

Where Was God?

Ponder: Feeling abandoned during trial

Scripture: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 20:28b, NKJV).

At least a dozen times in the Old Testament, God promised to be with His servants such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David. Yet the record of these men's lives shows fiery trials bearing down upon them frequently. How can this be? Was God with them, or not?

Take Joseph as an example. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian" (Gen. 39:2). But wait! Why was Joseph enslaved in Egypt? Where was God when Joseph's cruel brothers sold him to the caravan of traders who sold him to Potiphar?

Again, "The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen. 29:21). But wait! Why was Joseph in prison? Where was God when Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph and Potiphar unjustly imprisoned him?

Sometimes angry people ask demanding, "Where was God when . . . ? Fill in the blank with whatever disaster they are upset about. Their question implies that if God is real and faithful, He would have stepped in to prevent the catastrophe. Since He didn't, He must not be real or else He just doesn't care.

Such assumptions betray a lack of understanding of God's nature and how He manages His universe. Joseph and others like him realized that God being with them didn't mean they would be free from difficulties. As Joseph later told his brothers, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). Joseph knew the meaning of Romans 8:28 many centuries before Paul wrote it: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Have you seen the wall art entitled "Footprints"? A man dreams of walking along the beach with God, thus making two sets of footprints. But during times of suffering there is but one set of footprints. He asks why God left him, but the Lord replies that during those painful times He was carrying him.

Fight those feelings of abandonment. God intends trials to make us better, not bitter!

Hymn: "Does Jesus Care?"

Prayer: Father, help us to trust You in trying times. Thank You for never abandoning us. In Jesus' name, Amen.