

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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What Are You Complaining About? (Part 2)

Exodus 16:7-12; Philippians 2:14

Upon looking at the forms of the word complain, I came to the conclusion that only the unsaved and selfish, non-Spirit filled believers murmur and complain. A Spirit-filled believer will never complain no matter what they face in their life. This may seem harsh, but I believe it is the absolute truth. As we saw in several verses, God never allows nor accepts complaining. It is always punished—often severely. In one of our text verses, Philippians 2:14, the command is given, “*Do all things without murmurings and disputings.*” As I mentioned earlier, one word is absolutely important. **All** things are to be done without any complaining. We may think that is impossible, and in the flesh it is, but we are not to walk in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

But is it really possible to live in this life without complaining? I believe it is when are filled (controlled) by the Spirit. As I was contemplating this message, the Lord brought to my mind three men. They all faced terrible circumstances, but you never find them complaining. In fact, you find them rejoicing in the midst of those circumstances. As we look at these three men, you will notice that each subpoint is the same: they were all misunderstood, they were all mistreated, but they all delivered a powerful message. If we ever feel like complaining, may we remember the lives of Joseph, Stephen, and Paul. Through their examples, may we learn never to complain.

We begin with **The Life of Joseph**. Joseph is an interesting character. Thirteen chapters are devoted to the details of his life. About fourteen chapters are devoted to Abraham, one chapter to Isaac, and about ten chapters to Jacob. Of course, in many of these chapters these characters overlap, but I am using these chapter

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divisions in reference to their being the main character in those particular chapters. It is not amazing to find Abraham and Jacob discussed as the main character in several chapters because they are the patriarchs of Israel. What makes Joseph so unusual is that he is not more important than any of his other brothers at least in relation to their descendants. His line will not be the one through whom the kingship will come. That will be Judah. Judah’s line also, because of the kingship, will be the line of the Messiah.

Joseph is also not the one who leads the nation out of bondage, nor is he the lawgiver. Both of those positions are held by Moses. Many refer to Joseph as a type of Christ, but to be a true type of Christ, there must be Scripture in the New Testament that bears that out. Joseph is only mentioned twice in the New Testament: by Stephen in his account of the history of Israel, and by the writer of Hebrews as a hero of faith in chapter 11. Neither of those passages bear out a fulfillment as a type of Christ. Remarkably, there are many similarities between Joseph and Christ, but Joseph is not, strictly speaking, a type of Christ.

So why are there so many chapters devoted to the account of Joseph’s life? Because of his importance in saving the nation during the time of famine. God had a purpose for Joseph’s life, and Joseph wonderfully fulfilled it. We can learn a lesson from Joseph at that point. His line was not the line of the king, but if Joseph had rebelled against God because of what was going on in his life, the entire nation would have been destroyed. Joseph was willing to be used where God wanted him. May we learn to be used where God deems best.

In looking at the life of Joseph, we can clearly see The Misunderstanding. There were three times when Joseph was misunderstood. The first time was concerning *The Dreams* in Genesis 37. As we begin chapter 37, we are told that Joseph is 17 years old, that Jacob loves him more than the other sons, and that Jacob gives him a coat of many colors, symbolizing Joseph’s special

place. This, of course, does not endear Joseph to his brothers, but causes them to hate him (37:4).

In addition to all of this, God gives two dreams to Joseph. You can sense Joseph's humility as you read through the verses, because he does not use the dreams to lord over his brothers. He humbly tells them what God has told him. He recounts the dream in verse 7: "*For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*" We can only speculate about this, but I am not sure that Joseph fully understood all that the dream meant. The meaning is obvious to everyone, but I do not think that Joseph was telling them the dream so that they would immediately submit to his authority. I believe Joseph was telling them the dream, so that they could all figure out what God was trying to tell Joseph.

(Before we go on to the second dream, I must comment about Biblical dreams. Before Scripture was completed, God spoke to men in visions while they were awake and in dreams while they were asleep. This occurred both in the Old and New Testaments. This was how God revealed His will to men at that time before Scripture was completed. But God does not talk to men in visions and dreams today. His Word is complete. Revelation 22:18-19 says that nothing should be added or taken away from this book. In particular, the focus is on Revelation, but in application, it is a reference to the entire Bible. There is no more advanced revelation. All that God wants us to know is found in the Bible. If a man, or woman, says that God has spoken to them in a vision or dream, you can be sure that they are a false prophet. It is not God talking to them; it may be the devil.)

In Genesis 37:9, Joseph's second dream is recorded. He says, "*Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*" Again, I am not sure that Joseph fully understood how this dream would come true. This time he tells it to his brethren and his father, perhaps, hoping

that they can all help him understand what the dream might mean. He is not prepared for the reaction that he receives.

The misunderstanding starts with the dreams and leads to *The Dispute*. In Genesis 37:8, the brothers respond to the first dream by saying, "*Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?*" Everyone understood the meaning of the dream, but the brothers were disputing the fact that it would happen. You can sense their antagonism towards God and Joseph. They did not care if it was a message from God, and did not even ponder if God was trying to tell them something.

But it was not just his brothers that disputed with Joseph. As I mentioned, he told the second to his father. He responded no better than the brothers. Genesis 37:10 says, "*And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?*" Joseph could have been crushed by his father's response. His brothers already hated him, but his father loved him. But his father cared no more for the message of the dream than the brothers did.

Joseph had received the message of the Lord through his dreams. As I have mentioned, Joseph may not have fully understood all that the dreams involved, but he was no doubt excited that God had spoken to him. He may have wanted some help in totally understanding the dream, or he may have just wanted to let his family know what God had revealed to him. But, I believe it is fair to say that he never expected the response that he received, especially from his father. We must be prepared to receive the same response from others that Joseph did.

We have the Word of God. What Joseph had and what we have are equivalent. Neither are more important than the other. The time period and the way that God revealed His message was different, but

the message is the same. Joseph humbly revealed God's message, but he was misunderstood. He received and declared God's message (the dreams), but his audience, in this case, his family, did not want to hear what he had to say. They rejected the message of the Lord.

When we declare what God has said in His Word, we may be rejected as Joseph was rejected. A Gospel tract may not be accepted. A verbal witness may be refused. An invitation to church or a revival meeting may be declined. The preached Word may be ignored. All of these are situations that are very common today. People often will not accept the truth of God's Word.

Many times when God's Word is plainly declared, people will respond in a similar way as Joseph's family. They will say, "That is your opinion (or interpretation)." They may say, "My religion is as good as yours." However the response may be given, it is never pleasant to hear rejection. But when we are misunderstood because of our message and people dispute what we tell them, we must never complain about it. Joseph was misunderstood about his dreams, and his family disputed with him, but he never complained. May we respond in the same manner. We will continue next month.