

Why, God?

Joseph's experience (Genesis 37-50)

Intro

There are many times we wonder where God is when we want answers, especially through life's most difficult situations.

Have you ever asked God why He allows you to go through suffering and hardship?

Have you ever felt that God has abandoned you or distanced Himself?

Have you ever wondered why God is not fulfilling His word as He promised in your life?

Have you ever been disappointed with God?

Last week I started this series on the theme: *Disappointment with God*. For us who are believers it is hard to say: "I'm disappointed with God!" Somehow it feels wrong or blasphemous. If such a thought lurks in your mind and soul, then open the door and let it out! Do we honestly think we will shock God if we tell Him how we really feel? The sons of Korah, the temple musicians did in Psalm 44:23-26.

Disappointment is part of life. When we fail to acknowledge this fact, we tend to view disappointment as a disaster rather than a chance to learn and grow.

We must learn to recognize disappointment as a turn in the tide and not the end of the journey.

Please understand that God is big enough and His love is inexhaustible to deal with anything we feel or go through. So let's stop pretending and confess the truth: that at times life can deeply disappoint us. God's Word doesn't shy away from it, so why should we? The Bible recounts stories of people who at one time or another were disappointed with God. People who wondered when God would intervene and fulfill His promise in their lives.

Perhaps one of those who wondered was Joseph, Jacob's son. Joseph had every reason to feel disappointed with God. Let's look at his story and unpack some truths.

Joseph – an Example of Our Spiritual Journey

He received two dreams from the Lord in regards to his future. God revealed to Joseph that he was going to make him great and that his family would bow down to him and serve him.

Genesis 37

We pick up the story in Gen. 37. Joseph was 17 years old. Anyone here who is 17 years old?

He was a spoiled brat and was favoured by his father Jacob and because of this he was hated by his brothers. When Joseph told them about his dreams that they were going to bow down and serve him; they even hated him more. They wanted to kill him.

One day his brothers seized him and put him in the pit of a dry well and eventually sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken down into Egypt and sold as a slave to Potiphar, who was the captain of Pharaoh's guards.

Genesis 39:1-5

Gen. 39:1-2, “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.”

Rather than complain and be bitter about what happened, Joseph became the best slave there was.

As a matter of fact he gave light as a faithful witness of God and his master, Potiphar, saw that the Lord was with him. Gen. 39:3-5, “When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.”

Colossians 3:23-24, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Now that Joseph was a slave he had no rights and no freedom. Wait! He had a revelation, a promise from God that God would make him great and that his family would bow down before him and serve him? Where is the promise of God? Why didn’t God intervene? Why, God, are you letting this happen? Joseph had every reason to be disappointed with God.

It is said that Joseph spent about 10 years as a slave in Potiphar’s house. Rather than moving up, Joseph is moving down. No one is going to bow down to a slave and serve him.

Galatians 6:9, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the **proper time** we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Now if you think being a slave was bad enough wait till you hear what happened to Joseph next. It got from bad to worse. It’s like having lock jaw and stomach flu at the same time! That’s not a pretty scene! Joseph went from bad to worse.

Genesis 39:7-10

Potiphar’s wife had a liking for young Joseph and wanted some hanky panky. That means frolic under the bed sheets! But Joseph resists her advancements and maintains his moral convictions and integrity. Gen. 39:8-10 we read, “But he refused. “With me in charge,” he told her, “my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” 10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.”

Joseph fled from her and in the end she falsely accused him of trying to abuse her sexually.

2 Timothy 2:22, says, *“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

For doing what was right in God’s sight, Joseph suffered even more. As a result of Potiphar’s wife’s false accusation, Joseph was thrown into prison.

WAIT! Joseph had a revelation; a promise from God that God would make him great and that his family would bow down before him? Where is the promise of God? Why didn’t God intervene? Why, God, are you letting this happen? Again, Joseph had every reason to be disappointed with God.

Genesis 39:20-23

As a prisoner not only do you have any rights but now no chance of freedom, no future and possibly death? It is the pit of all pits. It is the lowest of all lows. How is his family going to bow down to him and serve him as a prisoner?

BUT, Joseph became the best prisoner that there was. What an attitude! I like what the Apostle Paul wrote, *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* (Ephesians 4:1). Even in prison Paul did not consider himself to be a prisoner of the Romans but of the Lord. He knew that God was with him.

It is estimated that Joseph spent 3 years in prison. If you calculate the 10 years of being a slave and 3 years a prisoner; that’s 13 years that he suffered. 13 years wondering when God was going to fulfill His promise? Joseph was by now 30 years old. He was 17 when sold as a slave with 13 years of suffering.

Genesis 40:9-14

While in prison Joseph interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s baker and cupbearer. To the baker Joseph told him that unfortunately he was not going to make it. But to the cupbearer Joseph said that he was going to be spared and reinstated. Also Joseph asked the cupbearer a favour, *“But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.”* (Gen. 40:14).

While Joseph was still in prison, Pharaoh had two dreams which no one could interpret. But the cupbearer remembered Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams. Soon Pharaoh sent for Joseph and he interpreted his dreams.

As a consequence Pharaoh made Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt, the second in command to Pharaoh. WOW! What a promotion! From prisoner to Prime Minister.

For 13 years Joseph suffered and perhaps wondering when is God going to intervene and do something in my life?

Here are some lessons we encounter in Scripture.

1 Peter 5:6, *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in **due time.**”* Joseph needed to be humbled. Remember he was a spoiled kid who aggravated his brothers.

1 Peter 5:10-11, *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered **a little while**, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.”*

Genesis 41:51-52

Eventually Joseph married Asenath and he had two sons. The first boy he named Manasseh. We read the meaning of his name in Gen. 41:51, *Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."*

Joseph did not dwell on his troubles or on the offense of what his brothers did to him. He did not harbor resentment or bitterness in his heart. He was free from offense because God helped him forget. I like what Paul said in Philippians 3:13-14, *"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

We read about Joseph's second son in Gen. 41:52, *The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."* Look at Joseph's attitude and his spiritual focus. He trusted God and he knew that God was in control of all that happened and was happening to him. God was with him when he was a slave and prisoner. God was blessing him as a slave and a prisoner.

Genesis 50:14-21

Finally the dreams and promise that God had given to Joseph were fulfilled. In Gen. 50:18 we read, *"His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said."*

Gen. 50:19-21, *"But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."*

Conclusion

At times we may feel disappointed with God wondering when He will intervene and fulfill His promise. But what we can learn from Joseph's journey is that God is in control and He will fulfill His perfect will according to His ways and timing. It is not according to our ways and timing. This is what God says in Isaiah 55:8-9, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

Also Isaiah 55:11 *"...so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*

Romans 8:28-29, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..."*

Folks, God is working on our behalf! He is preparing us for eternity. No matter what you go through God is for you not against you (Rom. 8:31). *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."* (Proverbs 3:5).