

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 32 (45:1-47:12): Some Summary Thoughts:**

**Final Chapters:** In chapter 45, Scripture allows us to view the initial interaction between Joseph and his brothers, 13 or more years after they sold him into slavery. The pivotal passage has to be Joseph’s revelation of his identity to his brothers in 45:4-8. For them a worst-case scenario has to be unfolding. The youngest son of their father (Benjamin) is being held hostage, an innocent victim of a trumped-up charge, and all of a sudden, they now hear this vizier announcing his *true* identity! Joseph’s speech to them at this point is remarkable!

In revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph spends no time indulging in self-pity, nor even casting recriminations. Instead, he focuses totally on God’s purpose in bringing him to Egypt to prepare him for future action. In a scene set up potentially to reflect “revenge,” we witness a powerful demonstration of “reconciliation” instead. We are privileged to see faithfulness to God bear the fruit of witness of that faithfulness. As brother and viceroy, Joseph addresses his brothers:

*“3 Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph! Is my father still living?’ But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. 4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, **because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.** 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. 7 **But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.** 8 **‘So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.** 9 **Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay.’”***

The rest of the chapters bear the fruit of this understanding. Jacob’s family is reunited in Egypt, given prime land by the Pharaoh, and there Jacob both blesses Pharaoh and is blessed in return. In 46:2-4, God, who has not appeared visibly to Joseph, reappears to Jacob in a vision.

*2 “And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, ‘Jacob! Jacob!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. 3 ‘I am God, the God of your father,’ he said. ‘Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there, 4 I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.”*

Surely Jacob’s vision of his own future has been once again transformed by God. When he first learned of Joseph’s supposed demise (37:33-35), in mourning he supposed that it would be only by “going down to Sheol” that he would be reunited with his son. Now, as Jacob prepares to depart the land of promise to go to Egypt, God tells him that he will not have to go down to Sheol; instead, God will go down to Egypt with him where Jacob’s reunion with Joseph will take place.

Joseph exemplifies for us the essence of what it means to be faithful in God’s service with “faith” revealed to include several components. Faith is “seeing *the unseen, the assurance of things hoped for*” (Heb 11:1) – having not only the *Divine Hand* in history revealed, but also the *human hand’s* part as well. Joseph looks back over his life and affirms that humans have been involved (for both good and bad); but most importantly, God has been involved (always for the good).

The life of Joseph reminds us that things are not always what they might seem. In a most unexpected fashion, God has used Joseph’s enslavement and a famine as a means of preserving His people! Thus, though Joseph’s life has been difficult and often apparently riddled with misfortunes, he plays a major role in changing the behavior of those around him and affecting the future of peoples for years. Such can be the power of a faithful life.