

UNANSWERED PRAYERS (PIT, SLAVE, JAIL)

INTRODUCTION

Why does God not answer prayers with a “yes” whenever we ask?

- 1) You are praying, but the request may be off, and in those times, and God says, “No.”
- 2) Sometimes the request may not be a bad one in itself, but timing may be off.
- 3) Sometimes people ask for really good things with really good hearts, and that prayer does not get answered, and there is not a human answer “why”.

DISCUSSION

What have been some of your unanswered prayers?

EXPLANATION

When was the last time you felt God left you all alone?
 When did you realize (if you did) that He didn't leave you?
 How is our vision and God's vision completely different?

APPLICATION

Read 2 Peter 3:8-13
 Why is it important to wait when we pray?
 Why does it seem like God is always slow or late?
 How does prayer help change us to understand God better?

MISSION (GENESIS 39:5)

How can God's unanswered prayers help us empathize with those around us?
 How can unanswered prayer actually be a blessing?

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT WEEK

Read Genesis 39:22-41:40
 How would you define character?
 Who in your life are the people with the most character? Why?



GENESIS

— THE FINAL CHAPTERS —

UNANSWERED PRAYERS (PIT, SLAVE, JAIL) PART 59

GENESIS 39:1-21

Psalm 88:14-15
 Genesis 39:1-21
 Proverbs 18:17

Mark 9:5
 Matthew 20:21
 Luke 9:54

Isaiah 40:31
 2 Peter 3:8-9

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

EASTER SERVICES
 Saturday: 6pm (Nursery Care Only)
 Sunday: 8:15, 9:30 & 11:00am

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE
 March 29th, 11:00pm

EKIDS! BAPTISM CLASS
 Today, 3/17 at 1pm

EKIDS! SPRING MARKET
 April 20th, 9-3pm



UNANSWERED PRAYERS (PIT, SLAVE, JAIL)

Psalm 88:14-15 O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.

Genesis 39:2 establishes the overall theme of the narrative: “The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered.” The following verses all relate that theme to the specific series of events to follow:

- Joseph’s blessing from the Lord is recognized by his Egyptian master, and Joseph is put in charge of his household.
- Joseph is thrown in jail, yet prospers.
- Joseph becomes the head of a nation.

We are told in verse 5 that “*the LORD blessed the house of the Egyptian because of Joseph,*” this thematic introduction alerts the reader to the underlying lessons intended throughout the narrative. This is not a story of the success of Joseph; rather it is a story of God’s faithfulness to his promises.

Potiphar’s house was blessed not because he loved God but because Joseph did. Abraham’s covenant “*you will be a blessing to all nations,*” and Joseph was.

This story about Joseph reverses a well-known plot in the patriarchal narratives; before it was the beautiful wife of the patriarchs who were sought by the foreign ruler, now it was Joseph, the handsome patriarch himself who was sought by the wife of the foreign ruler. Before, in the earlier narratives, it was either the Lord or the moral purity of the foreign ruler that rescued the wife rather than the patriarch. Here, it was Joseph’s own moral courage that saved the day.

We have seen in the preceding narratives that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob repeatedly fell short of God’s expectations, though, of course, they continued to have faith in God. In the Joseph narratives, however, we do not see him fall short. On the contrary, Joseph is a striking example of one who responds in total trust and obedience to the will of God.

There is an emphasis that has been rarely seen in the earlier stories, where the stress has been on God’s overriding commitment and faithfulness to His promises. The Joseph narratives, on the other hand, give expression to that part of the promise found in Genesis 18:19: “*that they may do righteousness and justice so*

that the LORD may fulfill what he has promised to Abraham.” There was a human part to be played in the fulfillment of God’s plan. When God’s people respond as Joseph responded, then their way and God’s blessing will prosper.

The Joseph narratives are intended then to give balance to the narratives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Together the two sections show both God’s faithfulness in spite of human failure as well as the necessity of an obedient and faithful response. In later writings by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34) and Ezekiel (Ezek 36:22-32) these two themes (divine sovereignty and human responsibility) are woven together by means of the concept of God’s Spirit giving man a “new heart.” A new heart is a heart given to man by God that responds with obedience and faith.

It is also not an accident that in all the book of Genesis only Joseph is described as one who was filled with the Spirit of God (41:38). Joseph was imprisoned through no fault of his own. In fact, the narrative is explicit in its emphasis on the total uprightness of Joseph throughout the attempted seduction by the Egyptian’s wife. He was in jail because of false witness laid against him.

Joseph probably earnestly prays this entire time for God to stop these attacks, and God never does. Why does God not answer prayers with a “yes” whenever we ask?

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Joseph had unanswered prayers but the epilogue in verse 21 is clear in its emphasis “*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love...*” God turned an intended evil against Joseph into a good. God was with Joseph and prospered his way. Lying behind the course of events, then, is the lesson that the whole of the Joseph narratives teach: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”