

Series: Stand Fast In the Lord

THE SILVER CUP

GENESIS 44

Text: Genesis 44:2

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² And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

Introduction:

At times God uses strange ways to speak to the hearts of people.

The Bible is filled with story after story in which God used unusual methods and means to get the attention of certain people.

Consider a few examples:

- **A Burning Bush** – To speak to Moses (Exodus 3:1-10)
- **A Donkey** – To speak to Balaam the pagan prophet (Numbers 22:28-31)
- **Empty Meal Barrel** – To speak to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9-24)

- **Rooster** – To speak to a backslidden preacher (Matthew 26:69-75)

This list could go on for quite a while, but those few examples are enough to demonstrate the point.

God will use whatever means necessary to penetrate the hard heart of humanity with the message He wants a person to hear.

This passage teaches the same truth. As the story of Joseph and his brothers continues to unfold, God uses a simple silver cup to open the door to forgiveness and reconciliation.

After all these years, God brings the guilty brothers of Joseph to place of repentance through the ministry of Joseph's silver cup.

Consider how God used this silver cup to bring conviction and confession.

Note:

1. IT INVOLVED A CONSPIRACY (VS. 1-9)

Joseph and his brothers had just enjoyed a time of celebration, Genesis. 43:31-34.

Genesis 43:31-34

³¹ And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. ³² And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. ³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

³⁴ And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

The brothers still do not know who Joseph is, but he is dropping hints here and there. For instance, when he seats the brothers at the table, they are seated in birth order, Genesis 43:33.

Genesis 43:33

³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

Also, Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother, is given five times as much as the rest of the brothers during the meal, Genesis 43:34.

Genesis 43:34

³⁴ And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

Now, the meal is over and the next day has dawned. The brothers are feeling pretty good about things. They have convinced the Prime Minister of Egypt that they are not spies.

They have rescued the brother Simeon from prison.

They are about to return home with more grain for the family, all their money and, most importantly, they are returning home with Benjamin, just as Judah had promised his father.

Genesis 43:3-10

³ And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. ⁴ If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: ⁵ But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. ⁶ And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man

whether ye had yet a brother? ⁷ And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? ⁸ And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. ⁹ I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: ¹⁰ For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

So, the morning dawns and the men take their grain and their animals and they set out toward home.

No doubt they are filled with excitement about going home to their families and their children.

No doubt they are congratulating themselves over their successful mission to Egypt.

But, what they don't know it that God is working behind the scenes to being them face to face with a sin some 22 years old.

While the men are preparing to leave, Joseph tells the steward of his house to prepare the grain they need. His order it give them "as much as they can carry."

Genesis 44:1

¹ And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

He tells the steward to give them their money back also. Then, Joseph tells his steward to do something very strange. He tells the man to take his personal cup and place it in the sack that belongs to Benjamin, vs. 2.

Genesis 44:2

² And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

This is done and the men set out toward home. When they have been gone awhile, Joseph set the steward after them to stop them and to confront them about the cup in Benjamin's sack.

The steward follows them and accuses them of "rewarding evil for good." He accuses them of stealing Joseph's silver cup, vs. 5.

Genesis 44:4-6

⁴ And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? ⁵ Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby

indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. ⁶ And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

The brothers deny the charge and seek to defend themselves and their honor.

Genesis 44:7

⁷ And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

They reminded the steward that they had plenty of money, so it isn't likely that they would steal a cup.

Genesis 44:8

⁸ Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

They are so sure of their innocence that they make some strong promises. They swear that if the cup is found among them, the guilty brother will die and the rest will become slaves to the Egyptians.

Genesis 44:9

⁹ With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

This may seem like a strange way for Joseph to treat his brothers.

In this passage, God uses Joseph as His instrument to draw these men to a place of repentance and restoration.

Years before, these men had conspired against Joseph in an effort to get rid of him.

They had conspired to Joseph's harm.

Now, the tables are turned and Joseph conspires against them.

But, unlike his brothers, Joseph is not conspiring for their good.

We need to remember that there are no accidents in life.

If you are a child of God, every event in your life is a product of divine providence.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

God is working out His will in your life in ways that you and I cannot begin to comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

There are times when we allow sin to abide in our lives. After a while we can grow used to sins presence to the point where it no longer bothers us. Or, we may come to think that we have gotten away with some sin because we have not faced judgment or chastisement over that sin.

The fact is, God knows exactly when and how to speak to our hearts. When the time is right, He will touch all the right buttons to humble us and to bring us to a place of repentance.

Illustration:

Absalom had killed his brother Amnon because Amnon had raped their sister Tamar, 2 Sam. 13. This murder in the family had created a rift between David and Absalom, as you might imagine. David banished Absalom from his sight for 2 full years, 2 Sam. 14:24. Absalom, in a effort to reconcile with his father,

approached David's general Joab, but Joab refused to heed Absalom's calls to come to his house. So, Absalom commanded his servants to set Joab's barley fields on fire. They did and it got Joab's attention and he came to see Absalom, 2 Sam. 14:28-33.

Here's the point of my sharing that story with you: you have a heartstring. There is something in your life that, if God were to touch it, or even take it, it would get your attention. For Joab, it was his barley field. For David, when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, it was their infant son. For Abraham, it was his son Isaac.

God knows how to get our attention and He is not afraid to touch or take what He pleases to speak to our hearts. He has a silver cup that He can place in our lives to open our eyes when we have walked away from Him. Sooner or later, the silver cup will end up in your sack!

We have come to believe that we can get away with sin. Like Adam and Eve, we think we can cover it up with the flimsy fig leaves of our own making. God, however, will settle for nothing less than total confession and repentance. Like Achan, we think we can hide our sin, but God knows where all of our skeletons are buried and He will uncover them in His time

Numbers 32:23

²³ But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

The best thing a believer can do with sin is hate it, confess it and forsake it.

When we refuse to, there will be a price to pay, sometimes a high price for our disobedience.

Hebrews 12:6-11

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Proverbs 13:15

¹⁵ Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

We may not understand it all, but that is what is happening in these verses! God is in the process of burning the barley fields of these brothers of Joseph. God is in the process of getting their attention. He is conspiring to bring them back to Him!

Not only do we see it involved a conspiracy but also:

2. IT INVOLVED A CONFRONTATION (VS. 10-13)

Genesis 44:10-13

¹⁰ And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. ¹¹ Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. ¹² And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

The sacks are opened and searched. These brothers know that they have done nothing wrong.

Can you see them standing there with smug expressions on their faces?

As each sack is opened and the silver cup is not found, they grow more and more confident.

But, when they opened Benjamin's sack, the sun reflects off a piece of highly polished metal.

To their disbelief, there in Benjamin's sack is Joseph's silver cup.

This is the moment of truth! This is Joseph's final test of his brothers. All this time, Joseph has been testing them to see whether or not they have changed. They have passed several tests already.

This is the ultimate test! 22 years earlier, they had hated Joseph so much that they had attacked him, cast him into a pit and sold him into slavery. They had broken their father's heart by lying to him about what had happened to Joseph. They had maintained that lie for all these years. Now, they have the opportunity to get rid of the other son of Rachel.

It is clear from the text that Jacob loves Benjamin. It seems clear that Benjamin had replaced Joseph as his father's favorite son.

All they have to do is allow Benjamin to be arrested and taken back to Joseph. They can simply go home. It would break the heart of their father, but he had endured other heartbreaks in the past! This is the ultimate test. These men do not know it, but they are about to reveal to Joseph what kind of men they have become.

They do not know how the cup got into Benjamin's sack. At this point that particular fact doesn't even matter!

But, they are determined to face whatever comes to them. They tear their clothes as a sign of grief and they go to face the music as one.

There are no accusations thrown at one another. There are no compromises. There is simply a unified resolve to stand by their brother.

What we see here is a picture of ten men who are finally ready to do the right thing. Here are ten men who have finally grown up and who are willing to face whatever consequences there are together. These men have grown to the point that they can see beyond themselves. They have a desire to do right, regardless of the personal cost!

That's the place God wants us to reach as well! He wants us to come to the place where we stop making

excuses for our behavior. He wants us to come to the place where we are willing to own up to our sins.

God wants us to stop pointing the finger at others. My sins are not my parent's fault! I can't blame my evil on my wife or on my surroundings. If I am going to enjoy cleansing and forgiveness, I have to deal with my sins openly and honestly. If I am going to have the power of God on my life, then I have to do the right thing. If this church is going to have God's power on it, I need to stop waiting on you to get right and do right, it is up to me to get right and do right!

God wants us to reach the place where we are willing to do the right thing regardless of the personal cost.

God is not afraid to confront us at the very point of our sins in order to open our eyes to our need of repentance.

These brothers are facing the things they are facing because God is determined to get their attention and bring them back into a right relationship with Him. He will do the same in your life and mine.

Sin should be confessed immediately, completely and honestly. When it is, it can be forgiven and the blessings of God can freely flow into our lives.

Not only do we see a conspiracy and a confrontation but not lastly:

3. IT INVOLVED A CONFESSION (vs. 14-34)

When the brothers arrive back at Joseph's palace, they find him still there, (vs. 14).

Genesis 44:14

¹⁴ And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

No doubt Joseph was waiting to see who would show up. Would it be Benjamin alone, or would the rest of the brothers be with him? By the way, this little trick might have been Joseph's way of protecting Benjamin from his brothers.

When the brothers appear before Joseph, they bow themselves to the ground before him. Again, this fulfills the dreams Joseph had as a young man.

At this point Judah steps forward and delivers one of the most profound and eloquent speeches in the Word of God. A careful examination of this speech reveals just how far Judah has matured.

Note:

- Vs. 16 – Judah confess their sin.

Genesis 44:16

¹⁶ And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

He offers himself, along with all the rest of the brothers as Joseph's servants.

- Vs. 18-34 – Judah reminds Joseph that the only reason Benjamin had come with them was because Joseph demanded it. He tells Joseph that their father Jacob will die if anything happens his youngest son. Judah then offers himself in Benjamin's place. He offers to stay in Egypt as Joseph's slave so that Benjamin can return to Canaan with his brothers.

This was what Joseph was wanting to see.

He sees that they have changed.

He sees that the brothers are willing to stand together as one man. They had the chance to turn their backs on Benjamin, but they didn't.

Judah stands up and puts his father, Benjamin and the rest of the brothers ahead of himself.

There is a lesson here that we need to take to heart. Judah shows us how sin is to be handled. His actions also remind us of the very nature of sin. Let's consider these two thoughts before we stop today.

- Sin, by its very nature, is a very selfish thing. When sin entered the world, it entered because Eve was selfish. She chose herself over the Lord.

Every sin we commit is still rooted in selfishness.

Our sins are all about us! When we sin we choose ourselves over every other person and over every other thing.

- The only way to get passed sin is to deal with it honestly.

Close:

Are we growing in the Lord? Have we dying daily to self and our selfish desires?

Are we confessing our sin, forsaking them and hating them?

May we be will to do so; so that a silver cu will not have to be placed in our sack.