

LESSON 8

JOSEPH TRIES HIS BROTHERS

Scripture Text: *Genesis 44:1-17*

The brothers bowed and made obeisance as God had forecast in Joseph's dreams. In Joseph's tears and kindness, we see his love for his brothers, although it was joined with strict holding to his purpose of testing them. Christ loves us. His love is joined with His strict purpose that we shall be an honor unto Him in righteousness (1 Peter 1:7).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*
James 1:12

**Making the Right Choice**

Genesis 44:1-3 After the noon meal with his brothers as guests, Joseph gave orders to his stewards to prepare the grain they would take home. He sent as much as they were able to carry. He also, unbeknown to his brothers, instructed every man's money to be put in his sack's mouth, as was done before. A third and most surprising order was that Joseph's own silver cup was to be put into Benjamin's sack. Joseph was about to complete the test of his brothers toward which he had been working. In early morning the brothers started home. No doubt they felt very pleased to be leaving with both Simeon and Benjamin and without trouble.

4-10 Suddenly everything changed. Here came Joseph's steward. He confronted the brothers and accused them of stealing the silver cup. Why had they been so ungrateful as to repay his good with evil? Did they not realize the value of the cup to Joseph? The brothers were so sure of their innocence that they made an extreme offer. If the cup could be found with them, the one who had it should be killed and all the others be made slaves. The steward, knowing where the cup was, softened the sentence somewhat. Only the thief should be made a slave. The others could go free.

11-13 Quickly and confidently they opened their sacks. They would prove the steward mistaken. Imagine their amazement when the last sack was searched and there was the silver cup in Benjamin's sack! They rent their clothes (a sign of mourning among the Hebrews) and returned to Joseph's house in grief and fear. They were in the midst of the final phase of the test, but did not know it. How will they meet it? At least, they were not abandoning Benjamin as they had Joseph. But had they repented? Were they changed men?

Joseph's method seemed very harsh. But he had a plan and he held to it strictly. His tender heart ached many times as he saw his brothers' anguish and knew his father suffered likewise. He had to hide his own anguish. It would have been easier for him to tell in the beginning who he was and let all be happy together. But there were conditions inside hearts that should be changed. The brothers needed to uncover their sin. Merely covering sin over never takes away its sting. They needed to gain peace and confidence by meeting and overcoming temptation. No one but God could help them in this. Joseph hoped that they would choose the right way, but he could not help them to make that choice. They must meet the hard things alone. To be of any worth, the choice must be wholly their own. Joseph would not rob them of that opportunity.

God has given us freedom of will. He sets before us right and wrong, life and death. The choice is wholly ours. He gives us many hard trials in this life in order that we may have the joy and strength and peace of heart that will come with gaining victory over them. Will we choose to do right, though it be hard, and gain the victory? Or will we take the wrong and weak way to failure and defeat?

Giving Account

14-17 Joseph was waiting for them. **They fell before him on the ground.** Their bowing was becoming increasingly humble. Now it was more than being polite, it was pleading in desperation. Joseph held his stern manner. Did they think they could deceive him? Judah spoke. His promises made him most responsible (Genesis 43:9)

What shall we say? . . . How shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity . . . They had no defense. They made no excuse. They offered that all would become servants of Joseph. Surely Joseph knew that his words sent an arrow straight to the heart of each brother. He would keep the thief only. The others could go to their father in peace. That was sarcasm, and no doubt Joseph knew it. What peace could they ever have, especially in their father's presence, if they went to him without Benjamin?

The brothers returned to Joseph's house to give account to him, a man, for one act. All of us must some day give account to the all-knowing God for our whole lives. If now we come to God in repentance and get our sins covered by the blood of Jesus, we will be ready then to give a good account.

Conviction of Sin

Joseph's part in the test was over. Now it was up to his brothers. He had laid before them a perfect opportunity to save themselves and let their brother suffer, as they had done with Joseph. Or they could face up to their responsibilities and protect the brother at their own expense. Which would they do, the first and fail, or the second and win a priceless victory? It all depended upon whether they had repentance in their hearts for that earlier sin. Joseph waited.

The brothers had felt conviction of their sin before when Joseph kept Simeon as a hostage. They had felt it continuously since they first saw their father's grief until now. A guilty conscience is a bitter companion. Now it rose to a crisis point. They felt their sin as being against God. **God hath found out the iniquity . . .** Conviction had served its purpose. They were ready to lay bare their sin in confession.

Confession of Sin

Conviction of sin, if obeyed as God means it to be, leads to confession. Judah spoke out and acknowledged their sin. He made no excuse for it. He just laid bare the fact. He owned the sin and confessed helplessness to clear themselves. This led to giving themselves up to Joseph. **We are my lord's servants.** They were cast upon Joseph's mercy for whatever he would do with them. When we give ourselves up to God like that He will save us.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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