

Wasted Years?

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good
to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*

Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

Perhaps the most annoying part of trying to make sense of life and suffering is this reality that we do not understand suffering until we are past it. When we are in the middle of a painful situation nothing seems to make sense. Many people have cried out, "Why? Why me? as they are made to endure pain that never seems to go away.

How can we cope with such apparently needless sorrow? These questions come to the minds of even the most godly Christians and are wrestled with to little profit. When we are finished pondering life's apparently unanswerable issues we must pick ourselves up and continue the journey.

The man Joseph, who spoke the words of our verse for today, had years taken out of his life because of the sins of his older brothers. They sold him into slavery and he had to learn the language of the Egyptian people as he worked for his master.

Joseph was such a good slave and worked so well

that his owner put him in charge of his household. Then Joseph was lied about and thrown into prison where he suffered for a long time paying for a crime he did not commit. He made friends in prison and when a fellow prisoner was released he did not help Joseph to be released as promised. So Joseph was in prison for a longer time than necessary.

Finally Joseph was released in order to interpret the king's dreams. So wise was his counsel to the king that Joseph became the second in command to the king. Joseph's story ended well but, for years he had no idea of why God was allowing him to be so unjustly treated. Looking forward, Joseph saw nothing but pain and grief for himself. His existence seemed useless to him at the time.

But as Joseph looked back—from the wonderful position he finally occupied in Egypt—he could see the sovereign hand of the Lord organizing every detail. There was no way that Joseph could have attained

the success and prosperity he did if he had not gone through such deep valleys.

The truth Christians learn from Joseph's story is that life will make sense in God's time and not ours. We struggle unsuccessfully to make sense of our circumstances. What we need to do at such times is to go on in the Lord's strength. We should have confidence that He will make sense of our lives when it pleases Him.

Keep on living as though everything made sense Christian friend. Some wonderful day you will see that those years were not wasted but were useful to others who determined to trust the Lord because they saw that you were faithful in your dark times. Also you wonderfully honor the Lord by trusting Him when you do not understand Him.

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