



Genesis 45

PROVIDENCE ACCORDING TO GOD

All the episodes in the Joseph story contribute to demonstrating how God's purposes are ultimately fulfilled through, and in spite of, human deeds, whether or not these deeds are morally right... This truth enables Joseph to reinterpret his narrative. From a worm's eye view, Joseph's story reads like a nightmare, a cacophony of outrageous excesses unjustly inflicted upon him. A rational conclusion that it is all absurd from this perspective could have made him an existentialist, a cynic, or a nihilist. But he chooses the heavenly perspective that God is working through him to bring about what is good (Rom. 8:28; Prov. 19:21). This enables him to forgive and encourage his brothers to do the same.

—Bruce K. Waltke

Genesis 45 is the climax and centerpiece of the Joseph story (37-50). All that has happened in Joseph's life, and in the lives of his brothers, finds resolution and redemption in this chapter. Also in this chapter, there is a chiastic structure which points to the beauty and emotion of Joseph's full forgiveness and reconciliation with his brothers.

- A "I am Joseph! Does my father still live?" (45:1-3a)
- B The brothers are stunned at the news and cannot speak (45:3b)
- C Joseph tells them not to be angry at themselves (45:4-5a)
- D Joseph extends grace in light of God's sovereignty (45:5b-8)
- E Joseph offers to them the best of the land (45:9-11)
- F **Joseph and his brothers are fully reconciled (45:12-15)**
- E Pharaoh offers to them the best of the land (45:16-20)
- D Joseph extends grace through the giving of gifts (45:21-23)
- C Joseph tells them not to argue on the way back (45:24)
- B Jacob is stunned at the news and cannot speak (45:25-26)
- A "It is enough! Joseph my son is still alive!" (45:27-28)

JUDAH: Evidence of _____ (44:18-34)

- Judah humbly acknowledges his own sin.
- Judah lovingly offers his own life for his brother, Benjamin.

JOSEPH: Expression of _____ (45:1-8)

- Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, with great tears.
- Joseph affirms God's providence in his life, with great faith.

Providence is the almighty, ever-present power of God by which He upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules that—leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from His fatherly hand.

—Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

*Providence is sovereignty in the service of wise purposes... It is God's **seeing** to everything. Absolutely everything that needs to be done to bring about his purposes, God sees to it that it happens.*

—John Piper

No more moving example of true contrition and repentance is to be found in Scripture, unless it be the parable of the prodigal son.

—Gordon J. Wenham

***I am Joseph.** His very first utterance, after his sobs have subsided, is the essential revelation of identity, a two-word (in the Hebrew) bombshell tossed at his brothers.*

—Robert Alter

Dismayed. Heb, *bahal*, "to tremble inwardly; to be alarmed, terrified"

A Few Thoughts on God's Providence and Human Choice:

1. God is absolutely sovereign over His creation.
2. Humans are absolutely responsible for their choices.
3. God's sovereignty and human responsibility are both true and are best held in tension with each other (cf. Romans 9-11).
4. Human choices can bring great damage to ourselves and others.
5. Human choices cannot override the sovereign purposes of God.
6. Human choices can be redeemed through God's sovereign grace.
7. Faith in God's providence is the means to a life of peace, joy, and hope. Thus, a believer does not have to live in fear, resentment, or regret.



We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

THE BROTHERS: Experience of _____ (45:9-24)

- The brothers receive true hope.
- The brothers receive full forgiveness.
- The brothers receive a restful invitation.
- The brothers receive abundant provision.

JACOB: Exclamation of _____! (45:25-28)

- The great news — "Joseph is alive and is lord over Egypt!"
- The great doubt — Jacob's heart stood still.
- The great joy — "It is enough! Joseph my son is still alive!"

The relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is a theological mystery that is ultimately beyond human comprehension. Mysteries make us uncomfortable, and thus there is always a temptation to modify one belief to make it more compatible with the other... But the Joseph story and the rest of Scripture insist that both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are true.

—Gordon Wenham

Joseph's speech is a classic expression of providence; it was his conviction that God's will, not the will of human beings, was the controlling reality in the events of his life.

—Allen Ross

Happy is the man whose eye sees God's hand in every-day events, for to him life always possesses a wonderful and true joy and glory.

—W. H. Griffith-Thomas

Wept. Heb, *bakah*, "to shed tears"
Joseph weeps in 42:24; 43:30; 45:2, 14-15, 46:29; 50:1, 17.

Troubled. Heb, *ragaz*, "to quake or shake, in anger or fear."

Silver. Heb, *kesep*, "silver, money"
Used 20x in Gen. 42-45, cf. 42:25, 27, 28, 35^{2x}; 43:12^{2x}, 15, 18, 21^{2x}, 22^{2x}, 23; 44:1, 2^{2x}, 8^{2x}; 45:22.

What Joseph's dreams [Gen. 37] did not make known was that grace, love, and forgiveness—not submission enforced by power—achieved the benevolent outcome of the ruler over his subjects.

—Kenneth Mathews

Jacob, that old greybeard, being all stooped and bent, suddenly takes on new vigor and heart.

—John Chrysostom (347-407)