

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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What Are You Complaining About? (Part 5)

Exodus 16:7-12; Philippians 2:14

We closed last month with The Message that we discover in the life of Joseph. We will expand upon those thoughts as we continue asking the probing question, “What are you complaining about?” This month we will finish discussing the life of Joseph. Next month we will begin looking at a few thoughts about Stephen. As we ponder the lives of these two men and Paul, later on, we will realize that there is never any legitimate reason to complain.

As Genesis concludes, Jacob has died and the 10 brothers of Joseph are worried that Joseph will now retaliate for their mistreatment of him. In Genesis 50:16-17, they send a messenger to Joseph saying that Jacob, before he died, had asked that Joseph forgive “*the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil.*” Some writers have speculated that the brothers may have made this up just to put the pressure on Joseph to honor his father. The brothers may have been scoundrels before, but in the time between their mistreatment of Joseph and meeting him, you can see that their lives have changed. I believe they had truly had this discussion with Jacob, and he really made this statement. They go on to admit their sin at the end of verse 17 by saying, “*And now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.*” The brothers show their true brokenness for they are weeping while admitting their sin, and then fall down before Joseph and declare, “*Behold, we be thy servants*” (50:18).

Joseph has his brothers where he wants them. They are groveling before him, admitting they meant evil. What is Joseph going to do to them? Will he execute them? He had the power to do so, and they knew it. Would he make them his perpetual servants? They know he

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can do so, and are submitting themselves to that reality. Would he return to them the evil that they had done to him? That would be the normal human reaction. When someone does wrong to us, the thought goes through our mind that we will get even with them by doing something wrong to them. The brothers expected Joseph to return evil to them because that is what they would have done, and they are begging Joseph not to do it.

Joseph relieves their fears in verse 19 by saying, “*Fear not: for am I in the place of God?*” Joseph knew what was later revealed to Moses in Deuteronomy 32:35 and was restated by Paul in Romans 12:19, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*” There was no written Word at this time, so how could Joseph say what he did? The answer is found in a statement that is made four times, “*The LORD was with Joseph.*” He had absolute confidence that God would work everything out according to His will. What others did to him did not matter. God was in control!

Because of Joseph’s absolute faith in God, he could say what we read in Genesis 50:20. As I mentioned last month, all of our children have memorized this verse, and I read it several times a year, but the words never grow old. It is one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible. Joseph said, “*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*” Joseph did not ignore what they did. He acknowledged *The Desire*. Joseph knew that the brothers hated him and wanted to kill him when they did what they did. The word evil in this verse means “misfortune or calamity.” They were wanting something bad to happen to Joseph, and they were trying to make it happen! But regardless of their desire and intentions, Joseph knew at that time and all through his life that God was working everything out the way that He wanted it to work. Joseph’s absolute faith in God is amazing! May we have faith like that!

In the last part of the verse Joseph gives *The Decree*. He admits that the brothers intended something bad to happen, but “*God meant*

*it unto good.*” The word meant carries the idea “to weave, to fabricate, or to purpose.” Do you see why I make so much of Joseph’s faith? Without any written Word to read or rely on, Joseph had absolute confidence that God would and could take what others were intending for bad and make it good. That is how great God is! He can take something terrible and turn it into something wonderful. Hatred, slavery, and imprisonment in the hand of God turned into exaltation, food, protection, and the fulfillment of His own prophecy that he gave to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14. What a wonderful God we serve! Others intend something for evil. God turns it into good. Do you see why we should never complain? God knows what He is doing! Everything works according to His will! He never does anything wrong! Why should I worry? Why should I ever complain? God does everything right! May we trust in Him!

We read and ponder Joseph’s response and we wonder, “How could Joseph react this way?” How could he not be angry and just waiting for his father to die so he could “get even”? The answer is found in a clause that is mentioned four times in Genesis 39. In verses 2 and 21, it is stated, “*The LORD was with Joseph.*” In verses 3 and 23, the pronoun is used and you have the clause, “*The LORD was with him.*” Five simple words, but what a profound meaning. Joseph was not in control of his life. He was completely surrendered to the LORD. He knew the LORD, and he gave the LORD full control of his life. It is interesting that Genesis 39:3 says, “*And his master saw that the LORD was with him.*” This master was Potiphar, the captain of the guard and Pharaoh’s officer. There is no record that Egypt ever served the LORD, the God Who made Himself known to Abraham. But Potiphar knew something was different about Joseph. We can only speculate at this point because the Bible does not give us any other information, but perhaps Potiphar talked with Joseph about how different he was. Perhaps Joseph explained how God revealed himself to Abraham. Joseph went on to tell how he served the same God and was devoted to Him. We do not know, but Potiphar saw something in Joseph that, no doubt, he never saw in anyone else. He saw that the LORD was with Joseph. Can others see

that the LORD is with you?

One other statement is made about Joseph that casts some light on how he was able to handle the situations that he was placed in with such grace and humility. In Genesis 41, Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh. After telling Pharaoh what the dreams meant, he advises Pharaoh to place a man in charge of storing food during the seven years of plenty. Pharaoh responds to his servants with this question, “*Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?*” As with Potiphar, here is a man that does not know anything about the God of Abraham. There is absolutely no record that Egypt ever worshipped Jehovah, the true God of the Bible. They were polytheistic, serving many false gods. Yet when Joseph interpreted the dream, Pharaoh knew there was something different about Joseph. Apparently, the Egyptians had some belief that the gods could live inside of man. I do not know anything about Egyptian religion, but the question is asked by Pharaoh. The implication is that there is something very different about Joseph. The difference must be Joseph’s God. The Spirit of God must live in Joseph.

This is the first place in Scripture where anything is mentioned about the Spirit of God indwelling anyone. As you read through the Old Testament, there are other occurrences of the Spirit indwelling people such as Samson, David, and others. As you study these cases, it seems that the Holy Spirit would come for a little while and then leave. In the Old Testament, there is no permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit permanently indwells believers. I cannot go into any more detail about it in this message, but while the duration of the Holy Ghost may have changed after Pentecost, the impact that He had on a person’s life is the same. Joseph could handle the problems in his life because he was living in the power of the Holy Ghost. (Again, I know there is some distinction about the Holy Ghost in the Old and New Testaments, but that does not change what Scripture says here in Genesis.) Pharaoh could see that the Spirit of God was in Joseph. How could he see it? Because, very simply, the Spirit of God was in

Joseph! The ways that Joseph handled all of the situations that he was in were very profound, but the source of his strength was very simple—it was God the Holy Ghost living through him. How can we handle hardships and difficulties in the proper way? By giving the Holy Ghost complete control of our lives. When we do, we will respond properly in hard times and others will see the LORD in us.

I mention a couple of situations, not to bring glory to myself, but to show you that others, people that you do not know, even unsaved people, can see the Holy Ghost in your life. Years ago, when I worked in a warehouse, I had people ask, “Are you a Christian?” When I said, “Yes, I am,” they responded, “I thought so.” On one occasion, I asked them why they thought so, and they said, “I could just tell.” In the last few years, my family and I have been stopped in restaurants and asked, “Are you Christians?” We would respond with a yes, and some would say that they thought so because of the way we were dressed or because of the way the children behaved. This past spring a man stopped me in Lowe’s and asked, “Are you a preacher?” I was not in a suit, so I was stunned and asked how he knew. He said, “I could just tell.” The world is watching. Can they see the Spirit in you? If the Spirit is in us, like He was in Joseph, we will not complain.