

When Hope Holds You Captive

The walls in my house are a witness. They've absorbed the sound waves of soft, wearied prayers and of bold, loud requests before God.

And with these walls, I wait for prayer's fruit.

Our hearts (*my heart*) want to dodge the subject of "unanswered prayer." We often don't have much to say about it, because mingled with the pain of delay is the reality that we simply don't understand why our prayers sometimes seem to go unheard.

We kind of feel like we're down there with Joseph in the pit, pleading for God's hand to rescue, to intervene, to break in *and to hear our prayer*.

But He leaves us there. And not only that, sometimes bad gets worse. As with Joseph ... from pit, to slavery, to dungeon.

And our hearts begin to pulse and ache with the question, "Does He really hear?"

There are things I have labored for in prayer for more than 10 years (and I'm only 32, so that's almost a third of my life). And there have been moments, even seasons of moments, when discouragement has pricked my heart so strongly, I've felt I might crumble under seeming futility.

At times, I've felt I've had only the smallest thread of hope, left over from unraveled dreams and tattered aspirations.

Still, *I find that I'm bound to that thread*. Where darkness and despair tries to crush, I've been hedged in with a groaning belief that He could still break through.

I've found that I have only two options in the pulsing ache, in the delay of God's move.

I can go to that raw, painfully vulnerable place of putting my bleeding heart into His presence and asking, again.

Or I can close up and give up.

My soul wrestles. But *hope* has enclosed me in a room of sighing, weeping and praying. And I just have to keep asking. *I have to.*

I'm held in desperation's grip—because if God doesn't break in, there is no other answer, no other hope.

History has told us some stories—stories that show us that sometimes God has a plan up His sleeve that we can't see.

Joseph made his pleas, offered his prayers and waited, not knowing *when* or *how* or *if* God would intervene. He didn't know God's storyline.

But in time, truth revealed that God wanted to do more than give Joseph a key to the dungeon's door. He wanted to test and refine a young man's heart to prepare him to save and lead a nation.

God had a bigger story than could be seen within the dungeon's walls.

When prayer “isn't working,” we might find that God is actually working something down in the depths of our hearts.

We cannot fathom all that is in God's heart, or the intricacies of these chapters He's writing in our life stories. And there may just be a piece of the story that we can't see yet.

He urges our hearts to trust Him again.

So I come again as an intercessor with thousands of prayers having left my lips through the years—and I confess that there is still much I don't understand about prayer. But somehow I

do understand—His Spirit has convinced me—that I can't quit.

I come to Him, held captive by *hope*. I come with sighs and groans and tears. With desperation, because only He can. And with hope, because He can.

I come before Him, broken because He has broken me open. I breathe prayers born out of the depths, out of my deep.

Friends, let's put courage in one another's hearts.

Let's come before the One who hears prayer *and ask again*.

Open Your hand to me, God. On Your Word I again cast my hope, and I hang on to what the holy, ancient pages have told me—with You there is mercy, with You there is abundant redemption.

I again bring these prayers.

I wait for You, Lord, my soul does wait. And in Your Word I do hope.

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