

Take Heart; Delays to God's Promises Have a Purpose

Promises from God give us hope. They are exciting, something to look forward to and plan about. But when the fulfillment of a promise is delayed, it can be discouraging. In those times we must remember that God does not waste anything; His plan is at work even in the delay!

The Promise to Joseph

God made a promise to Joseph in his dreams when Joseph was about 17. Joseph was so excited that he bragged about it to his older brothers, mother and father. Then, 13 years and a lot of hardship later, suddenly the promise began to take shape.

Overnight Joseph was taken from a prison and made the second in command of one of the world powers of his day. Seven or eight years later, what he saw in his dream became reality when his brothers bowed before him.

When Joseph first received the promise, he did not understand God's purpose behind it. He just knew he would be lord over his family. As the second-youngest of many brothers, that idea excited him. But God took him on a journey that gave Joseph the empathy, skills and wisdom he would need to fulfill the purpose of God when God fulfilled the promise to him.

Psalms 105:19 (TPT) says, "God's promise to Joseph purged his character until it was time for his dreams to come true."

Years later, after the death of Joseph's father, his brothers again bowed before him in fear, pleading for mercy. He could have done anything to them, but he now knew why God had given him that promise and fulfilled it. Joseph comforted his brothers, saying, "You intended to harm me, but God intended

it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20, NIV).

God's delay in fulfilling the promise was filled with purpose. He knew Joseph needed a promise to cling to during his days of servitude and imprisonment. God also knew Joseph's character needed refinement so when the promise came, His will, not Joseph's, would be accomplished through it.

God's Reason

We have all received promises from God. Some are fulfilled quickly; others require patient endurance. But rest assured, promises that seem to be forgotten are not. Psalm 111:5 (TPT) says, "He satisfies all who love and trust him, and he keeps every promise he makes," while 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) tells us why some of His promises are delayed: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." The promise referred to in that verse is the promise of Jesus' return. But the reason for the delay of any of His promises is the same – the saving of many lives.

We may not understand how or why, but any delay in the fulfillment of a promise of God has a divine purpose. To see the promise fulfilled, we must continue to press in and prepare. {eo}

Dr. Jodie Chiricosta *is vice president of Somebody Cares America/International. She teaches and consults on a variety of Christian living and leadership topics and hosts the Her God Story podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.*

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