

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: SECTION TWO

Three Promises That Encourage the Hurting – Promise Three/The Example of Joseph

Computers and smart phones are always being upgraded in order to meet the needs of people in our ever-changing world. The same is true for Christians whose desire is to be used by God in greater and more meaningful ways. Yet with every upgrade in our spiritual capacity, there is a corresponding cost. The price to be paid is a season of suffering. God has provided us with three wonderful promises to encourage and sustain us during those difficult times. As we appropriate them and partake of their fulfillment, we can make the most of whatever trying circumstance God sends our way. As a result, “the sufferings of this present time” are not wasted, but serve the positive purpose of developing us as God’s people in a lost and fallen world. Joseph is a great example of how these promises were put into practice for just such a purpose.

First, consider how the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 was fulfilled in Joseph’s life. His brothers threw him into a pit and while they were debating about what to do next, God, through His providence, provided a way of escape, as Joseph is rescued by some Midianite traders who eventually sell him in Egypt to an influential man named Potiphar (Genesis 37:28,36). God blesses Joseph with success while serving there but also puts him to the test regarding his moral integrity. He passes the test by successfully resisting sexual temptation, even though it meant being unjustly imprisoned (Genesis 39:7-20). During his imprisonment, the severity of what it could have been is lessened by God’s intervention (Genesis 39:21-23). The ultimate “way of escape” for Joseph involved interacting with Pharaoh, as an interpreter of dreams, resulting in both his freedom and a promotion to the position of prime minister (Genesis 41:14-45).

Moreover, can there be any doubt that Joseph serves as a prime example of God’s power being manifested in the midst of human weakness? He could not have escaped from that pit on his own, nor from the clutches of Potiphar’s wife, if it weren’t for the power of God at work on his behalf. Joseph would have been in that prison for the rest of his life, if God doesn’t mercifully intervene in his helpless situation; giving him the ability to interpret dreams, which in turn gains the attention of the cupbearer and Pharaoh, resulting in his release and promotion. None of this would have been possible apart from the powerful presence of God at work on Joseph’s behalf (Genesis 39:3, 23; 41:38-40).

As a result of all the hardship he endured, Joseph also learned that his God was capable of producing “good from bad.” There may have been times, especially during his unjust and lengthy imprisonment, when he may have doubted that promise. Yet Joseph emerged from his many trials holding to that positive perspective; upon the birth of his firstborn son (Genesis 41:51); and in the context of being restored with his family, recorded in Genesis 50:20 –

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

Joseph is one of the greatest examples in Biblical history of someone who benefitted from the fulfillment of God’s promises designed for the suffering believer. They prepared Joseph to be used greatly in accomplishing the purpose of God, at an important time in human history. What was true of Joseph also applies to anyone whose sincere desire is to be used of God in an increasingly significant manner, in these very last days of the Church Age on earth.