

CLASS NOTES -- GENESIS -- Appendix # 4

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS (Ref. note at Gen. 45:24)

In the matchless story of Joseph there is a small detail (in Gen. 45:24) which could easily escape our notice. Yet it is full of blessing for us.

Joseph has finally revealed himself to his brothers, they have been reconciled to him, and now he is sending them back to their father with good news -- "**Joseph is alive!**" They are to bring him, and the rest of the family, to Egypt. Through Joseph their every need will be supplied, and they will enjoy personal protection from all danger. He has freely forgiven his brothers and does not blame them for what they did to him (45:5 - 8). Yet now, as he sends them away, he warns them not to have a "falling out" on the way home by blaming one another.

This lends new meaning to Eph. 4:32. "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Not only are we to forgive our brothers because the Lord forgave us, but if He forgave all of us, we should not have a "falling out" by blaming one another. What can we hold against our brother that the LORD has not already forgiven?

When we remember they were on their way home to Jacob -- and must finally tell him the truth about what happened to Joseph -- we see how timely Joseph's warning was. It would have been so easy to have a quarrel over how to break the news. Who must be the spokesman? Are they to admit the particular part each one played in the sordid drama? Are they to blame one another for what happened? "Dear Dad" may not be as forgiving as Joseph was! Joseph had had all these years to think about it and pray about it -- but it will hit Jacob like a bolt out of the blue!

Had they been the same kind of men they were when they rejected Joseph, they might have arrived home with black eyes and bloody noses -- if, indeed, they all arrived! But these men have had years to groan under guilty consciences, and have experienced loving chastening and full forgiveness. They were not the same.

Even so, the warning was in order -- as it is among us today!

As it turned out, their father fully forgave them also (Gen. 50:16, 17), probably for Joseph's sake. How could he long retain his anger when Joseph had forgiven them? Like Joseph's brothers, both the Father and the Son have forgiven us. Praise the Lord!

So how can we fail to forgive one another?

--- William P Heath

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