

Genesis Ch39v1-23 - When God Is With You

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[0 : 0 0] to Genesis chapter 39. Genesis is at the beginning of the Bible. We're following along the life of Joseph. And again, if you've missed any of the talks, they're recorded for you on the Carragalline Baptist Church website. You can find a list of all the talks, and they've been provided for you to follow up on. So we're going to read Genesis chapter 39, all of it. They're wonderful accounts, wonderful true accounts that can teach us and help us. So let's hear God's word. Genesis 39, starting at verse 1.

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. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household and entrusted to his care everything he owned. 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. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care with Joseph in charge. He did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, come to bed with me. 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 is entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am.

[2 : 3 2] 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? And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went to the house to his attendants for his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, come to bed with me. But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. Look, she said to them, this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us. He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house. She kept his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.

She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story. That Hebrew slave you bought has come to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house. When his master heard the story, his wife told him, saying, this is how your slave treated me.

He burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him. He showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the eyes of the prison warder. So the warder put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison and he was made responsible of all that was done there. The warder paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care because the Lord was with Joseph was with Joseph and gave him success, whatever he did.

Well, let's pray together and we'll look at God's word. Let's pray. Father, you are good and kind. And you have shown that by giving to us your word.

[5 : 2 2] These true accounts of lives in the past. That teach us and encourage us today. And so we pray that you would speak to us afresh, that we would focus upon you.

And you would build us up in our walk and in our faith in you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. The Lord be with you.

Well done. I didn't think you would say it. That's right. The Lord be with you and also with you. Now, what are we asking when we say the Lord be with you?

What are we asking? We say it all the time when we pray, especially when we don't quite know what to pray. Lord, be with Amy in Sheffield.

Lord, be with the Rock and Rooted team. Lord, be with Liz today in hospital. Lord, be with because they're having a bad time.

[6 : 35] What are we actually asking for when we say the Lord be with you? Well, I think the answer to that question is found in Genesis 39.

When God is with you, it makes all the difference. When God is with you, it makes all the difference. We're going to look at two big things.

There's a bit of crossover with both of these ideas. But I think together they will help us see what it means that the Lord is with us. Two big things. That God is present and God is working.

God is present and God is working. So first, God is present in the downs and ups of life.

Whatever our experiences and circumstances, God is present. First, he's present in our suffering in the downs.

[7 : 39] Joseph, you remember, had been sold off to a bunch of slave traders by his brothers. So we pick up the story when Joseph is in a downer.

Verse 1. Now, Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought Joseph from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

Now, whatever way, whatever angle we look at this, it's not good, is it? Joseph's in a bad situation because slaves, well, they don't have rights and you don't enjoy a comfortable or restful life.

Clearly, God is absent from Joseph's life. After all, if God is with you, you don't suffer, do you?

Wrong.

Look at verse 2. The Lord was with Joseph. God hadn't gone anywhere.

[8 : 46] God was right there with Joseph when his brothers had sold him and when Potiphar had bought him. You see, just because life isn't going wonderfully well, that doesn't mean to say God has gone AWOL.

Just because this isn't the way we would plan or design our life, that doesn't mean God has stopped working in our life. No, God is present in our suffering.

And it's also true that God is present in our successes when we're on the up.

Joseph may be a slave with nothing to his name, but all that was to change. Verse 2. The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.

But when things are going good, of course, God is present. I mean, even Potiphar could see that. Verse 3.

[9 : 52] When his master saw that the Lord was with Joseph and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did. Well, Joseph was on the up.

So it's obvious that God was with him. But what would happen to Joseph when things went down again? What then?

Well, have a look at the very end of the story because things did take another nasty turn. Look at the end of the story. Verse 20. Joseph's master took him, put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

Does that mean God has gone absent? Well, while Joseph was there in the prison, verse 21, the Lord was with him.

You see, we tend to view God like this. If we're winning, if things are going well in our life, God is present. But if we're losing, if things are going badly, then God is absent.

[11 : 03] And we bring that kind of notion with us through the day. So if the day is sunny, unlike today, and the kids are good, and you find the parking spot that you need, Oh, God is with me.

But if I go to the doctor and I receive some bad news, well then God is not with me. Or if you go to work and the boss calls you into the office to give you a raise, we can proudly say, God is present. But when my car breaks down on the way home and it costs me a fortune to fix, well then we think, God must be absent.

But that's not how God works. The account of Joseph enforces the reality that God is always present, and God is always at work.

Because our suffering is not a sign that God is absent, any more than our success is a sign that God is present. God is with us in the downs and the ups and the downs again of life.

[12:16] In fact, God is with you to bless those around you. So he's present in our suffering, in our success, and he's present with us in those times so that we can bless others.

God was present with Joseph, and the reason is so that he would bless those he came in contact with. So verse 5.

From the time Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian.

The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field.

Blessings rained down on Potiphar in the home and at his workplace.

Joseph was that means of blessing. Now that shouldn't be a surprise to us. Have a look back with me to Genesis chapter 28.

[13:25] Genesis chapter 28. If we went back further, we'll remember that God made a promise to Abraham that he would be a blessing to all the nations.

And so that promise continues. We pick it up in chapter 28, verse 14. God is speaking to Jacob, Joseph's father.

Verse 14 he says, Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

I am with you and I will watch over you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

You see, God had made this promise that through the family of Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob, through Joseph, God was going to bring his blessing and he promised that he would never ever leave them until he had done what he had promised and that was to bless the nations.

[14:42] So back to chapter 39. So Joseph is part of that great promise. God was with Joseph, bringing him all the way from Canaan to Egypt, from his own family to Potiphar's family, so that they would experience the blessing of God in their own lives.

God was with Joseph in the downtimes and in the uptimes, so that Potiphar, a pagan ruler, living in a foreign land, might see that God is good and gracious.

You see, is that not the calling of God's people today? Is that not the calling for the church today? Whatever situation we find ourselves in, remember the words of Jesus, go and make disciples of all nations, go and bring the blessing of the gospel, the good news of God's grace and mercy to all peoples and remember his promise and I am always with you to the very end of the age.

You see, God is actively present in our life. It might be that God brings you into a hospital bed. It may be that God will give you a job promotion.

But whatever season of life we find ourselves in, whether we're on the up or on the way down, God is present in your suffering. He's present in your success so that we might declare the blessing of God.

[16:28] That if we're in a season of suffering, we might be able to say, God is good and gracious. That if we're in a time of blessing, we might be able to say, God is sufficient and God is enough.

So when we pray the prayer, Lord, be with, we're asking that God would work through them in such a way that they would bring the blessing of the gospel, the good news of Christ, so that they too may be blessed.

So first, God is present in our downs and in our ups. The second big idea is this, God is at work in the temptations and trials of life.

God is at work in the temptations and trials of life. Joseph, at the end of verse 6, is in a good place. He's risen through the ranks to become the right-hand man of one of the most powerful men in all of Egypt.

But that doesn't mean he's going to be immune to struggles. First, God is working in our temptations.

[17:52] Look at the end of verse 6. Now Joseph was well built and handsome. He had a six-pack and had the chiseled chin.

Something that had not gone unnoticed by a particular lady. Verse 7. After a while, his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, Come to bed with me.

You see, sometimes looks aren't everything, are they? Sometimes they bring unwanted attention. And it was becoming a real struggle for Joseph.

Joseph's temptation is sudden. It's directed. It's constant. And it seems that there is no let-up. On and on it goes.

Sorry, can you turn it up, Rob? Because I'm shouting more and more. Thank you. Thanks very much. God is present when it's raining.

[18 : 57] Don't worry. Joseph's temptation temptation is sudden. It's directed. It's constant. And it seems that in his temptation there's no let-up.

On and on it goes. Every single day. Come on, Joseph. I know you want to. Come on, just come and sit beside me.

Just a kiss. That's all. That's all. On and on the temptation goes. Now, why doesn't God step in? Why doesn't God just make it all stop? In fact, why did God make Joseph so good-looking in the first place? If Joseph had been just, well, not Joseph, but an ordinary Joe, he would never have had this issue.

Is God absent again? No, God is at work in and through the temptation. Look, despite the ongoing pressure, look at verse 10.

[20 : 06] And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. how did Joseph resist?

How did he not give in? Well, look at his response. It came in verse 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. Look, he's saying, I respect my master.

And I respect you. But above all of that, end of verse 9, how then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?

You see, Joseph is saying, look, you promised me so much, but I love God more. God is enough for me. God is sufficient for me.

[21 : 09] I don't need anything else or anyone else. you see, temptations reveal where our heart is, what we most love.

They highlight where we're most weak and where we're most vulnerable. In fact, temptations keep us humble. Instead of thinking, I can handle this, I've got this, temptation throws us back in God, in desperation because we need him.

You see, God never tempts us, but God uses the temptations we face to show our ongoing need of God.

Joseph faced temptation and we all face temptation. For some of us it's sexual, for others it will be a desire for wealth and for power.

It can be subtle things like a love of comfort or a longing to be popular amongst our friends.

Basically, temptation is anything that comes alongside us and says, unless you have this in your life, your life is empty, you're unfulfilled.

[22 : 27] And we struggle when those temptations come in. And maybe we ask, why doesn't God step in? Why doesn't God take away this temptation?

Why do I constantly have to fight and battle day after day? Well, temptations reveal our weakness. They throw us back to God so that we can see that God is enough and God is sufficient. That's what it was for Joseph.

All that he needed, all that he ever required was in God. He didn't need anything else. You see, temptations grow us and they strengthen us as we depend upon God.

So God is at work through our temptations and God is working through our trials. The pressure was enormous for Joseph.

[23 : 31] Eventually someone or something was going to give. look at verse 11. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties and none of the household servants were inside.

She caught Joseph by his cloak and said, come to bed with me. Well, the timing was perfect. She caught him by surprise.

They were alone. No one would ever know. What was Joseph going to do? Well, it seems the work that God had been doing in Joseph's life over the weeks and over the months strengthened him,

gave him bottle for what was going to be his biggest test yet.

Look at the end of verse 12. come to bed with me. But he left his cloak and ran out of the house. At this point we might say, well, all's well that ends well.

Perhaps she will finally give up chasing Joseph and run after somebody else. After all, God owes Joseph, doesn't he? Joseph deserves a break for saying no all of these years.

[24 : 52] But that's not how the account ends. It goes from temptation to trial. Potiphar's wife went ballistic. She cries out, rape!

You wait until Potiphar gets home. Look at verse 17. Then she told him this story. The Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me.

But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house. Poor Joseph! It seems he doesn't even get a chance to be able to relay or tell his side of the story.

And Potiphar sees red, verse 19. When his master heard the story, his wife told him, saying, this is how your slave treated me.

He burned with anger and Joseph's master took him, put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. Where's God when you need him?

[26 : 04] Joseph had done everything right. He had been loyal to Potiphar, he had been obedient to God, but not only does God not come to him, or so it seems, God lets this great injustice take place.

Even worse, God leaves him in a stranded prison. No intervention, no miracle, just a dark dungeon. Where is God?

What is God doing? You see, our expectation is that if we respect others, if we obey God, God is going to work good in your life.

If you resist temptation, if you don't sin, God's going to rescue you from danger, he'll heal you if you're sick, he will provide with you all that you want.

Just do the right thing, and then all the bad stuff is going to go away, right? not so. Joseph had done nothing wrong.

[27 : 12] He had done everything God had asked of him, but yet trials is what God brought Joseph through. You see, God is always present.

He is always working in our lives, regardless of how bad or difficult the situation may be. In fact, God is always working for our good.

God is working for our good. God was present with Joseph, and God was at work. So why, why did God leave Joseph in prison?

Well, look at the end of verse 20. while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him, and God showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warder.

So the warder put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. It sounds very familiar, doesn't it?

[28 : 26] Do you remember the beginning of this account? It's like we've been here before. It's a similar turn of events. Joseph's accommodation may be different. He's in a dungeon, not in a mansion, but there's a familiarity about it.

There's this expectation that, well, God could be at work in the prison too. You see, if God brought Joseph to Egypt, if God caused Joseph to be a blessing to a pagan general, don't you think that God has a purpose for Joseph in prison?

We're not told yet what that purpose is. We need to keep reading to find out. But we are given an assurance, aren't we? Look at the end of verse 23.

the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

So when we pray, Lord be with so and so, well, what we're saying is we're asking, Lord, would you enable that person to trust them in their difficult and struggling time to trust that you are working out good purposes for them and for others.

[29 : 50] God is working in our temptations and in our trials for good. So you see, as we follow the life of Joseph, in all his downs and ups, as we watch Joseph go through his trials and through his temptations, isn't it so similar to our own life and our own pattern?

And we ask the question, where is God? Is God working? Well, God is present with you. He never leaves you.

He is always at work in your life. Whether it's a time of suffering to show to others that God is enough and he is sufficient. even in our successful times and in the best of days, God is with you to

show that God is good and gracious, that he has given you all that you need.
And when we find ourselves in a time of trial and we're wondering what's going on, yes, God's purposes are being worked out. He is strengthening you.
He is making you strong so that in your life, where you are, you can bring God's blessing to others.
Let's pray together.

[31 : 16] Amen. Father, thank you that you are present with us today.

And as we go into this new week, while the week is unknown to us, we do not know what will unfold before us.

We thank you that you are enough and you will be sufficient. Thank you, Father, that you are at work in us and through us so that we can bless others and show others that you are good and you are kind and meet us in all of our need.

So help us to go with confidence, trusting you and being strengthened by you. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Amen. We're going to sing together. Mine are days that God has numbered, I was made to walk with you.