

Devotion 16:

## **Our Father Blesses People He Is With**

I Chronicles 1—29

What word would you say is the key word in the title for this chapter? Realizing that several answers are possible, I would like to offer my choice--“with.” English teachers will know this word is a preposition; the English language has over 40 such words. A preposition is a little connecting word that usually combines with a noun phrase. I am fascinated when I read the dictionary definitions of the simplest of words. Here is what *Webster’s Dictionary* says about with: “used as a function word to indicate combination, accompaniment, or presence.”

One of the first major occurrences of the word in Scripture in a similar context as found in I Chronicles is back in Genesis 39:2-3:

*“The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes.”*

This concept of God’s being with someone is found throughout I Chronicles at least 15 times. I Chronicles 11:9 reads: *“And David became more and more powerful, because the Lord Almighty was with him.”* It is a very good thing when our Father is with us.

There seems to be something innate in us humans that deeply longs for withness. It is the only thing that God declared at creation to be not good, that man should be alone. (Gen. 2:18) Loneliness is one of life’s most profound and disturbing pains. Many people detest conflict and go to great lengths to avoid it. On the flip side, listen to what is highly touted in Ps. 133: *“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”*

It is interesting that the word “death” carries the connotation of “separation.” I suppose, if we think about it, we might conclude that this characterizes the essential difference between heaven and hell: we will experience deep “withness” with God and with others in the one realm, and horrific separation from God and from others in the other. (see I Cor. 13:12 and recall Christ’s words from the cross in Mt. 27:46)

Are there more comforting, reassuring words in the Scriptures than these?

*“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*  
Mt. 28:20b

*“God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”*  
Heb. 13:5b

And this is exactly what the Lord said to David in I Chronicles 17:8: *“I have been with you wherever you have gone.”* And some of David’s last words before he died to his beloved son Solomon were these: *“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you.”* (28:20b)

Unfortunately, in a fallen world and lugging a sinful flesh around, we don’t always feel or experience God’s presence as continuously as we will some day. Listen for the prepositions in Revelation 21:3: *“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”* Theologians have called the present experience “the now but not yet.”

The New Testament emphasizes that we sons and daughters of God are right now “in Christ” and that “Christ is in us.” That is a pretty intimate accompaniment and combination, if you think about it. How much more “withness” could we have?

But another problem for us, however, is hardships. We often cry out in pain to God, “Where are you?” Reading Job and Psalms, we see that others have sometimes wondered if God had left them. On the contrary, it is in such trials where we see the presence of our Father shine most beautifully. We referred to Joseph earlier in this devotion. As you recall his story in Egypt, there were years when he didn’t experience the fine food, comfort, or honor of Pharaoh’s home, but rather he had to endure miserable imprisonment. Even then, we read in Genesis 39:20-21:

*“But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.”*

Is our Father with us today? Read His Word. Eat Christ’s body; drink His blood. Gather with two or three other believers. And when hard times come and our enemy tries to tempt us to believe otherwise, hold fast to these words:

*“And we know that in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...If God is for us, who can be against us?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*  
Rom. 8:28, 31, 35, 37-39