.

Romans 12:17,19-21: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.... Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt

heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

That's exactly what Joseph was doing. He didn't know these verses, but he was "heaping coals of fire" on his brothers' heads, and it was changing their perspective and their hearts.

1 Peter 3:9 tells us: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." When we do that, there's a promise involved, isn't there? We will be blessed, just as Joseph was.

Going back to our passage, we see in Genesis 42:28 the first explicit mention of God by the brothers: "And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it

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is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?" This is the first time they mentioned God. They are being reconciled to God as well. God is working in their lives. They have been in frightening circumstances. They have been accused of being spies. It was a matter of life and death.

So, they travel back to Jacob, and tell him the story. They still don't know that Joseph is alive. They want to go right back. That is a pretty amazing change in heart attitude as well. The old brothers would have said: "Tough luck, Simeon. We've got our food. Hope you do OK in prison. We're not telling our father anything. We'll just make up a story about Simeon." But, no, they go back and they tell the truth to their father. Pretty amazing, isn't it?!

The deceivers are beginning to tell the truth. They wanted to go right back to Egypt, but Jacob said, "No way! Joseph is lost from me. You lost Simeon from me. You're not going to lose Benjamin from me too!"

Then, Rueben makes a foolish offer. He says, "Well, if you let us go back and I lose Benjamin, you can kill my sons." Jacob wisely refused that offer. But, Rueben has now lost the credibility to be a leader. It falls to Judah. We see a change. Instead of indifference to the cries of Joseph, we see loyalty to the brother and integrity in dealing with the situation. Jacob finally gives in after Judah's intervention and allows Benjamin to go. This shows more change in Judah and his brothers. Jacob says, "You can go, but you're not going to take Benjamin. Judah responds that the others might as well not go either then, because without Benjamin they

would not be given any food. Finally, Judah tells his father that he would offer himself as surety for Benjamin. That finally convinces Jacob, and off the brothers go.

We see that they go back to Egypt and bow again. Both dreams are fulfilled. The first time they bowed in submission. This time they bow in homage, with gifts to Joseph.

We see here that Joseph now restores social etiquette. Turn with me to chapter 43:26-27: "And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and

Joseph is a picture of grace. Joseph is a picture of unmerited favor. He didn't wait for them to ask for forgiveness. He showed grace prior to that.

said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" He's asking about them. He's offering them peace, in a matter of speaking. Social etiquette has been restored.

In verse 29 we see that he has a special greeting for Benjamin, and the second test begins. Verse 29 says: "And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And [speaking to Benjamin now] he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son." We see the beginning of the second test in that he's starting to show what towards Benjamin? He's showing favoritism towards his brother. We know what happens. He sits them down to a feast. They all get an abundant amount of food, but Benjamin gets five times more — right in front of these brothers who resent and envy those who get more than they do!

Just imagine! You are invited into a royal home and fed a feast. And, lo and behold, Simeon is there, and he's not in chains! And look! He has sent the other Egyptians out, and has sat them at a special table! Their fear gradually changes, and they are starting to enjoy themselves. They notice that they are seated in order by age. "How did that happen?" Joseph's grace freed everyone up. They were able to relax. No more anxiety; no more dread. They are being treated as guests of honor. They are able to relax in the joyful presence of royalty. That's what we are going to have in heaven, isn't it?

They had done nothing to earn his kindness, and he did not remind them of their wrongs, or make them pay for their cruelty and injustice. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). When we get to heaven and are at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Lord is not going to call us aside and say, "You enjoy this meal, but you just remember what you did." No, God has buried your sins and my sins as deep as the ocean.

Joseph is a picture of grace. Joseph is a picture of unmerited favor. He didn't wait for them to ask for forgiveness. He showed grace prior to that.

Well, there is still another test. He wants to see if this apparent heart change is real. Remember that Joseph was Rachel's oldest son, and Jacob's favorite son. Now, Joseph is about to create another situation where Rachel's other son, and Jacob's current favorite — Benjamin — is threatened with slavery. Well, the brothers have a choice. They can take great personal risk, or they can abandon Benjamin for personal gain. They could profit again. The trap is sprung.

The brothers joyfully go on their way home. Imagine their conversations as they discussed all that had happened. But, suddenly, they were

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stopped by Joseph's steward who asked them: "How dare you steal my master's cup — his silver cup — after all the kindness he has shown you?" Imagine their reaction: "What are you talking about? We have done no such thing! Why would we do that after such kindness? Go ahead and search!" Imagine their growing sense of vindication as each sack after sack was checked: "See, there's no cup there." But, horror of horrors, there in Benjamin's sack was the cup. Imagine their consternation, their shock.

Before the search began, they had made a foolish pronouncement: "Whoever's sack you find it in, you just kill him." What are they going to tell their father now? Their own words could be used against them. They could have abandoned Benjamin, but they went back to the city, back to Joseph's house, and told him, "We'll all be your slaves." The implication was that they were asking for Joseph to let Benjamin go. Joseph replied in chapter 44:17: "God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father." What happens? Profit-loving Judah, hateful Judah, offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin!

Didn't Jesus do that for us? Judah is a picture of Christ here. Judah and his brothers show self-sacrificing love. They passed the test with flying colors. Now Joseph knows that he can fully restore his relationship with his brothers. They were concerned about their brother and what this would do to their father. They weren't concerned about that before, were they? What a change of character!

Joseph had been modeling submission to God, and reconciliation. He had another tempting chance to kill them. But, no! In chapter 50:20, Joseph says: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass,



Top: The ACCC Executive Committee met before the Annual Convention. **Bottom (left to right):** Dr. Ralph Colas, Executive Secretary of the ACCC; Dr. John McKnight, President of the ACCC; Dr. Edward Panosian, of Bob Jones University, was one of the excellent speakers at the Convention, which was held from October 23-25, 2012, at the Cedar View Independent Methodist Church of Kingsport, TN.

as it is this day, to save much people alive." He told them that their evil deeds were all part of God's plan.

We know Romans 8:28, which says: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Acts 2:23 states: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have

taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Even the most wicked devices of evil men, in slaying our Lord — and we would have done the same — were overturned and used by God for His purposes, for our salvation. Yet, we often fight being restored to God or others, because of guilt.

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Philippians 3:13-14 says: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Sometimes we think: “God could never use me. I’m too terrible a sinner. I know I’ve been forgiven, but God can never use me.”

The Apostle Paul was complicit in murder; he was a persecutor. He had a lot to feel guilty about. But, he said that he forgets “those things which are behind,” and “press[es] toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” That’s what we need to do.

Joseph cleared the room. He knew that, if he didn’t, the story would get out. He didn’t want his brothers to be humiliated in front of the Egyptians — for others to know the depths of their depravity. He weeps aloud, openly expressing his emotion. Men can weep. In Genesis 45:4,5, Joseph says: “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.”

We can see that our attitudes are critical in our Christian walk. Joseph models humility, supportiveness, mercy, grace, generosity and unselfishness. He tells them to go and bring their father. He knows them well and tells them not to fight on the way back.

We see that restoration is not normally going to be solicited by guilty parties. The injured have to

make the first overture — just as the Father draws us; just as the Holy Spirit convicts us.

Even years later, when Jacob died, the brothers still realized the dreadful evil of their actions against Joseph, and could not fully comprehend his forgiveness. They sent a messenger unto Joseph asking him to have mercy upon them, now that their father was dead, and Joseph did not have to fear bringing grief to him. And here, Joseph offers up these two little words: “BUT GOD....” “But God meant it for good.... Now therefore fear ye not.” They had been restored. •



Keith McCoy is an elder in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Collingswood, NJ. He presented this Bible study at the 2012 Family Camp of Faith Presbytery, Bible Presbyterian Church.