

Joseph's Brothers - Put Away Falsehood

Foundation

Bible passage: Gen 37.29-35 & Eph 4.25

Joseph's brothers

Joseph's brothers were jealous of him (v11) and an opportunity came to do him harm. The brothers plotted together about how they might kill him (v18). However, Reuben persuaded them not to kill Joseph straight away whilst secretly planning to rescue Joseph. Despite this the other brothers did capture Joseph and threw him into a water pit, but they then decided to sell him to some traders as a slave (v25). But what would they then say to their father?

The brothers decided to deceive Jacob by taking Joseph's special coat and dipping it in blood. They then lied to Joseph about what they knew, pretending that they had found the coat and that they did not know what had happened. They obviously did not want to admit to Jacob what they had really done.

As a result of the wrong they did, including the deception, Jacob believed that his son was dead and mourned for him and could not be comforted. He would live with this loss for the next 20 years. When Simeon, another son, was apparently captured and kept in Egypt after they had gone seeking food Jacob's grief regarding Joseph was still apparent in what he said (Gen 42.36). The fact that God would use all this for good (Gen 50.20) did not excuse the brother's sin.

Speak the truth

The brothers acted out of their jealousy to Joseph, but their action, including the deception brought great sadness to Jacob. Writing to the Ephesians Paul encouraged them to grow in their



*Jacob Receiving Joseph's Bloody Coat
by Jan Lievens, probably mid 1640s*

faith and love for Christ and so not to be tossed about "by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes". He is not talking about the same thing but we can see how Joseph's brothers were cunning, crafty and deceitful in what they did. Whereas Paul was telling the Ephesians to speak the truth in love (Eph 4.15).

"speaking the truth in love"

This means telling the truth but doing so in a loving way, and that means being careful in what we say. The brothers should have loved Joseph, but instead they were jealous of him. But perhaps if they had thought about the consequences of their actions and the hurt it would cause to their father Jacob, they would never have done what they did.

Paul goes on to say to the Ephesians: "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another." (Eph 4.25)



Joseph's brothers sinned and did not speak the truth in love but lied to hide their sin so causing great grief to Jacob.