

The Road to Spiritual Maturity

International Bible Lesson

Genesis 45:3-15

Sunday, January 15, 2012

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“[Joseph told his brothers], ‘Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life’”
(Genesis 45:5—KJV).

“[Joseph told his brothers], ‘Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people’s lives’”
(Genesis 45:5—GNB).

“[Joseph told his brothers], ‘And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life’”
(Genesis 45:5—NRSV).

Many believers aspire to the spiritual maturity of Joseph, who treated his brothers with extraordinary goodness in spite of their sins against him. Deeply wronged by them when they kidnapped him and sold him into slavery, he expressed no desire to punish them, but forgave them and comforted their guilty conscience. He held no resentment against them, and he did not want them to feel angry with themselves for the great injustice they had inflicted on him. Joseph chose to disregard the wrongs of others, because he wanted everyone to be at peace with God, others, and within themselves.

Joseph chose to emphasize and explain some of the ways that God uses to help people. To preserve life, God had sent Joseph to Egypt through the slave trade. God prepared him through imprisonment to ascend to the second highest place of authority in Egypt. Joseph understood that God had blessed him, not so he could selfishly enjoy the riches of Egypt, but so he could save the lives of many during seven years of famine. God used the evil deeds of Joseph’s brothers to get Joseph to Egypt before them so God could save from starvation the Egyptians and all who would go to Egypt; therefore, Joseph chose to focus on the good intentions and purposes of God, and let God deal with the intentions and actions of others. Only the most spiritually mature can forgive those who have wronged them and look instead for the good that God has brought into every situation so He could meet the needs of many.

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Thinking Further

1. Joseph expressed concern that his brothers might become distressed and angry with themselves. What does this expression of concern tell us about Joseph's character?

2. What reason or reasons does Joseph give his brothers for not being angry and upset with themselves for doing wrong to him? Can you think of a time when someone wronged you and later you could see how God intended it for good or brought good out of the wrong that was done to you? How did this knowledge make you feel? Did it make you change your mind in any way?

3. If Joseph kept believing in his dreams of greatness, what types of things did he do to help make his dreams come true?

4. Who are two of the people that Joseph expressed the greatest concern for in the Bible Lesson on Genesis 45:3-15? Why do you think these two would be of special concern for him?

5. In what way or ways does Joseph demonstrate the manner in which Jesus Christ would like for His followers to treat others?