

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 31. (Gen chapter 44:1-45:28). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

**Introduction/Review:** In Genesis, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis chapters 12-36) raises up a people (Israel), and empowers the 3 Patriarchs to accomplish His Purpose. The Patriarchs all heed God’s Call and respond faithfully, yet often by their own means and in their own way. The story continues through the life of Joseph, pictured initially as a teenage spoiled brat who tattles on his brothers and who has dreams depicting him as superior to both his elder siblings and his parents – character traits which annoy his brothers so much they act to get rid of him (37:18; 25-28). But God who is faithful works this action to the good of the people of Israel, Joseph, and even Joseph’s immediate family. In chapter 45, we see the impact a faithful life has.

**Read Chapter 44 completely through:** Recall that severe famine initially brought Joseph’s family to Egypt in search of food in chapter 42. Joseph accused them of being spies (42:14) and required a “test” of their truthfulness. The family of Jacob must leave Simeon as hostage, return to Canaan, and bring Benjamin – the youngest brother – back to Egypt (42:15-16). When the brothers return to Canaan and report this to their father, Jacob refuses. But the famine is so severe, they are forced to make a return trip in chapter 43 and bring Benjamin – the only other son of Rachel besides Joseph. The brothers all sit in Joseph’s presence at the end of chapter 43, still not realizing that Joseph is the brother they sold into slavery more than 13 years before.

- According to 44:1-13, Joseph takes specific actions.
  - What does Joseph do (note particularly the description of the “cup” in 44:5)? Briefly discuss.
  - How do Joseph’s brothers react? Briefly discuss.
  - How would you characterize this scene at this point in the story? Do you see potential revenge emerging? Other? Discuss.
- In 44:14-34, the brothers are brought back to Joseph and a discussion of “guilt” begins. Joseph talks of their “guilt” by theft; Judah responds with a different tale of “guilt.” Note particularly Judah’s tone of compassion and “servant” language.
  - Re-read 44:14-16 noting particularly Joseph’s statement of his ability of “divination”. Then re-read 37:18-28 with its characterization of Judah and his brothers’ animosity toward the “dreamer/diviner” Joseph. What, if anything, do you see happening in Joseph and/or Judah and what do you learn about God’s sovereign working and design? Discuss.
  - In 44:17, Joseph states his intended punishment for their “guilt.” What do you think is going on? Briefly discuss.
  - In 44:18-34, Judah responds to Joseph’s actions. Note particularly the tone of Judah’s language. Compare what you are reading with 37:26-27. What transformation do you see occurring in Judah, if any, and what application can you make regarding your own life? Discuss.

**Read 45:1-15:** Joseph dismisses his attendants, but his expressions of sorrow are still heard by them in the household, and then in Pharaoh’s household as well. In a one-way conversation, Joseph credits God absolutely and totally for these circumstances.

- What strikes you about the interaction between Joseph and his brothers?
- What does this “dreamer/diviner” say about the past and immediate future and what part does Joseph say that God played in this human-Divine drama? Discuss
- Challenge question: Certainly Joseph and his family suffered trauma. Can you relate any of this to your life, i.e., can you set into perspective some of your own traumatic events and see how God has delivered you and matured you in the process? Discuss.

**Read 45:16-28:** Pharaoh now chimes in.

- What does Pharaoh offer Joseph’s family?
- Note the symbolism surrounding “clothing.” “Favoritism” that once suggested discord (37:3) now pictures reconciliation. What application do you draw for your lives? Discuss.