

Dreamcoat Part 3: Thanks for Nothing 10.30.11

Scripture: **Genesis 39:9-23 ESV** [reading v. 11-14;19-21]

Video: "Psalm 42" by Shift Worship

Intro: Praising God and being thankful for His many blessings is one thing when life is going well and we are living out all of our dreams. But what about the down times? What about those times - and there are many - when our dreams are not fulfilled. What do we do when our dreams mock us? When our real life is so distant, so opposite our dreams, that our real life seems more like a nightmare. That's what we discover in Joseph's life. He dreamed as a young man that his brothers and father and mother would one day bow down to him. Eventually his dreams came true. However, as we see in today's Scripture, there were a lot of down times for Joseph between the dream and the reality of it. We would be tempted to say, "Thanks for NOTHING!" Not Joseph...

How To Be U.P.B.E.A.T. In Down Times

U UNDERSTAND that bad things happen to good people.

Real life doesn't work out sometimes like we dream it will. The Bible tells us of 3 different times in Joseph's life when his life was a nightmare compared to his dream:

When his brothers sold him into slavery:

"Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt." Genesis 37:28 ESV

When Potiphar threw him into prison:

"So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained." Genesis 39:20 NLT

When the cup-bearer forgot all about him:

"Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought." Genesis 40:23 NLT

We must understand that bad things do indeed happen to good people. This goes against our perception of how the world should be. **We want to cry out that life is not fair! Which leads us to "P".**

P PRESUME that life is not fair.

As Christians we want to live in a world where - as God's children - we receive special treatment. Jesus, however, in his famous sermon on the mount makes clear that God provides just as many good things to those who are evil as He does to those who are good!

"For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew: 5:45b ESV

Sometimes we can grasp that evil people are rewarded as much as the good, but it does seem to us that at least the good should be rewarded as much as evil people, right? But even that is not always true. The writer of 1 John explains that this world around us is actually under the control of the evil one, Satan!

"We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one." 1 John 5:19 NLT

Remarkably some people like to teach that being a Christ-follower gets you ahead in our world. Christ himself, however, never sold this attitude to any of his followers. What did he say about persecution?
“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’
If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” John 15:20a NIV84

The apostle Paul may have been one of Jesus’ greatest converts. What did Paul have to say about the Christian life?

“We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it.” 2 Corinthians 1:8b NLT

Don’t get me wrong. I believe the Christian life is a most rewarding life, both now and in the eternal life to come. But it is not easy. And it certainly is NOT FAIR! It’s just easier to presume this going in. I **recommend you change “belief” systems from ‘life is fair’ to...**

B BELIEVE that God has not abandoned me.

When we are “crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure,” it may seem as if God has abandoned us. It may be difficult or even impossible to sense His presence. We learn a valuable lesson from Joseph’s life. The first 2 times he was unfairly treated, we are told how “the Lord was with Joseph”:

“The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.” Genesis 39:2 NIV84

“But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” Genesis 39:21 ESV

Then we come to the time when the cup-bearer forgot about Joseph
“After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile.”
Genesis 41:1 ESV

Sometimes we can learn as much about what the Bible DOESN’T say as we do about what it DOES say. In both previous occasions, we are told how the Lord was with Joseph. But not this time. This time all we read is a passing phrase you and I are all too ready to pass through quickly. AFTER TWO WHOLE YEARS!!! Those must have been a long two years... Years when Joseph didn’t know, couldn’t hear God, couldn’t feel God. **And just had to believe!**

This is what it’s like for us sometimes. When we just have to hold on. When we have to believe! 6 different times in Bible, God says:
“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”
Deuteronomy 31:6 ESV
(Also 31:8; Joshua 1:5; 1 Kings 8:57; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Hebrews 13:5)

E EXERCISE faith despite my circumstances.

Being strong and courageous doesn’t come without exercise. Just like physical strength requires “strength training,” same is true with faith training. In times of crisis in our faith, we can choose confidence
“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.” Hebrews 11:1 NLT

You should be asking, “HOW?” How do I CHOOSE confidence in the middle of crisis. Remember Paul? “Crushed, overwhelmed, beyond our ability to endure” Paul? **Here’s how he did it...**

“So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.” 2 Corinthians 4:18 NLT

The “choice” is what we look at, what we focus in on. The contrast between “look at” and “fix our gaze” is instructive. To “look at” means just to look around without thinking about it. The easiest thing to do is to look at our troubles. Paul didn't do that and neither should we. To “fix our gaze” means to concentrate. Deliberate focus. To not allow our immediate, time-contained troubles to distract us from an appreciation of what God is doing in “forever.” **Leads us to...**

A APPRECIATE this “pit stop” as an opportunity for reflection.

- God's glory. Change focus from me to where it belongs - on God!
“And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18 TNIV

- God's strength. Change focus from my power to God's power!
“Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”
2 Corinthians 1:9 NIV84

- My future with God. Change focus from troubles now to glory!
“That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.’” 1 Corinthians 2:9 NLT

T TOIL as if my dream has already come true.

What I love about Joseph's story is that he didn't stop at reflection, and he didn't get lost in what he couldn't do. Isn't that true of us sometimes? We have a dream. Someday we'll be able to... you fill in the blank. Joseph had a dream. Someday his family would bow down to him. Didn't seem likely in slavery or in jail. What did Joseph do? Yes, he never lost sight of the Lord being with him, but then **he also worked as if he were already in receipt of his dream come true!!!** He did what he could, where he could, without waiting.

Even though only a slave, he managed a household:

“Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.” Genesis 39:4b NIV84

Even though only in jail, he managed a prison:

“So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.” Genesis 39:22 NIV84

Even leads to ---> Eventually he was fully trained to fulfill his dream:

“You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”
Genesis 41:40 NIV84

Conclusion: When you are in the midst of trouble or difficulties, when life seems more like a nightmare than a dream, what do you do? Do you quit? Do you say, “Thanks for nothing?” Or do you use your troubles to discover God and His power in your life? Don't let troubles get you down. Your “evens” will become “eventually.” Be U.P.B.E.A.T. not because of Positive Mental Attitudes, but because God is real! **Let's pray together.**