

## 15 Faithful in the Fire: When You Wait and Still Suffer

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Maybe you've done everything right.

You've prayed faithfully.

You've trusted God.

You've waited patiently.

And still – you're suffering.

The promise hasn't come.

The breakthrough hasn't happened.

The pain hasn't stopped.

And you're wondering: **What's the point of faithful waiting if it still hurts this much?**

If that's you, I want to introduce you to two people from Scripture who know exactly how you feel.

Joseph and Hannah.

Two people who waited faithfully through agonizing circumstances.

Who never rushed ahead.

Who never compromised.

Who trusted God even when it cost them everything.

And who still spent years in the fire.

### **Joseph: Faithful Through Injustice**

Joseph was 17 years old when God gave him dreams about his future.

Probably should have kept them to himself.

His brothers hated him for those dreams.

So they threw him into a pit, sold him to slave traders, and told their father he was dead.

Joseph – the favored son with the God-given dreams – became a slave in Egypt.

Owned by a man named Potiphar.

But Joseph didn't give up.

He worked hard. He stayed faithful. He did everything right.

And God blessed him.

Potiphar noticed. Promoted him. Put him in charge of everything.

### **Finally, the breakthrough.**

Except it wasn't.

Because Potiphar's wife desired Joseph and falsely accused him of assault when he would not give in to temptation.

And Potiphar – threw him into prison.

### **Thirteen years.**

That's how long Joseph waited.

Thirteen years of doing everything right and suffering anyway.

Pit. Slavery. False accusation. Prison.

And still – Joseph didn't cave.

Even in prison, he stayed faithful.

He helped other prisoners. He interpreted their dreams. He told them what God revealed.

One of those prisoners – Pharaoh's cupbearer – was released and promised to remember Joseph.

### **Finally, someone who could help.**

Except Genesis 40:23 says:

*"The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."*

### **Two more years.**

Two more years in prison after being forgotten by the one person who could have helped.

Thirteen years total.

From age 17 to age 30.

Faithful the entire time.

Suffering the entire time.

Many would have given up.

Many would have decided God had abandoned them.

But Joseph waited and was faithful in the waiting.

And then – suddenly – Pharaoh had a dream no one could interpret.

The cupbearer finally remembered Joseph.

Joseph was brought before Pharaoh, interpreted the dream, and was made second-in-command of Egypt.

**In one day, everything changed.**

But it took thirteen years to get there.

**Hannah: Faithful Through Barrenness**

Hannah's story is different, but the pain is just as real.

She was barren.

In a culture where a woman's worth was tied to bearing children, Hannah couldn't have any.

Her husband Elkanah loved her.

But he had another wife – Peninnah – who had children.

And Peninnah used those children as a weapon.

1 Samuel 1:6-7 says Peninnah *"kept provoking her in order to irritate her"* year after year.

Every year, the family went to the temple to worship.

Every year, Peninnah taunted Hannah for being barren.

Every year, Hannah wept.

And one year, Hannah couldn't take it anymore.

She went to the temple and prayed with such desperation that the priest Eli thought she was drunk.

She wasn't drunk.

She was broken.

And she made a vow:

*"Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life."* (1 Samuel 1:11, NIV)

**God heard her.**

She conceived. She had a son. She named him Samuel.

**The promise came.**

But it came with a cost.

Because Hannah kept her vow.

When Samuel was weaned – probably around age 3 – she brought him to the temple and gave him to Eli to raise.

She prayed for a child.

God gave her the child.

And then she gave him back.

1 Samuel 1:27-28 says:

*"I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord."*

**Faithful waiting.**

**Agonizing sacrifice.**

**Maybe That's You**

Maybe you're in Joseph's pit right now.

You've been faithful, but you're suffering anyway.

You did everything right, and still – false accusations. Betrayal. Injustice.

You're watching people who don't deserve success get promoted while you're stuck in prison.

Or maybe you're Hannah.

Desperate for something God hasn't given yet.

Barren – whether that's literal infertility, or longing for a spouse, a job, a breakthrough that hasn't come.

And the people around you keep asking, "So when are you going to...?"

And every question feels like Peninnah's taunt.

I know those places.

My dad's 12-year battle with cancer ended in heaven, not earth.

My wife has lupus. Our daughter battles significant autoimmune issues. I live with chronic migraines.

We've prayed for healing. For years. Faithfully. Desperately.

We still pray. We still ask.

But we've learned to pray like Jesus did in the garden the night before His crucifixion:

**"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."**  
(Luke 22:42, NIV)

Take this suffering away – **but not my will, Yours.**

We're still waiting.

Still praying.

Still faithful.

**And still suffering.**

The healing hasn't come. Not yet. Maybe not on this side of heaven.

But we haven't given up on God.

And He hasn't given up on us.

That's what faithful waiting looks like when you're still in the fire.

**Faithful waiting doesn't always end with earthly breakthrough.**

Sometimes it ends with "not here, but there."

Sometimes the promise comes.

Sometimes it doesn't – on this side of heaven.

But either way, the call is the same:

**Stay faithful in the fire.**

**The Castle in the Fire**

When we're suffering – especially when we're suffering unjustly – we're tempted to build walls.

**The Storerooms** fill up.

We stuff the pain down instead of bringing it to God.

Joseph could have become bitter. He had every right.

But he didn't stuff it. He kept bringing it to God.

Hannah could have pretended she was fine.

But she didn't. She went to the temple and wept before God openly.

**The Moat** widens.

We create distance between us and God.

"If He loved me, this wouldn't be happening."

"If He cared, He would have answered by now."

So we pull back. We guard our hearts. We stop trusting as deeply.

Joseph had every reason to widen the moat.

Thirteen years of unanswered prayers. Thirteen years of faithful suffering.

But he stayed close to God.

Hannah had every reason to create distance.

Year after year of barrenness. Year after year of humiliation.

But she ran **toward** God, not away from Him.

**That's the difference between faithful waiting and bitter waiting.**

Bitter waiting builds walls higher.

Faithful waiting brings the pain to God.

### **What Faithful Waiting Looks Like**

So what does it actually look like to wait faithfully when you're still in the fire?

#### **1. You don't rush ahead.**

Joseph never tried to manufacture his own escape.

He could have.

He could have schemed, manipulated, lied his way out.

But he didn't.

He waited for God's timing.

Hannah didn't give up on God and turn to idols or other solutions.

She waited.

#### **2. You don't compromise.**

Joseph stayed pure in Potiphar's house even when tempted.

He stayed faithful in prison even when forgotten.

Hannah didn't stop going to the temple even though it hurt.

She kept showing up.

#### **3. You bring the pain to God, not stuff it away.**

Hannah wept before God.

She told Him her misery.

She didn't pretend she was fine.

Joseph trusted God even when he couldn't see the outcome.

He interpreted dreams for others even while his own dreams seemed dead.

#### **4. You hold onto the promise even when circumstances contradict it.**

Joseph had dreams of ruling at 17.

By 30, he'd spent almost more time in slavery and prison than in freedom.

But he never stopped believing God's promise.

Hannah prayed for a child when her body said no.

And she kept praying.

#### **The Wait Produces Something You Can't Get Any Other Way**

Here's what I've learned:

##### **The wait isn't wasted.**

Joseph didn't just get a position at the end of his thirteen years.

He got **character**.

The kind of character that could forgive his brothers.

Genesis 50:20 records Joseph saying to the brothers who betrayed him:

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

That's not bitterness.

That's not grudge-holding.

That's a man who spent thirteen years learning to trust God's purposes even when they hurt.

##### **The fire refined him.**

Hannah didn't just get a son.

She got a son who became one of Israel's greatest prophets.

Samuel anointed kings.

He heard from God.

He changed the course of a nation.

**Because Hannah was willing to wait – and then willing to give him back.**

The agonizing wait produced something beautiful.

### **The Compassion of God**

James 5:11 says:

*"As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."*

#### **The Lord is full of compassion.**

Not "The Lord is full of reasons why you have to suffer."

Not "The Lord is full of lessons He's teaching you through pain."

#### **The Lord is full of compassion.**

He sees Joseph in the pit.

He sees Hannah weeping at the temple.

#### **He sees you in the fire.**

And His compassion doesn't always mean immediate rescue.

But it does mean He's with you.

It does mean He hasn't forgotten.

It does mean the wait has purpose.

### **Don't Give Up**

So if you're in the fire right now – if you've been faithful and you're still suffering – **don't give up.**

I know it's been long.

I know it hurts.

I know you're tired of waiting.

But the wait has purpose.

Joseph's thirteen years weren't wasted.

They positioned him to save nations.

Hannah's years of barrenness weren't meaningless.

They prepared her to raise a prophet.

Your wait – however long it's been – isn't wasted either.

### **Stay faithful in the fire.**

Bring the pain to God, don't stuff it in the storerooms.

Stay close to Him, don't widen the moat.

Don't rush ahead.

Don't compromise.

### **Hold onto the promise even when circumstances contradict it.**

Because the God who brought Joseph out of prison after thirteen years is the same God holding you now.

The God who heard Hannah's desperate prayer is the same God hearing yours.

### **He is full of compassion.**

And the wait – however agonizing – has purpose.

Trust that the wait you're in can and will be used by God to bring about His will and for His Glory.

We often can't see it in the waiting.

And even if it means fulfillment on the other side of this life – it is worth the waiting.

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### **If you're struggling:**

- Christian Faith-Based Resources: <https://mentalhealthhotline.org/christian-faith-resources/> or call 1-866-903-3787 (24/7)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 (call or text)

**You matter. Your life matters. And your faithful waiting is not in vain. Please stay.**

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**William James Meyer is the author of "Do You Live in a Castle? Breaking Free from the Walls That Hold You Hostage." He writes from a Christian perspective as someone who's learning that faithful waiting through the fire is not wasted – even when it hurts.**

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