

The Promised Presence of God: Fueling Faithfulness and Bringing Blessing

Genesis 39

Intro: You Must Know God's Presence

One of the most comforting promises in all of Scripture is the promise of God's presence. The God of all creation, Lord of the universe, Giver of life, Judge of all the earth, Father of the broken, Forgiver of the fallen, the Comfort of the forsaken, the Lover of the loveless...

God is always with you, even when life is hard. It's a promise that fuels faithfulness. When you truly know God is with you, that's when you obey him, live for him, say no to sin, walk in faithfulness.

The problem is too often we don't know it. We're not intellectually unsure if God is with us—every Christian knows he is. But we're not regularly consciously aware of his intimate presence. When we are consciously aware of the very presence of God, especially when the pressure is on, we're not gonna give into sin and we won't break in suffering.

To endure hardship, we gotta *know* God is with us. That's the driving reason Joseph is faithful to God amid trials. Not only is God with him, but Joseph **KNOWS** God is with him. Do you?

Emphasis of this Story

That's the emphasis of Gen 39: *God is with Joseph to bless him in hardship*. This story is organized like a sandwich: the top piece of bread and bottom piece of bread repeats the phrase, “The Lord was with Joseph.”

Moses does NOT say “GOD was with Joseph.” Rather, he uses the covenantal name revealed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...the personal promise-keeping name of God—Yahweh. (Used 6x times in this chapter.)

HE is with Joseph—he personal God who keeps his promises is presence. And it's the awareness of that presence that fuels his faithfulness and is his source of his success in suffering. Do you know God like that? This story reminds us of the personal promise-keeping presence of God in 3 different ways.

Reminder #1: God's presence brings blessing in suffering. [v1] Notice the past tense, “Jospeh *had been* brought to Egypt... Potiphar *had* bought him...Ishmaelites *had* brought him there.” Moses is picking up where he left off when he broke away to talk about twenty years of the life of Judah, Joseph’s older brother, who sold Jospeh into slavery in the first place.

Here he is, in Egypt, bought by Potiphar, who is an *officer* of Pharaoh...which is the same word for *eunuch*. (Some of Pharaoh’s workers would be eunuchs and it’s likely Potiphar is one, which is gonna come into play later on.)

As “the captain of the guard,” Potiphar oversaw imprisonments and executions. He was likely a ruthless man. And it’s interesting that Moses refers to him as an *Egyptian* 3x, which is odd because we should know he’s an Egyptian being he an officer of Pharoah, the king of Egypt! So why emphasize this?

This story of Joseph sold as a slave in *Egypt* was written to comfort Israel (who also were

slaves in Egypt (by reminding them God was *with them* then, and therefore, he will be with them no matter what they face in the future!)

Imagine how hard this was for Jospeh: 17 yrs old, betrayed by his older brothers, 300 miles away from home, in a foreign place, unfamiliar culture, having no realistic hope of rescue, and a slave of a ruthless military officer of the most powerful person in the world. Talk about feeling all alone.

My guess is, whatever loneliness you feel, as hard as it is, doesn't come close what Jospeh went through. If there's any situation that reveals God abandons his people, it would've been Joseph's. But...[v2a]

How can that be? He all alone! If God is there, is he doing anything? Is he just standing by watching? [v2] It's the Lord's presence the brings succuss to Joseph. It's not Joseph who makes himself prosper—it's God!

Joseph ends up in Potiphar's house—which shows his rank as a slave. Most worked in the

fields, but Joseph gets inside because he gains favor in the sight of Potiphar. Why? **[v3]** That's an incredible statement. His master—this pagan Egyptian officer of Pharoah—who worshipped many gods, including Pharoah himself—saw that the LORD (Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one true God) was with Joseph. How?

It couldn't only have been because of Jospeh's actions. It had to include the words of Jospeh because how else would Potiphar know who Yahweh is unless Joseph told him?

The Lord caused ALL that Joseph did to succeed. “All” is used 5x showing the extent of God’s blessing through him. **[v4]** Instead of just working in Potiphar’s house, he’s now in charge of all the workers of Potiphar’s house. He is like the Assistant Captain of the Guard. Why? **[v5]**

Hear the emphasis on “blessing”? What does that remind you of? God said to Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you...” This is a taste of God keeping that promise. **[v6]**

There is a subtle allusion to the Garden of Eden in v6. Just like God gave Adam freedom over all his creation, except for one thing: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “I’m giving you free reign over all this; just don’t touch that.” So too, Joseph is given free reign over his whole house, but one thing is off limits. **[v6b, “but the food”]**

Many think this refers simply to the cultural custom that non-Egyptians couldn’t eat with Egyptians. However, some think this is a euphemism for relations with Potiphar’s wife. “Jospeh can have whatever he wants, except the food Potiphar eats,” referring to his wife, which makes sense, given what happens next.

Reminder #2: God’s presence fuels faithfulness in temptation. Things are looking bright for Joseph, and if we’re not careful, we might be tempted to conclude that God’s presence always means he blesses us with prosperity *right away*. That’s not true. **[v6c, “Now Joseph”]** We know where this is going. Physical beauty can present people with unique temptations.

In fact, this is the only time in the Bible a dude is described this way. Guys are said to be handsome, but not in “form and appearance.” Moses intends to highlight his looks *because* the one thing off limits to Joseph become attracted to the way he looks. **[v7]**

We gotta realize the layers of temptation facing Joseph. He’s not chasing after this, like Judah did. The temptation comes at him... aggressively. She’s not requesting. She’s not even seducing. She’s demanding.

And she can demand because she has authority over him. She’s the First Lady, who, has likely experienced much frustration in this area being married to a eunuch, but that’s no excuse for her abuse...which is what this is.

Joseph is a teenager and she’s using her position of power for personal pleasure. That’s called abuse. It doesn’t always happen from male to female; it can happen female to male.

There are more layers of temptation for Joseph than just the feeling of the pull of lust,

though that would've certainly been there. He is a teenage boy! So what's he gonna do? What would you do? **[v8a, refused]** May that be true of all of us! He refused, even though many excuses could be given. "She came on to me!" "She's in a position of power." "I've had so many injustices happen to me, one little slip up is not a big deal!" "What else was I supposed to do? I'm a slave, so my only option was to comply."

Jospeh refused. No excuses just resolve. Why? **[vv8-9a]** So notice the focus at this point: "There's no way I would do this to my master, Potiphar. That would break his trust with me, and I have no right to you."

So how do you think he's gonna conclude his point? He says, **[v9b, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against..."]** Who? Potiphar? No...GOD. That is a man fully aware of the personal presence of God.

Conscious knowledge of God's presence is *not only* meant to bring comfort in suffering. It is meant to fuel obedience in temptation.

For example, you'd be far less likely to look at sinful things on the internet if one of the pastors of this church were standing over your shoulder, than if you're alone in your room.

And from the sermon from last week, I would emphasize, “Don’t make provision for the flesh! Don’t put yourself in a place where you’re alone with access to such things!”

But from *this* passage, I would add: Don’t believe the lie that you’re ever alone. You’re not! GOD is right there, looking over your shoulder! Who are pastors compared to God? Conscious knowledge of the presence of the Lord fuels faithfulness in temptation.

Joseph refused because he *knew* God was with him. He didn’t have a way to “block” Potiphar’s wife. There was no app called Covenant Eyes that kept her from tempting him. Sometimes we’re in situations we can’t get out of, and all we have is the knowledge that God is with us in it!

That should be enough! Yes...use internet blockers! Get a dumb phone. Get out of that relationship that's tempting you. Cut off your hand. Gouge out your eye. Do what you gotta do NOT to make provision for the flesh!

But know this: None of that is the ultimate solution. What we need most to resist temptation is to know, Almighty God is here! Don't be a functional atheist.

That's why Joseph refused. And that was the end of it, right? The temptation goes away after you refuse, right? **[v10]** She relentlessly pursues. Every single day she's saying the what she said on the first day, "Lie with me." It's not a conversation! It's a daily demand that a onetime refusal will not make go away.

But Joseph "would not *listen* to her." You know what that alludes to? Adam who "listened to his wife" when she tempted him with the forbidden fruit. That's what happens when you're passive in temptation. You won't resist! So what kills passivity? Conscious knowledge of the presence of the Lord.

- “I’ll just scroll and see what’s on here and see where it leads.”
- “We’re just hanging out...in my apartment ...alone...with lights off...and a fire going.”
- “I’m just having a little fun with a co-worker friend. Yeah, it’s a little flirtatious and my marriage is rough, but it’s a good outlet for me.”

Passivity in temptation is a recipe for gratifying the desires of the flesh. Prov. 6 puts it like this: “Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?”

Passivity is not an option for Christians because temptation doesn’t go away. **[vv11-12]** Give us more like that at Kinney! “I’m outta here! I’m not playing with this fire!”

But this still puts Joseph in a very precarious situation because the garment she grabbed was likely an inner garment (outer garments weren’t usually worn inside the home). So Joseph fled without a shirt. And a lightbulb goes off for Potiphar’s wife. **[vv13-15]**

I don't know if I can count all the lies in that statement. *Five?* *First*, she blames her husband. "HE let in this Hebrew. This is his fault!" That's what unrepentant sin says, "It's not my fault; it's yours." *Second*, she says Joseph was there to "laugh" at them—which is a word that has sexual connotations. It's the same word used in 26:8 when Isaac was "laughing" with Rebekah, his wife—they were doing more than just giggling.

Third, she says, "He came IN TO me." She's claiming rape. He didn't touch her. *Fourth*, she says she lifted her voice as soon as he did this. No, she lifted her voice *after* she realized she couldn't get him to do it. *Fifth*, she says HE left his garment, but she pulled it off him.

And then, notice what she does with this garment. **[v16]** She's staging the whole thing. She puts it down and lays there until her husband gets home, like she hasn't moved since the whole thing happened. **[vv17-18]**

This is the 6th time the word "garment" is used. Why the emphasis? It's not the first time a

piece of clothing was used as false evidence in Joseph's life. His brothers put goat's blood on his fancy coat to make their dad think he got killed by an animal. Bad stuff just keeps happening to Joseph, which must mean God abandoned him, right? Especially when we see how Potiphar responds. **[v19]**

Interestingly, we don't know who he's angry at. Joseph? His wife? Perhaps an unfortunate situation? He really liked Joseph, and it appears he doesn't believe his wife's story. Look what he does. **[v20]** This takes us to...

Reminder #3: God's presence keeps fueling faithfulness and bringing blessing. Potiphar could have (and probably SHOULD have) executed Joseph for this. That's his job as the captain of the guard—to bring justice on wrongdoers. You'd think he'd do that with someone who did this thing to his wife!

Which makes you wonder: Does he believe her? I don't think so...because Joseph has moral integrity.

If you wanna guard against false accusations, live a godly life. It's not fool proof. But there is a principle of Scripture that says godliness guards against false accusations. Proverbs 10:9, "Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out."

Joseph wasn't executed because of his proved character. BUT he in prison. Doesn't that reveal God left him? **[v21]** Think about what Moses is saying! IN PRISON God is with him and SHOWS him steadfast love. How can imprisonment SHOW Joseph that God loves him? It seems like it's showing the opposite!

Here's how: what God does for Joseph while he's in prison reminds Joseph that God hasn't left him and that he still loves him. You gotta have eyes to see, even in pain and suffering, just look: "Is God doing anything? Is there any evidence of his presence/ love?"

There always is. Always...if you have eyes to see. Here's Joseph's evidence. **[vv22-23]**

Joseph was right where he needed to be for God's presence will bring blessing. You know what happens later on? It's through this imprisonment that leads him to become Pharoah's right-hand man, which leads him save the whole world from a famine. Joseph was right where he needed to be *at that time!*

But he didn't know what was gonna happen! All he *knew* was that God was with him.

Conclusion

Do you know this? How can you be certain God is with and will not leave you and will bless you, even in suffering? Here's how: You can be as certain of God's presence as you are certain of Jesus' resurrection. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then you can and should doubt whether God is really with.

But if air came back into his lungs...and if he stood again on his feet and walked out of tomb, leaving it empty, then you and and SHOULD be TOTALLY confident that God is always with you. Why?

One of the primary benefits Jesus purchased when he died and rose again was God's presence with you always...called the Holy Spirit. Know that?

Gal. 3:13–14 says, “Christ redeemed us [died for us]...so that we would receive the promised Spirit through faith.” Jesus said to his disciples in John 16:7, “It is to your advantage that I go away [meaning, die, rise, and ascend into heaven], *because* if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”

This is why Jesus says to his disciples in Matt. 28, just before he ascends into heaven, “I will be with you, even to the end of the age.” How can that be? Because his **SPIRIT**—the third person of the Trinity—is with us!

As sure as you are that Jesus's tomb is empty is how sure you can be of his presence with you by his Spirit. ***Be comforted in...***your lonely marriage/ singleness...in the face of financial troubles...as you anticipate a tough conversation with friend...after another bad

report from your doctor...after weeks of silence from dozens of jobs you applied for.

Be comforted in the knowledge of the presence of God in suffering and may such knowledge fuel faithfulness in temptation. God is with you. Are you aware of that?