IX. **Joseph Reunited with His Brothers**

31-Jul-05  Genesis 44:18-45:28

**Theme:** While God is not the author of sin, His providential control extends over the sinful actions of men; God's sovereignty does not deny man’s responsibility.

**Key Verses:** Genesis 45:4b-8  

> 4Then he said: “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.  
> 5But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.  
> 6For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.  
> 7And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.  
> 8So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

**Review**

Last week we looked at Genesis 43 and the first half of Genesis 44. That is, we looked at the eighth panel and the first half of the ninth panel in the Joseph Story. Back in Canaan, the second year of the famine is being felt by Jacob and sons. Jacob is reluctant to send his sons back to Egypt, because he knows it will mean facing up to the possibility of losing Benjamin as well. Judah steps up to the forefront as the leader of the brothers and convinces Jacob to let Benjamin go with them, offering himself as Benjamin’s surety. Jacob realizes that he has no choice, coming to grips with the sovereignty of God and the will of man. Once he reaches this point, we can see a change in Jacob’s attitude as he submits to the will of God and is accepting of whatever should happen. Once again, he is Israel, the servant of God Almighty.

In Egypt, Joseph treats his brothers with kindness, inviting them to his home and giving them a banquet in their honor. The brothers continue to be suspicious of Joseph’s motives, and they attempt to return the money from their first trip. However, the steward assures them in the name of their God that it is not necessary. They are put at ease by the release of Simeon and the kind treatment they receive. The banquet is a time of relaxation and enjoyment. Two small things threaten to upset the joy of the feast: the seating arrangements that show inside knowledge into their lives, and the favoritism shown to Benjamin; but neither of these dampen their joy.

As the brothers prepare to return to Canaan, Joseph sets up his final and most severe test of the brothers. By planting his silver cup in Benjamin’s sack, Joseph frames Benjamin for theft. Joseph’s demand that Benjamin remain behind as a slave because of the theft while the other brothers can go free puts them in a familiar dilemma: Should they leave a son of Rachel in slavery in Egypt and return to their father? Or should they remain as slaves themselves in exchange for Benjamin? The old brothers would have left town in a heart-beat. How about these “new” brothers? Had they really changed?

That is what Joseph wants to find out. And he will find out this morning, in our latest installment of: *As the World Turns* – I mean – The Joseph Story.

**Introduction**

If you remember, last week we began to diverge from following the panels of the Joseph Story. So we covered the eighth panel and half of the ninth last week. Today, we will be coving the second half of the ninth panel and the first half of the tenth panel.
Structure of Panel 9

a  Joseph’s plan (44:1-2)
   b  Joseph sets up brothers (44:3-6)
   c  brothers’ denial (44:7-13)
      d  CENTER: Joseph makes Benjamin his slave (44:14-17)
   c’  Judah’s plea on Benjamin’s behalf (44:18-34)
   b’  Joseph reveals himself to brothers (45:1-4)

a  God’s plan (45:5-15)
   • “God sent me before you to preserve life”

Structure of Panel 10

a  pharaoh’s invitation and generosity to Joseph’s family (45:16-20)
   • they are invited to dwell in Egypt, in the best of the land

b  Joseph’s instructions to brothers about journey home (45:21-24)
   c  Jacob is told that Joseph is alive (45:25-28)
      • Jacob’s joyous response: “My son Joseph is still alive! I will go and see him before I die!”
   d  CENTER: Jacob and entire family come to Egypt (46:1-27)
   c’  Jacob sees Joseph alive (46:28-30)
      Jacob says, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive”
   b’  Joseph’s instructions to brothers about meeting with pharaoh (46:31-34)

a’  pharaoh’s reception of, and generosity to, Joseph’s family (47:1-12)
   • they are invited to dwell in Egypt, in the best of the land

A. Judah Pleads (44:18-34)

“And as for you, go up in peace to your father” (45:17). These are the words that are still echoing in the room. Joseph’s trap has been neatly sprung. Benjamin’s life now belongs to Joseph as a slave. But the other brothers are free to go. Will they?

Perhaps the “old brothers” would have left their youngest brother, the second son of Rachel, behind in Egypt as a slave, just as they had sold the first son of Rachel into Egyptian slavery 22 years before. But these weren’t the old brothers. God had been using Joseph to do a work of grace in their hearts. And now through the speech of Judah, we can see the fruit of that work. Judah steps up again as the spokesman for the brothers, the leader of his family. Judah’s speech goes from verse 18 to 34 and is the longest speech in the book of Genesis.

As we consider Judah’s speech, remember that this fellow, who pleads for the life of Benjamin in chapter 44, is the same man who coldly counseled his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery in chapter 37. A lot has changed in twenty-two years! As Wallace puts it: “Judah, already a completely transformed man, is simply pouring out the prayer of his heart, turning towards God in a clinging desperate hope that he and his young brother Benjamin — and his father too — maybe shown mercy by God, in their otherwise helpless need.”

Judah begins his plea to Joseph by remembering the past and what has brought them all to this point. Part of this speech would be familiar with Joseph, since Judah rehearses their previous interactions (44:19-23). However, Judah also relates events that Joseph would have no way of knowing — their dealings with Jacob back in the land of Canaan (44:24-29). And it is in this part of Judah’s speech that Joseph begins to learn the impact of his disappearance upon his father. “He hears of his father’s lament and grief that still persists; he hears the father’s cry ‘torn to pieces, torn to pieces!’ which still echoes in the brothers’ ears” (Wenham).
After rehearsing the past, Judah turns to the present predicament in vv. 30-31. The reality of the situation regarding Benjamin is that his loss will mean the death of Jacob. Jacob’s life is so bound up in Benjamin that he would die of sorrow and grief – of a broken heart – if Benjamin did not return. It is obvious in Judah’s words that he had great affection and deep love for his father; emotions which seemed to be absent from Judah twenty-two years previously.

The climax of Judah’s speech is his selfless offer of substitution in the place of Benjamin (44:32-34). Here we see Judah willing to sacrifice himself in the place of his half-brother on behalf of his father. Wenham proclaims: “No more moving example of true contrition and repentance is to be found in Scripture, unless it be the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15).” Baldwin says: “It is a vivid example of the change that God can bring about in a person, even someone as ‘earthy’ as Judah. The Lord had been at work to make his people what he wanted them to become.”

Clearly Judah has had a change of heart. And since Judah is the spokesman or representative of the brothers, by inference we can see that they have changed as well. Joseph’s series of actions has accomplished God’s objective of breaking the sinful spirits of these men and bringing them to repentance and conversion.

In fact, in Judah’s offer, we see a glimmer of the gospel. Judah offered himself up as a substitute to release Benjamin from slavery, because he loved both his brother and his father who had sent him to Egypt. In a greater way, Jesus Christ, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, offered up His life as a ransom for many men and women to release them from slavery to sin and death, as He submitted to the will of His Father in Heaven.

B. Joseph Reveals (45:1-15)

1. Joseph’s Revelation (45:1-4)

Joseph can no longer control himself. He is now certain that his brothers have changed and repented of their sin. Judah’s plea has convinced them of that. He clears the room of the servants and reveals his true identity to the brothers. We learn that word quickly reached Pharaoh (45:2, 16), so no doubt the servants were listening at the doors. But even if they weren’t close at hand, Joseph’s weeping was loud enough for any to hear. After twenty-two years, Joseph’s pent-up emotions are released as he is reunited with his brothers.

James Boice paints an interesting parallel at this point between Joseph and Jesus. In verses 1-4 he notes four propositions that relate Joseph to Jesus. “First, Joseph knew his brothers before they knew him. Is it not strange that we should fail to know and recognize the God who has created us or the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Savior? We did not know him; but He knows us, and He has known us from the beginning. He knows you profoundly, deeply. He knows the secrets, even the most guilty secrets of your heart. This was the case with Joseph and his brothers. The brothers had confessed their sin to each other but never openly, and they supposed that there was not a creature in the universe who knew of it and was therefore capable of exposing their transgression. Yet Joseph knew. He had known all along, and was now bringing what he knew to light. So also does the Lord Jesus Christ know you.”

Second, “Joseph loved his brothers when they did not love him. They hated him at first, so much that they sold him into slavery. Yet Joseph loved them and was actually acting toward them in love, although they did not know it. Moreover, Joseph loved them deeply. How deeply appears in this story as, overcome before Judah’s poignant pleadings for Benjamin, Joseph breaks down
and has to require his Egyptian attendants to leave him (Gen. 45:1). It would have been a surprise if Joseph had not broken down at this point. True. But what are we to say of Jesus, whom we see weeping over Jerusalem? Was there ever a love like his? Joseph’s love was great, but Jesus’ love is greater. It is beyond all tracing out.”

“Third, Joseph saved them before they were aware of their salvation. Everything that has happened in the story to this point has been an aspect of the salvation of these godless men, which God was affecting through Joseph. Yet they did not know it, and here—when they had actually repented of their sin and had given evidence of having become regenerated people—they were so unaware of what had happened that they were “terrified” and feared a harsh revenge at Joseph’s hands (v. 3). Moreover, these brothers were not only overwhelmed with their guilt but conscious that they were in Joseph’s absolute power. He was the monarch. He could do with them according to his good pleasure.”

“The last parallel between Joseph and Jesus in this story is this: Joseph called his brothers when they would have preferred to run from him, and he called effectively. This is the way Joseph’s announcement of his identity ends. He had told them who he was, and they were terrified. But he commanded them to ‘come close’ to him; and although they must have feared that it was because he wished to harm them, to their surprise they discovered that it was not an angry master who so called, but a loving brother. Joseph was not calling them in anger. He had turned them from sin; they were changed men. Jesus is calling you as your brother, just as Joseph called his brothers: ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt’ (v. 4). You have done that and more to Jesus. But that is of no account now. Jesus is calling you as your brother, who loves you and is willing to provide for you both now and for eternity.”

2. Joseph’s God (45:5-8)

Now we come to the theological heart of the passage, and indeed, of the whole Joseph Story. Three times in four verses (45:5-8), Joseph declares that God has sent him to Egypt. He doesn’t deny that the brothers sold him into slavery; but he proclaims that the providence of God controls even the sinful actions of men. As Joseph speaks to his brothers, notice how theo-centric he is. God is the subject of his speech; God is the one who had controlled the events of the past twenty-two years; God has accomplished it all.

Boice comments: “Nothing is more characteristic of Joseph than his ability to relate everything that happened to him to God. By looking past secondary causes to God, who is the first cause, Joseph gained a stabilizing perspective on life and achieved a frame of mind out of which he was able to forgive and reassure his brothers. It is a perspective to be held by every Christian.” This is applied theology – taking what you know in your head and applying it in the situations of life. Let’s take a few minutes to examine Joseph’s theology and how he applies it.

a. God’s Providence (45:5-6)

“You sold me … God sent me” (45:5). In these few words we have a succinct summary of the doctrine of God’s providence. The Westminster Confession of Faith defines God’s providence as His upholding, directing, disposing, and governing of all Creation:

WCF V.1. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.
The two aspects of God’s providence that are on display for us here in the Joseph Story are God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility.

i. God’s Sovereignty
First, let us consider God’s sovereignty. Joseph tells his brothers three times that God had sent him to Egypt. It was God’s sovereign will for Joseph to go to Egypt. Even though the brothers had sold him into slavery, it was according to God’s will. In verses 8-9, Joseph states that God had raised him up to be the lord of all Egypt. Even though Pharaoh had raised Joseph up, it was according to God’s will.

We can see from Joseph’s assertions that God’s sovereign will is accomplished, amongst other ways, through the actions of men. Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery; Pharaoh raised Joseph up; but all of these actions were done according to God’s will. The WCF is consistent at this point, teaching us that God (the first Cause) uses secondary causes and means to accomplish His will:

WCF V.2. Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

WCF V.3. God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure.

Second, let’s consider man’s responsibility. Although God is sovereign, men are still responsible for their actions. We are not mindless robots; we have the freedom to exercise our wills. However, since the natural man is fallen and corrupt, he naturally chooses that which is sinful. We can see this worked out in the Joseph Story. Twice Joseph says that his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. There is no denying their responsibility for this sinful action. Yes, it is true that God used their sinful actions to accomplish a glorious purpose – the salvation of the world from famine, and the conversion of the sinful hearts of these very same brothers – but that does not alleviate their responsibility for the sin.

Sin is a reality in this fallen world. We are all impacted by it. Death, disease, conflict, sorrow, pain – all of these are consequences of sin. And when we sin, there will be consequences for us. There certainly were consequences for Jacob’s family. “That God used the brothers’ hatred to
send Joseph to Egypt does not, according to Genesis, excuse that hate. The story spends most of its time portraying the cost of this hatred to the whole family: Jacob’s unquenchable grief, Joseph’s unjust imprisonment, and the brothers’ own guilty consciences. Full forgiveness and reconciliation only become possible after Judah has demonstrated a sincere repentance in his words and in his willingness to take Benjamin’s place. Though Genesis emphatically states that God uses the sins of Joseph’s brothers for good, it nowhere excuses their sins or pretends they can be forgotten; rather, they needed to be acknowledged and repented of” (Wenham).

We need to be very careful here. God is 100% sovereign; man is 100% responsible. That is “Biblical math.” God uses man’s responsibility through providence to accomplish His sovereign will. But that does not make Him the author of sin or responsible for the sin. God’s sovereignty does not lessen man’s responsibility or guilt. Once again, the WCF is very clear on this point:

WCF V.4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

iii. Reconciliation

Joseph knew these things. He knew that his brothers were responsible for selling him into slavery; but he also knew that God had sovereignly allowed it to occur in order to fulfill His greater purposes. This is where our theology becomes intensely practical. Joseph could have been bitter against his brothers for their sin; instead he forgave them because he understood God’s sovereignty. Joseph’s theology led to reconciliation with his brothers. As Ross puts it, “this theology is the basis of reconciliation. No one who believes in the sovereignty of God in the affairs of life can bear a grudge or take revenge.”

That’s easy to say in Sunday school, but harder to live out in day-to-day life. And yet we must. We must take our doctrine, our theology, our “head knowledge” and emulate Joseph. We must take that knowledge and apply it to the situations of daily life. We must forgive those that wrong us. We must not grow bitter against man or against God when circumstances don’t turn out according to our plans. We must remember that “all things work together for together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” We must live like Joseph did, trusting in God in all circumstances. “May God give us the grace and spirit of Joseph” (Eveson).

The ultimate collision of God’s sovereignty and man’s sinful responsibility took place in the crucifixion and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:22-23 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death.

It was God’s eternal purpose to send the Son to die to redeem sinners; but sinful men were responsible for Christ’s death. Here we have the perfect balance of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. The greatest good in all the world was born out of the greatest evil ever
committed. And the result was reconciliation between God and man. If God can enact the ministry of reconciliation in this way, how much more so should we be reconciled one to another?

One final thought. In this lesson we have two long speeches, one by Judah (44:18-34) and the other by Joseph (45:3-12). The theme of Judah’s speech is man’s responsibility, while the theme of Joseph’s speech is God’s sovereignty. Both sides of Providence are displayed for us.

b. God’s Deliverance (45:7-8)

So far, we’ve talked a lot about Providence in terms of God’s responsibility and man’s sovereignty. We’ve talked about the “what.” But now, let’s talk about the “why.” Why does God providentially control all things? The confession reminds us: “according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.” In other words, to accomplish His will.

And in verse 7, Joseph describes the will of God that has been accomplished through the events of the Joseph Story: “And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity (remnant) for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (45:7).

Remnant and deliverance — these are two key words in the concept of salvation. So we see that the whole of the Joseph Story comes down to salvation, to redemption, to saving a remnant for Himself. This has been accomplished both physically and spiritually.

God has physically saved the lives of Jacob’s family through the great deliverance made possible by Joseph. The severe famine has been presented as a matter of life and death throughout the story. The first time Jacob sends the brothers to Egypt, it is so that they “may live and not die” (42:2). Before the second trip, Judah reminds Jacob of the same thing: “Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones” (43:8).

The famine was severe – it was a life and death matter. And so in God’s providence, Joseph was sent to Egypt to prepare for the famine that was to come. And through that providence, Jacob’s family was able to survive. God had delivered them from physical death through the ministry of Joseph. In a sense, Joseph is presented to us as a new Noah, used by God to “preserve life (45:5) and “to save your lives” (45:7; cp. 6:19-20; 7:3). “Jacob and his offspring are like a remnant who have escaped destruction and become a sign of future hope” (Eveson).

But even more importantly, God has delivered the sons of Israel from certain spiritual death. God has used Joseph in chapters 42-45 to bring about an even greater deliverance of the brothers – no less than the conversion and salvation of their immortal souls. The remnant that Joseph speaks of here is most likely referring to spiritual salvation. This language is often used in the prophets to refer to God’s elect, those whom He chooses to save. As we will see next week, the size of the remnant is small – only 70 people – but they are the foundation from which will spring a great multitude of God’s people.

God is also furthering the fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham. Egypt has received great blessing through their association with Joseph. The entire world has been blessed, being fed by Joseph during a time of severe famine. And God is continuing to grow His remnant. Thus, as God has protected His people through His providential care, blessings have fallen on the
entire world. This is another Biblical principle that is highlighted in the WCF chapter on God’s Providence:

WCF V.7. As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.

God has shown His special love to His church, the children of Israel, through the ministry of His servant Joseph. Realization of this truth puts the whole Joseph Story into perspective. God was present the entire time, guiding events for this outcome. And God is present in your story as well. Even if you don’t sense Him, He is there. Even when you feel like God has abandoned you, He is working out His will in your life. Don’t give up on God; He will never give up on you. But it might not be until you reach the end of your own story that you can see how God accomplished all things for good. Take encouragement from Joseph – the end of the story makes the pain and suffering in the middle all worthwhile.

3. Joseph’s Provision (45:9-13)

Having spent most of our time on the doctrine of providence, we will cover the rest of the chapter more briefly. In verses 9-13, Joseph invites his family to live in Egypt. He gives the brothers instructions about what to say to Jacob to convince him to come. But notice how God is still at the center of Joseph’s thoughts, even when he stops talking theology and is now talking practical logistics? “Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph: “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry”’” (45:9). They are to explain to Jacob all of the glory (Heb. kabod) that God has given to Joseph. God is the one who made Joseph who he was – and the brothers and Jacob were not to forget that. Joseph was a living display of God’s providence.

Joseph offers to his father and brothers the land of Goshen in which to live. This offer will soon be ratified by Pharaoh. It appears as if Goshen was in the eastern part of the Nile delta, near Tanis. It may have been part of the royal estates, which would explain why such fertile land would have been unpopulated. Because of Joseph’s esteemed position, he was able to offer this land to the children of Israel. This was no idle offer. Again in God’s providence, Goshen was to become the incubator for the nation of Israel. We’ve already seen in Genesis 38 that there were too many temptations in the land of Canaan for the people of God to remain pure. Therefore, God in His wisdom will bring the sons of Israel to a deserted part of Egypt in order to grow them into a nation.


After Joseph settles the matter of provision for his family, he gets down to the business of reacquainting himself with his brothers. His love comes pouring out through his tears and his hugs, and his conversations. It is natural that he would weep over Benjamin. Benjamin was his full brother, the little brother he had never known. But Joseph also weeps over the other ten brothers. These were the ones who had wronged him so badly. And yet Joseph has truly forgiven them and is now reunited and restored to them. Again, Joseph reminds us of Christ, who reconciles sinners to Himself and forgives their iniquity against Him.

Boice summarizes: “Joseph showed four things in this incident. He showed genuine humanity, for he was not aloof from the common emotions of humankind. He too was lonely; he too was subject to tears. He was not afraid to show this. Second, he demonstrated great love, just as Jesus showed love in giving Himself for His brethren. Third, Joseph modeled true forgiveness.
He had been wronged, but he did not hold the wrong against his brothers. Rather, he reached out to them to forgive the wrong and allay their fears. Fourth, he acted in profound wisdom, for he knew enough to take time to reestablish a good relationship with these men and let them know that his love for them and his forgiveness of them were both real and permanent.

C. Return to Canaan (45:16-28)

1. Pharaoh’s Invitation (45:16-20)

Word of the reunion spread fast. It wasn’t long before Pharaoh had heard of Joseph’s eleven brothers and the emotional scene that had taken place. Pharaoh must have realized that the ten older brothers were the men who had sold Joseph into slavery in the first place. “Such an unnatural crime deserved stern punishment. Again, Pharaoh might have seen these men as an unwelcome challenge to the time and loyalty of Joseph, whose attention until now he had had entirely to himself. But this pharaoh was apparently a great man. He was not deterred by petty jealousies. No doubt it was his love for Joseph that predominated” (Boice).

Pharaoh’s love for Joseph is now extended to Joseph’s family. Pharaoh demonstrates his favor in three ways: 1) by repeating the offer of rich land for Joseph’s family; 2) by supplying carts to carry their families back to Egypt; and 3) by alleviating their cares and concerns: “Do not be concerned about your goods; for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.”

Boice points out that the carts were an amazing gift. No one traveled by cart. Everyone walked. Especially the nomadic sons of Jacob. And now they were given vehicles to ride in. “To return to Canaan with ‘carts from Egypt’ was the cultural equivalent of landing a jumbo jet among a tribe of isolated savages. It would have been the stuff legends are made of” (Boice).

Obviously, this Pharaoh is a completely different sort of man than the one Moses would deal with in a future generation. Moses’ pharaoh only knew how to harden his heart against God and God’s people. Joseph’s pharaoh had a soft heart. God had told Abraham that “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (12:3). God had truly blessed Egypt and Joseph’s pharaoh, just as He would one day truly curse Egypt under Moses’ pharaoh. Remember, James Jordan believes that Joseph’s pharaoh and the Egyptians of that day truly converted to worshipping the one true God. It is the response of Pharaoh in this passage, amongst others, that leads him to that opinion.

2. Joseph’s Instruction (45:21-24)

Joseph is quick to follow-up on Pharaoh’s invitation by supplying the promised carts and outfitting the brothers for their return journey back to Jacob. In these verses we have another evidence of the brothers’ conversion. Once again Joseph shows favoritism to Benjamin by showering him with additional gifts. Each brother got one new suit of clothing, but Benjamin got five new suits plus 300 pieces of silver. No hint of jealousy is given. The old brothers would have chafed under this display of favoritism, but the new brothers were reconciled to Joseph and reconciled to God.

However, Joseph is a realist, and so he gives some parting advice: “See that you do not become troubled along the way” (45:24). Joseph is telling the brothers not to quarrel or fight. Old tendencies might resurface on the long journey back to Canaan. Certainly there would be tension as they related to Jacob what had happened in Egypt. They would finally have to confess their
sin to their father. So Joseph reminds them not to quarrel. As Boice puts it, “It was a way of
telling the brothers to live like saved people and not to allow sin to have a victory in their lives.”

3. Jacob’s Incredulity (45:25-28)
So, the brothers return to Canaan, with the carts and the garments, and the silver, and the
donkeys, and the food, and all the good things of Egypt that Joseph had sent with them. Can you
imagine this magnificent caravan returning to Jacob’s home? Ten brothers had set out on foot
with little more than their donkeys; now eleven brothers return home with a fortune.

The brothers tell Jacob what happened, especially the part about Joseph being alive and in
command over all of Egypt. Despite the panoply of Egyptian goods on display, Jacob at first did
not believe them. How could this be? The son who has been lost for twenty-two years is now
found alive? Jacob dared not to hope against hope.

And so the brothers had to give a detailed report of everything. Although the text doesn’t
explicitly tell us, they must have confessed their sin to Jacob. As Boice puts it: “Part of the
report must have been a confession of their sin and their subsequent lies to cover up that sin.
There is something convincing about the confession of sin—for the simple reason that it is so
unusual. Men and women do not naturally confess their sin. On the contrary they deny it and
make excuses for their conduct.”

Slowly the report sinks in. Joseph is alive! Joseph is lord of Egypt! Joseph has sent many gifts
and an invitation to return to Egypt to live in safety and security. At last the “spirit of Jacob their
father revived” (45:27). And it is as Israel, “prince with God,” that Jacob accepts the good news
and agrees to go down to Egypt to be reunited with his son.

Conclusion

Here at the end of Genesis 45 we see another aspect of Joseph’s work. The good news, the
“gospel of Joseph,” has revived the faint spirit of Jacob. James Jordan points out that Joseph’s
actions in Genesis 42-45 have not only restored the individual brothers, but they have also healed
a society that was torn apart by suspicion and strife. Jacob’s family was a mess. There was
favoritism, hatred, lies, cover-ups quarrels, tension, and guilt in the family. This was a real
dysfunctional group! And yet, at the end of chapter 45, we see Jacob revived and reconciled
with his sons.

“What brought Jacob back to life was the good news, the ‘gospel news’ that Joseph lived and reigned
in Egypt; that Joseph, who had been ‘dead,’ was now alive and enthroned. When the brothers
told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that
Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived’ (Gen. 45:27). The good
news snapped Jacob out of the lethargy and horror in which he had been living for years.”

“The fledgling nation of Israel needed to pass through death and judgment before coming to
resurrection and restoration as a community. This should encourage us, for it means that God
never lets His people go. Whatever we as individuals or as communities may pass through, it is
only part of God’s good plan for us” (Jordan).

Close in Prayer.