

“I am your brother!”: Sovereignty and Forgiveness

Genesis 45.1-15

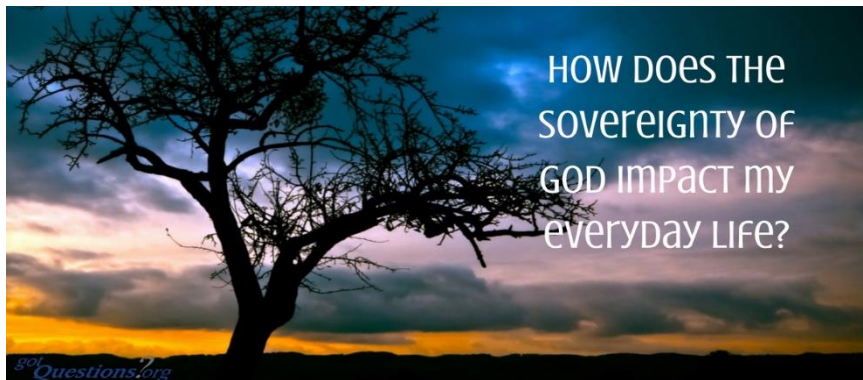
The tension that has been building since Joseph’s brothers first came to Egypt is released as he reveals who he is! They are frightened, but need not be: Joseph sees God’s sovereign hand at work, preserving a nation, and restoring a family. *This is what God can do!*

Joseph’s speech: Because God is sovereign, forgiveness is possible

- Understanding God’s sovereignty enables us to forgive (1-8)
- Forgiveness of others enables us to enjoy reconciliation (9-15)

What this means for my life

- *God is ‘bigger’ than my problems – He is able to use them to bring about good.*
- *I can trust God even when my life doesn’t make sense, because He knows more than I do.*
- *I can forgive others even when they wrong me, knowing that God is working in my life.*



1. Genesis 45 is the climax of the encounters between Joseph and his brothers that began in Gen. 42 with their first trip to Egypt. The combination of famine and Joseph’s shrewd dealings with them aroused their guilty consciences, leading them to repent of their sinful deeds and accept their suffering as just judgment from God. *This is the context of all that happens in chapter 45.* Remember this: Forgiveness can be given, but for reconciliation and a restoration of fellowship, repentance for wrong is needed. Have you experienced this – forgiving someone for wrong they committed against you, but only later restored fellowship with them after they confessed it? How does 1 John 1.9 reflect this truth for our restoration of fellowship with God?
2. Gen 45.3 records Joseph’s brothers’ first response to learning who he was. Some translations say they were “stunned;” most say they were “dismayed.” The Hebrew word used here, *bahal*, indicates that they were terrified to the point of trembling. Why do you think they would have reacted this way?
3. In verses 5-9, Joseph turns the spotlight on God: *God* sent him to Egypt to become the ruler, to preserve life and preserve their family line. Navigating our way through this truth can be tricky: Does this mean the brothers didn’t need to be sorry for selling Joseph into slavery? Does God ‘promote’ sinful actions for His own purposes (see James 1.13)? At stake in questions like these is our understanding of God’s *sovereignty* – His absolute power and authority. How would you explain it?
4. At the beginning of the Joseph story in Genesis 37, his brothers hated him so much that they *couldn’t speak to him on friendly terms* (v4), and sold him into slavery. 22 years later, they weep and hug, and *his brothers talked with him* (Gen. 45.15). What a change! Have you ever experienced this kind of reconciliation in a relationship? Is there someone who you have no fellowship with today because of some wrong that was done? What change could God make in your heart to bring healing? Are you ready to trust Him as your sovereign God?