

Adversity: Friend or Foe

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“Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, where the king’s prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because the Lord was with him; whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper” (Genesis 39:20-23).

God will never leave you nor forsake you, irrespective of where you are – in prison, in the fiery furnace, a storm or the lion’s den. If you are in a “pit” or are facing a “Potiphar’s house” experience, figuratively speaking, remember your predicament is not your destiny. When you are down to nothing, God is up to something. Hang in there for you are about to enter the “palace” experience!

While fleeing from temptation, Joseph incurred the wrath of Potiphar’s wife who falsely accused him of rape. Joseph landed in prison because he chose to live right for God and not because of his own folly and sin. Your “prison” experience may not be a literal prison but could be in the form of sickness, failure in business, tragedy, mishap, a bad relationship, etc. What do you do when you do not understand or do not see His hand? Trust His heart! Do not be afraid of trouble that comes your way. It could be the means for you to grow in maturity or to promote you rather than to destroy you. The Bible says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).*

You may be scarred by troubles but the scars need not necessarily be scars of defeat. Champions are not without scars. I believe no one gets into heaven without some scars. David described how Joseph was taken to prison: *“He [God] sent a man before them – Joseph – who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the Word of the Lord tested him” (Psalm 105:17-19).* When Joseph arrived in the palace, he did not loose his scars on his feet and neck. Jesus, when He returns, will be recognised by His nail-scarred hands. Scars are powerful testimonies of God’s grace and faithfulness in a believer’s journey through life.

Whenever you go through trying situations, it could be that you are being tested by the Word. God gives everything in promise form. God’s promises have principles to be lived. When the principles are tested, you face problems. The problems come with God’s provision as a result of your faithfulness. Therefore stand on His promises and say, “God, this is what you said” and He will be true to His Word. Like Joseph, when you remain faithful to God and continue to do the right thing, you will come out victorious because of God’s mercy. *“But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy...” (Genesis 39:21).*

Adversity leads to achievement. Joseph's life was full of adversities. With every adversity, God brought him nearer to the realisation of the dream that He gave him. All the adversities were stepping stones that led to his appointment as Pharaoh's right hand man at the age of 30! The thing that you think will kill you could be the very thing that promotes you and brings you closer to God.

On one occasion, the disciples of Jesus were in a boat when a storm came. In that storm which could have destroyed them, they saw Jesus walking on water. Peter asked, "*Can I come too?*" Jesus permitted Peter to walk on water because He wanted Peter to know that the very thing that he thought would kill him could be brought under his feet, that is, he could overcome the adversity. Therefore do not be afraid of adversity. God can turn your predicament into profit. Have faith in Him and let Him lead you.

It is natural that you will be doubtful and discouraged when you face trials. You wonder if God still loves you. Be prepared to deal with such negative emotions. Do not be afraid or let the devil condemn you. Doubt is not unbelief. When you do not believe, it means that you choose not to accept the truth and you reject God. However, when you doubt, your emotions are unsettled in the face of what you are confronted with. You have doubts because you are human – you are not sure.

Even great men and women of God have doubts. Let us look at three biblical examples.

Firstly, the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said, "*The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor*" (Judges 6:12). But Gideon was doubtful. He queried, "*Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites*" (Judges 6:13). Note that God did not cast Gideon away even though he expressed doubt.

Secondly, Sarah doubted. "*Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed with herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'*" (Genesis 18:11-12). It was a laugh of doubt.

Thirdly, John the Baptist whom Jesus described thus: "*Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist*" (Matthew 11:11), also doubted if Jesus was the Christ.

How do you deal with doubt? Find a place to seek the face of God. Search the Scriptures and call upon His name because He will always answer you. Feed your doubts with the truth of the Word. Believe what you know and doubt what you doubt. Trust God who is all knowing. He knows the beginning to the end. Doubts flourish in the dark. Run to the Light – run to Jesus. And when you are discouraged, remember what Jesus said in Luke 18:1, "*...men always ought to pray and not lose heart.*" Do not give up. Pray instead of blaming God, your circumstances or other people for your situation. Keep doing what you know is right and in the will of God. Persevere. God always answers prayers that are in line with His will.

No matter what you feel, know that God has not forsaken you when you go through adversity. When you are down to nothing, God is indeed up to something on your behalf. Your part is to continue to walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God and you will be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.

(All Bible quotations are from the New King James Version)

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