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Which Shall It Be?

Which shall it be, lads? which shall it be?
God, or the devil, bond or free?
Will you boldly and cheerfully take your stand
With the chosen few, with the noble band,
Who are steadfastly doing all they can
For God and the right and fallen man!
Or will you sink, debased and blind,
To herd with the rusk of humankind?
God, or the devil, bond or free—
Which shall it be, lads? which shall it be?

Which shall it be? The home life sweet,
Gay with the patter of tiny feet;
Or the squalid tap-room, grimy and grim?
The drunkard's curse, or the children's hymn?
Wrecked lives, or the strength that never flags,
Peace and plenty, or ruin and rags?
Which shall it be, lads? which shall it be?
Which shall it be? Two paths lie here—
The right leads upwards, the left, ah! where?
Others may give you counsel true,
But the choice, dear lads, is for you, for you!
And remember now in your seeding-time;
The sot's bent back, or the saint's bent knee—
Which shall it be lads? which shall it be?

The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 2, Oct. 13 1901

JOSEPH IN PRISON.—Genesis 39 : 20-40 : 15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy.* —Gen. 39 : 21.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time. — Thirteen years, B. C, 1729-1716. Ten in slavery, and three in prison.

It is generally thought now that the events of Joseph's life took place during the supremacy of the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, who had ruled in Egypt for a long time before Abraham.

Joseph was 17 years old when he entered Egypt; about 22 years old when made ruler of Potiphar's estates; about 17 years old when put in prison; about 30 years old when ruler of Egypt.

Jacob was still living at Hebron with eleven sons. He was 108 to 121 years old

LESSONS JOSEPH LEARNED.

In our last lesson we left Joseph in the hands of the Midianites, who had bought him as a slave. It was a great change for him from being a favorite son of a wealthy sheik to the rough treatment and hard fare of a slave; and it doubtless was a great mystery to him why God should have permitted it. The wicked seemed to triumph, and the righteous to be defeated.

In studying this portion of Joseph's life, note two things: In every life there are two elements intertwined, the divine element and the human. God's providence and man's free choice. Our success in life, the kind of success, depends upon both. All the open doors in the world are of no use if we have not prepared to enter them. We have seen the human element in Joseph's life his faithfulness, purity, energy, skill, courage, piety, discipline. He was what is usually called a self-made man.

The divine element is as clearly seen. All through his life there was a providence and guidance. It opened doors, it prepared ways, it directed the concurring actions of men.

While God was preparing a place for Joseph in which to accomplish his life-work, he was also preparing him for the place. There were thirteen years of schooling needful, in a very hard school. Joseph was gold ore that must pass through the smelting furnace to get rid of the dross.

Compare David's early experience with the sheep, with the sling, with the lyre, in the open fields, in Saul's court, in outlaw banishment, as a preparation for his kingdom.

THE INFLUENCE OF A NEW CIVILIZATION.—Egypt was at this time the most flourishing kingdom the world had known. It was cultured in the arts,—in learning, in architecture, printing, writing, weaving, etc. So that when Joseph entered into the cultivated city life of Egypt, it was a bewildering sight to the shepherd lad.

All these things he saw were (1) a trial and a test of Joseph's character. He grew strong by resisting them, by holding on to the true God, by retaining his purity. He knew about evil, as he had never known before, but only by observation. (2) They broadened his outlook, they enlarged his nature, they furnished him with culture and polish which he would need in Pharaoh's court.

OBEDIENCE.—Joseph, when he reached Egypt, was sold to Potiphar, "the captain of the guard." The military caste in Egypt ranked next to the priesthood; and the entire force consisted of 410,000 men, a thousand serving each for a king's body-guard. Potiphar was probably the captain of one of these thousands, and a man of great honor and influence. Joseph felt the degradation of a slave. Three lessons Joseph learned in this school, all of which he needed in later life.

1. He learned to obey. No one can govern well who has not learned to be governed.

2 He learned how those governed or employed should be treated.

3. He learned how they could improve their condition; how honesty, faithfulness, unselfishness, love to God, could do more than all else to elevate them.

FAITHFULNESS.—Joseph was so wise, so faithful, so blessed of God, that he was soon raised to a high position in Potiphar's household, and had general control of all his affairs. When his fellow-servants were squandering the golden moments, Joseph was filling them with activities.

The lesson is that faithfulness in little things is the only way to great things. Piety is just as beautiful in a hovel as in a palace; faithfulness, truth, courage, honor, are no more noble on the throne than in a factory or on a farm; love, gentleness, self-denial, are as blessed in the kitchen as in the parlor.

TRUST IN GOD.—We are told, concerning Joseph, that "the Lord was with him." He had learned to love and serve God in his youth, and he still served and loved him. The Lord is with those who obey him; with those who are righteous for his sake; with those who open their hearts to him. Joseph had reason to cling to God in his adversity. He had had opportunity to meditate upon him, and his law, and commune with Him, while he was in a strange land, speaking a strange tongue. Joseph learned to keep close to his God.

BUSINESS PRINCIPLES AND METHODS.—The work Joseph had to do in managing Potiphar's estate was an excellent training for his future high position

SELF-CONTROL.—For nearly ten years Joseph was a slave, rising from the lowest position to the highest. Then came his severest temptations from the wife of his master Potiphar. There was much more than passion to tempt him. An intrigue with Potiphar's wife might lead to the very advancement he sought. Joseph was lonely. He desired to please. Expressions of love and sympathy, admiration and recognition, met a craving of his spiritual nature. There was little outward restraint. Lawless love was popular and common.

Joseph resisted temptation, and kept his self control (1) by recognizing the fact that it was sin against God; and (2) by recognizing the fact that it was treachery toward his master. To have yielded would have been to lose all he had gained, and blot out his unknown future.

PATIENCE AND FAITH.—Vs. 20-23. *And Joseph's master....put him into prison.* The immediate result of faithfulness was a loss of reputation, suffering under false accusations, a slur upon his religion, and worse sufferings than he had hitherto endured. Joseph's imprisonment seems to have been at first very severe. He was bound in fetters. *The Lord was with Joseph.* Just as he was in Potiphar's house. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa. 43 : 2, 3). *Gave him favour.* Through his character, manners, and past conduct. So that the jailor released Joseph from his fetters and dungeon. *Committed to Joseph's hands all the prisoners.* This gave him new power for good to help others. Many of these men were not criminals, but political prisoners, like the chief butler and baker. Joseph was now 27 years old. He, doubtless, was praying and hoping for release (Gen. 40 : 14, 15), and wondered why the deliverance was so long delayed. But the time was not ripe yet. He gained strength, grip, power to rule.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE COURT AND GOVERNMENT.—Vs. 1 4. *The butler.* The chief of the butlers (v. 2). The cupbearer, like Nehemiah, was a councilor, statesman, courtier, and favorite. He was a man of great ability, wealth, and influence. The cupbearer had a special privilege of admission to the august presence of their sovereign. The king's life was in their hands. *The baker.* He had the superintendence of providing and preparing meats for the royal table. He, too, was a high officer. *Had offended their lord.* What they had done we do not know. *Charged Joseph with them.* So that he was brought into familiar contact with them. This was of great advantage to Joseph in view of what was (unknown to him) before him. It gave him ample opportunity to become acquainted with the court and its ways, with details of the government, and with the general condition of the people.

A LESSON OF INSIGHT.—Vs 5-8 These men *dreamed a dream both of them.* They told their dreams, and Joseph interpreted them, asking as a return favor that the chief butler who was to be restored should remember him and procure his release.

Notice 1 That the best way to assuage his own sorrow was to minister to the sorrow of others.

2. "Joseph's willingness to interpret the dreams of his fellow-prisoners proves that he still believed in his own. Had he not yet hoped that somehow God would bring truth out of them, he would surely have said, 'Don't you believe in dreams; they will only get you into difficulties.'"

3 Joseph in becoming the interpreter of the dreams of other men became the fulfiller of his own

4 For two years longer his faith was tried. Like his great grandfather Abraham, he was tested again and again, waiting for deliverance. God's providence was over him, leading him in the best and surest way to his life-work and success.

Eyes Open.

Rachie went off to school, wondering if Aunt Amy could be right.

I will keep my eyes open, she said to herself. She stopped a moment to watch old Mrs. Bert, who sat beside her door binding shoes. She was just now trying to thread a needle, but it was hard work for her dim eyes.

Why, if there isn't work for me! exclaimed Rachie. I never should have thought of it if it hadn't been for Aunt Amy. Stop Mrs. Bert; let me do that for you.

Thank you, my little lassie. My poor old eyes are worn out, you see. I can get along with coarse work yet, but sometimes it takes me five minutes to thread my needle. And the day will come when I can't work, and then what will become of a poor old woman?

Mamma would say the Lord would take care of you, said Rachie very softly, for she felt she was too little to be saying such things.

And you say it too, dearie. Go on to school, now. You've given me your bit of help and your comfort too.

But Rachie got hold of the needle-book, and was bending over it with busy fingers.

See! she said, I've threaded six needles for you to go on with, and when I come back I'll thread some more.

May the sunshine be bright to your eyes, little one! said the old woman as Rachie skipped away.

Come and play, Rachie, cried many voices, as she drew near the play ground.

Which side will you be on?

But there was a little girl with a very downcast face sitting on the porch

What's the matter, Jennie, asked Rachie, going to her.

I can't make this add up, said Jennie, in a discouraged tone, pointing to a few smeary figures on her slate.

Let me see; I did that example at home last night. Oh, you forgot to carry ten. See?

So I did.

The example was finished, and Jennie was soon at play with the others.

Rachie kept her eyes open all the day, and was surprised to find how many ways there were of doing kindness which went far toward making the day happier. Try it, girls and boys, and you will see for yourselves.

Will you look here, Miss Rachie! Bridget was sitting on the porch, looking dolefully at a bit of paper which lay on the kitchen table she had carried there.

It's a letter I'm after writing to me mother, an' it's fearin' I am she'll niver be able to rade it, because I can't rade it mesilf. Can you rade it at all, Miss Rachie? It's all the afternoon I've been at it.

Rachie tried with all her might to read poor Bridget's queer scrawl, but she was obliged to give it up.

I'll write one for you some day, Bridget, she said. I'm going over to Jennie's to play 'I spy' now.

The fresh air and bird songs and the soft winds made it very pleasant to be out of doors after being in school all day, and her limbs fairly ached for a good run. But she turned at the gate for another look at Bridget's woe-be-gone face.

I'll do it now, Bridget, she said, going back.

It was not an easy task, for writing was slow work for her; but she formed each letter with pains taking little fingers, and when she had finished felt repaid by Bridget's warm thanks and the satisfied feeling of duty well done.

"Our Master has taken His journey
To a country that's far away.'

Aunt Amy heard the cheery notes floating up the stairs, telling of the approach of the little worker.

I've been keeping my eyes open, Aunt Amy, and there's plenty and plenty to do.—Selected.

How a Sunday School Committee May Help the Sunday School.

1. They can make a thorough canvass of the district in which the church is located, for recruits to the school. A full list should be kept of the names of children who are not attending any school, that they may be visited again, if they fail to accept the first invitation.

2 They can be at the door of the Sunday school room every Sunday, to welcome new scholars, supply them with hymn-books and Bibles, and assign them to classes.

3. They can organize a class of volunteer teachers—those who will pledge themselves to study the lessons and to supply the places of the regular teachers when the latter are absent.

4. They can invite the older scholars to attend the C E meeting. This can be done either by visitation, or by sending a note of invitation, sent to each teacher, to be read before the class.

These are only a few of the can be dones that will suggest themselves to a wide-awake Sunday-school committee. In many places important missions have grown out of the labors of these committees in opening and maintaining schools in neglected neighborhoods. There is scarcely a society that could not well undertake such a work, if it were under the guidance of a wise committee.—Christian Guardian.

Frightening Children.

Little Arthur R——, while visiting his grandmma, came screaming

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...deceived. Would it not be much better to retain their loving confidence at any cost? It may take more time and trouble to secure obedience by firm and loving discipline, yet it is much better for both child and parent.—Aunt Jean in Christian Observer.

We are never free from temptation's presence, though we may be from its power.

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A Dinner Pill.—Many persons suffer excruciating agony after partaking of a hearty dinner. The food partaken of is like a ball of lead upon the stomach, and instead of being a healthy nutriment it becomes a poison to the system. Dr. Parmelee's Vegetable Pills are wonderful correctives of such troubles. They correct acidity, open secretions and convert the food partaken of into healthy nutriment. They are just the medicine to take if troubled with Indigestion or Dyspepsia.

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