

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

◆Intro:

- ◆The house is all cleaned up
- ◆the boxes packed and on the truck
- ◆my life is relocating for the umpteenth time.
- ◆And standing in the thin Fall air
- ◆All I can do is watch and stare
- ◆As everything I own drives on out of sight
- ◆Sometimes my eyes can barely see
- ◆Is this the way that its supposed to be?

◆ Country songs are famous for often being about all the things you can lose.

- ◆The den no longer filled with toys
- ◆what happened to my little boys
- ◆who used to greet me with a joyful cry?
- ◆They're older now and drive to school
- ◆and half the time think I'm the fool
- ◆I used to be the hero in their eyes.
- ◆It's fading from my memory
- ◆the sandbox days were so carefree
- ◆Why should they now be done for me?

◆It seems that nothing is free from the inevitable end. Seems like we can lose just about anything, can't we?

- ◆He's sitting in his rocking chair
- ◆his kids have come but he don't care
- ◆The faces he can barely recognize
- ◆His eyes light up, but then they go
- ◆and where they went God only knows
- ◆The pappa they once knew is lost in time.
- ◆I'm longing for a memory

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

◆ I miss the way that life once used to be...

◆ There's a joke that asks, "What do you get if you play a country song backwards?" You get you dog back, you get your girl back, you get your truck back... Fact is, everything you have you can lose. You can lose your hair. You can lose your firm figure as your chest sinks down into your waist. You can lose your job, your eye sight, your IRA, your freedom, your legs to a land mine, your entire town to a tornado. When we lived in Iowa, Chandler, MN was removed from the map in one night. Semi's, grain bins, houses. They didn't even find any debris!

◆ So here's the question of the day: What do you have that you can't lose, that can anchor you down so that "You'll Get Thru This." Again, Joseph's story is our story. Joseph lost everything overnight; his home, his family, his culture, his clothes, his freedom. What didn't Joseph lose? In a word, his purpose! Joseph couldn't lose his purpose from God. That's because purpose comes from God. And Joseph couldn't lose his place with God.

◆ 1. My purpose on this earth gives my life meaning, no matter what.

◆ When life has meaning we can bear almost anything. Without meaning we can bear almost nothing. Your reason for being alive, your purpose, call it your destiny (Max does in the small group material) if you like, –this is where your meaning comes from. Joseph, regardless of his youth and need for maturing, was aware of his God-given purpose. His **dreams** were part of the indication of this. It would seem Joseph was aware that the dreams were from God.

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

- ◆ In chapter 40 when Joseph is in prison with two royal servants who have troubling dreams, Joseph says, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.” We can tell several things here: 1) That Joseph is aware that knowledge and meaning come from God. 2) that Joseph is deeply involved with God! (But more on that latter.)
- ◆ Joseph grew up having dreams, and we can tell he was the type to ask God about it. Joseph knew God has some special reason for his life. Knowing this kept him going from pit to Potiphar, to prison, to palace. It really didn't matter where he was. What mattered was *why he was!*
- ◆ A. The fact is that you are alive for God's reasons. You can pick your mate, and you can pick your favorite sport. You can pick your house. But you can't pick your purpose. God does that.
 - ◆ “The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me...” Psalms 138:8, NIV.
 - ◆ The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God chooses when to make you, where you will live, how you will be born –all far in advance!
 - ◆ *“You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.” Psalms 139:15, 16, NLT.*
- ◆ God's Word also makes it clear that no matter what circumstance you find yourself in, whether we are starving or stuffed, homeless or housed, rich or poor, hurt or healed –every single piece of this life's existence is bound up in his hands and will prove ultimately for your good, if you belong to him.

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

◆ Check out this great Christian statement written back in 1563.

◆ Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?

A. Providence is

the almighty and ever present power of God
by which he upholds, as with his hand,
heaven
and earth
and all creatures,
and so rules them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
prosperity and poverty--
all things, in fact, come to us
not by chance
but from his fatherly hand.

◆ B. Why could Joseph endure so much loss? Because he knew that the central meaning and course of his entire life was set by God and that God's plans for him could not be botched. Nobody throws God off course!

Therefore *Joseph could be patient when things did not go well, and thankful when things did!* And so can you and I.

◆ We pick up a clue to Joseph's insight on this later in the story. In Genesis 50:24 Joseph says... "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

◆ Now why "come to your aid"? They've only just come to Egypt in his lifetime. And it was to aid them that they came here!

What does Joseph know? He knows what his dad, Jake, knew and what his grandfather, Ike, knew. Namely, what God said to his great grandfather Abraham in Gen.15: that his descendants

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

will be slaves in a country not their own for about 400 years!
But he needn't worry. God would come and bring them out. It appears that Joseph may be thinking here that Egypt is the place. It's good now, but it's going to get worse later. But guess what, God will still have his purpose and it will still win in the end!

◆ 2. My place with God gives my life meaning, no matter what.

◆ Why does anyone have a place in some ones life? Isn't it love. Love gives you a place in a family. God's love is the best place to be in the world.

The Bible says:

◆ "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." John 1:12, 13, NIV.

◆ And

◆ *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ...Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him..." 1 John 3:1, 2, NIV.*

◆ Many folk believe that we are all here by accident of random evolutionary happenstance. They don't believe there is anything after this life. They don't believe there is any power controlling or ordaining the development of life on this unique planet. If they are right, if all we have is this life, then we

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

might as well live it up, drink it up, party it up, and do whatever we want while we can because when it's gone, it's over. There is really no belonging in this philosophy of life.

◆ But the Bible tells a far different story about this life. The Bible says God put us here on purpose and that our lives, especially those of believers, are in his hands.

◆ *“Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:4, 5, NLT.*

◆ A. We see this in Joseph's story in phrases like “the Lord was with Joseph” (39:2, repeated in v3 as observed by the Egyptian, Potiphar! Potiphar could see that some god was blessing this Joseph, and blessing him! It's said twice in Potiphar's house, and twice in the royal prison (v21 and 23).

◆ Now I take that to mean more than something like “Joseph called himself a Christian.” It is clear that God and Joseph interacted. God was “with” him. Joseph was also “with” God. It was Joseph's close interaction with God that enabled him to turn down Mrs. P's sexual advances day after day. Joseph's relating with God was an observable phenomena! That's what I call belonging to God. Which is to say this; when you practice a life of interacting/belonging with God, you will find power to “get through this.”

◆ God does answer your prayers.

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

◆ God does speak to you.

◆ God does line things up for your benefit.

◆ B. When I belong to God, I live in the light of eternity. You see, God is beyond time. God plan for us began before time. And it extends into eternity. Now it matters greatly as to whether you belong to God or not. For those of us who accept salvation in Christ, this life is as *far* from the tangible presence of God and the joy of heaven as we will ever be, and as *close* to Hell as we'll ever have to get. For those who reject God, this life is as *close* to the presence of God and the joy of heaven as they'll ever be and as *far* from away the sorrow of hell that they'll ever get.

◆ And let me just urge you if you have not, to accept the forgiveness of your sins in Jesus Christ and join the story that ends happily forever after!

◆ The Heidelberg Catechism puts it like this. Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own,
but belong--
body and soul,
in life and in death--
to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.
He also watches over me in such a way
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven:
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life
and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

from now on to live for him.

◆C. When I live in the light of eternity, the present is much more bearable.

Suddenly the house you live in doesn't seem all that significant. Suddenly your collections of things seem petty, and less worth the effort. When you see life as bigger than this, the "this" appears a lot smaller, whether it's material, or trials, or even terrors.

◆The Bible is pretty clear that this is not all there is. Isn't it true that when you are watching a scary movie, you can calm yourself by looking around and at the bigger picture? "This is just a movie. There's more than this." Or if you know how the movie end, then you're really calm! "Oh don't worry, the monster eats the propane tank while chasing the girl and then the boyfriend shots it and it blows up..." Well for followers of God, we know how the movie ends! We know that this life is a fraction of a second compared to eternity. We know that we will live all of eternity without a single tear, any pain, no sorrow. We know that because Jesus took our punishment for sin, we will walk with God in a beautiful world full of all the amazing things of this world, but even more. Let me put it in perspective. CS Lewis at the end of his 7 book Chronicles of Narnia, which tells the adventures of a few human children in another world of Narnia and all the fantastic things they see and learn, sums up the whole thing like this:

◆"For us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world, and all their adventures in Narnia, had only been the cover and title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

one on earth has read, which goes on forever, and in which every chapter is better than the one before.” (I like to tell people that at funerals!)

◆ If something better is really coming, we can honestly say, “You’ll get through this.” May not be easy or quick. But this mess will wind up for your good. With God, you will get through this. You may have a challenging marriage this side of heaven. You may have a challenging mother or father this side of heaven. You may have a body that’s broken this side of heaven. You may never travel Europe this side of heaven. You may never ski, or sky dive, or get married. You may be fined unfairly by your government for being Christian and opposing homosexual marriage, as happened recently in New York where the Giffords refused to rent their farm out for a same sex wedding and got fined \$13000. I may have my sermons, texts, speeches, and emails subpoenaed as happened this month to Houston pastors who oppose their lesbian mayors bill to make public restrooms open to either sex. It may not be long before you as a Christian are put in prison here in the US, because you wouldn’t say the politically correct thing.

◆ Now I’m not saying “These things don’t matter. We’re headed for heaven so let be what will be.” No. Joseph did say “OK” to Mrs. Potiphar because after all, in heaven we’ll no longer be tempted by ungodly sex. I’m saying *you can endure the pain and work of taking on the brokenness in which you find yourself because hard as it is, there is much more to all this than just this.* And everything thing we

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

do here on earth has implications for eternity. Every time we struggle to do right in the eyes of God, we are laying up treasure in heaven.

◆ *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, NIV.*

◆ **Conclusion:** The country song is known for often being about loss.

There is another kind of song: the negro spiritual of the South. These are known for setting eyes on heaven.

◆ Swing Low Sweet Chariot...

◆ He's got the whole

◆ Beams of Heaven as I go...

◆ Do Lord Oh Do Lord Oh...

◆ This world is not my home. Im...

◆ Like Joseph, the slaves of Early America endured by focusing on heaven. more than the stuff of earth. We can learn from them.

◆ *“For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven, which is yet to come.” Hebrews 13:14, NLT.*

◆ When we grasp this, we don't have to worry so much about having it all the way we want it in this life. We can get through anything because God and everything is waiting for us at the end!

◆ 28 Q. How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence

WHEN WILL GOD ABANDON ME?, GEN.39

You'll Get Through This #2

help us?

- A. We can be patient when things go against us,
thankful when things go well,
and for the future we can have
good confidence in our faithful God and Father
that nothing will separate us from his love.
All creatures are so completely in his hand
that without his will
they can neither move nor be moved.