

Explore the Bible: May 19

Reconcile • Genesis 45:1-15

By Laura Lee Leathers



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Because the famine was in every land, Jacob sent his ten sons to buy the grain in Egypt. When the men arrived, they bowed before Joseph. A fulfillment of his dream years before (37:5-7,9; 43:26,28; 44:14). Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him.

He accuses them of being spies, imprisons them for three days, and then allows them to return to their country, but Simeon is left with Joseph. The brothers returned home with their donkeys loaded with grain (42:24-26) and find their money had been returned. The situation upset Jacob and his sons but note that no one rushed back to get Simeon or return the money.

When they had used the grain, it was time to go back and buy more. But this time, per Joseph's request, they took Benjamin. Joseph was overwhelmed when he saw Benjamin. After the visit, the grain bags are filled, and the men depart for home.

Joseph had his silver cup embedded in Benjamin's bag and sent his servant to retrieve it. Filled with horror and shock, they all return to Joseph and beg for Benjamin's release. Judah takes the lead in pleading with Joseph.

I Am Joseph (Gen. 45:1-3) – In this chapter, we have reached the climax regarding the story of Joseph. At the end of chapter 44, Judah told Joseph he couldn't go back without Benjamin because he couldn't bear to see the grief it would bring to Jacob.

In verse one, this is the second time the word composure is used (43:31) and the third time he wept over his brothers (42:24; 43:30). Joseph could no longer hold back his tears. Rather than going to another room to weep, this time, he tells

everyone to leave except his brothers.

For the Hebrews, the word crying means tears from the eyes, while weeping gave a voice to the crying. We might call it gut-wrenching sobs with wailing. Joseph cries so loudly that the Egyptians and Pharaoh's household hear it. We don't know why both groups are mentioned. Perhaps it was status, or Pharaoh's house was close by.

Imagine the shock, the disbelief that the brothers must have felt when they heard, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" They were speechless and terrified. A lot to process. Would Joseph offer them mercy? Would he forgive them? Was there any hope of reconciliation?

God Sent Me (Gen. 45:4-8) – Again, Joseph tells his brothers, "I am Joseph, your brother." And then, as if he needed to convince them further, he states, "The one you sold into Egypt."

The key verse for today's lesson is verse five. Joseph tells them not to be grieved or angry regarding their actions from years ago. Instead, they needed to see God's sovereignty; this was all part of his plan—preserving life.

They had five more years to go regarding the famine. Joseph was sent ahead of them to do two things: "establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance."

Again, Joseph reminds them, three times, that it is all by God's providence; placing Joseph as a special advisor to the Pharaoh and making him ruler over all the land. He was second in command. God orchestrated the events of his life for His purposes.

Settle in Goshen (Gen. 45:9-15) – Joseph went beyond forgiveness. He had a plan for his father and brothers' welfare through the years of famine. They were to return to

their country and tell Jacob that Joseph was alive. Have you ever wondered how they explained that information to their father?

After the shock and the questions Jacob asked, they returned to settle in the land of Goshen. The area is on the eastern edge of the Nile Delta. Jacob was a shepherd, an occupation loathed by the Egyptians. This area wouldn't compete with the Egyptian grazing area.

In the last four verses, Joseph addresses any additional doubts his brothers might have had. The word "glory" describes the weight of this subject. Because of Joseph's position, he had everything he needed to provide for his father.

When Joseph hugs Benjamin, the weeping starts again, but this time it is probably tears of immense joy. "Afterward his brothers talked with him." There was a lot to catch up on, and perhaps they still had questions about Joseph's motives. Reconciliation had come!

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington.