

# The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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What Are You Complaining About? (Part 4)

Exodus 16:7-12; Philippians 2:14

Last month we began to consider the mistreatment of Joseph. I am discussing this mistreatment to help us realize that even when people treat us badly, we do not have the right to complain. So far, we have seen that Joseph was mistreated by his brothers and his boss.

There is a third mistreatment of Joseph. This one is performed by *The Butler*. After Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he was thrown in prison. Genesis 39:21 reminds us that God is in control by saying, "*But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*" In spite of being wrongfully accused and thrown in prison, Joseph still behaved well. There is no mention made of any complaining. Some may think that Joseph was discouraged, but there is no record of that. Other men throughout Scripture had troublesome times and did not handle them well, such as Moses, Elijah, and Peter. Because of the detail given about Joseph, it seems fair to say that if he had complained in some manner, it would have been recorded. But it is not. Joseph handles the situation so admirably that the jailer puts him in charge of the other prisoners. From this situation alone, we can say resolutely that it is never right to complain. Joseph, though he may not understand everything that is going on, still has absolute faith that God is in control and that God will work everything out in His own time. O that I would have the utter dependence upon God that Joseph had!

But we have not even covered the mistreatment by the butler. We have just seen that Joseph is thrown in prison and put in authority over the other prisoners. As Genesis 40 begins, we are told that Pharaoh's butler and baker are thrown into prison for offending

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Pharaoh. No other details are given about their crime other than that Pharaoh was angry with them. They are placed into the same prison with Joseph, and Joseph serves them. One night both men dream unusual dreams. They are sad because they do not understand them, and no one is available (at least that they know about) to interpret them. Joseph asks, "*Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?*" They explain the situation to Joseph, and he responds, "*Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.*"

Joseph, of course, is very familiar with dreams. He dreamed two dreams of his own over ten years earlier. Because of his question concerning the interpretation of dreams belonging to God, I cannot help but think that Joseph knew what his dreams meant. Of course, his were not difficult to understand because his own family knew that they meant that they would bow before him. But nevertheless, Joseph's faith in God's revealed will never wavered. He knew what God had shown him, and he believed that it would happen. God did not reveal to him every detail. God did not show him that he would be sold into slavery, nor did he know that he would be cast into prison. But that did not shake Joseph's faith in what God had shown him. For Joseph, the dreams were the equivalent of God's Word. We have God's written Word. For us, that is the equivalent of Joseph's dreams. Therefore, we should have the faith in God's Word that Joseph had in his dreams. As with Joseph, God does not fill in every detail. But he does give us many verses that we can rest upon. Romans 8:28 says that God works everything together for good. Sometimes the "*all things*" mentioned in that verse will include "bad" things. The verse does not say "all good things" work together for good but "*all things.*" We could mention other verses such as Psalm 37:25 which says in the second half, "*Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*" Consider also Psalm 23:4, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.*" Remember Hebrews 13:6, "*The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*" With these verses alone, why do we (why do I!) ever complain that God is not being fair to me? He always does

everything right! I may not understand the particular situation that I am in, but God has given me enough Scripture to trust in Him even when things seemingly are out of order. God still works in our lives as He did in the life of Joseph. O God! Give me the faith of Joseph! May I handle even the “bad” situations of life as he did!

In Genesis 40:9-11, the butler recounts his dream to Joseph. Joseph immediately responds with the interpretation that within three days, the butler will be restored to his position. This excites the baker and in Genesis 40:16-17, he tells his dream to Joseph. No doubt, he is expecting the same results, but Joseph does not tell him good news. In three days, he will be killed.

Obviously, the baker will not be able to help Joseph, but the butler, restored to his position, can speak to Pharaoh in behalf of Joseph. In fact, that is what Joseph asks in Genesis 40:14-15. He briefly explains what has happened to him and asks the butler to “*make mention of me unto Pharaoh.*” You would think that the butler would easily remember Joseph, but the last verse of Genesis 40 says, “*Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.*” Joseph no doubt thought that this would be his escape from prison, but it was not God’s time. We know from reading the account that God had a reason for keeping Joseph in prison for two years, but Joseph, at this time, did not know that reason. He was again mistreated, but even in this situation, there is no record of his complaining to God or of any anger with the butler for forgetting him. His absolute trust in God is unshakeable! May we (may I!) have that same trust.

The mistreatment by the butler may not have been as severe as what the brothers or the boss did, but it, no doubt, could have hurt just as much. Joseph was very good to the butler. When the butler was disturbed about his dream, Joseph came to his aid. The butler mistreated Joseph even though the *Dream Was Proclaimed*. The butler had a dream and had no idea what the dream meant. Joseph was kind and thoughtful enough to proclaim the dream to him, but the

butler still forgot about Joseph.

We can take it a step further. Not only was the dream proclaimed, but the *Deeds Were Performed*. As we have already recounted earlier, the butler was restored to his position, and the baker was hanged. Joseph interpreted the dreams, and everything took place exactly as Joseph said it would. In three days, the butler was given his position, and the baker was executed. How could the butler forget what Joseph did? It was not three months or three years before the fulfillment. It was only three days. How could he forget? God was in control and ordained it that way, but humanly speaking, perhaps the butler was caught up in the excitement of being restored to his position, and in celebrating Pharaoh’s birthday, that the details just escaped his mind. However it came to pass, Scripture clearly states that the butler forgot about Joseph. Those are among the saddest words in Scripture, but they did not shake the faith of Joseph. Again, there is no record of his complaining to God about having to remain in prison, nor is there any record of his anger toward the butler. His faith in God was so strong, that he never complained.

We may be faced with situations similar to what Joseph faced. We may be sure of what God has led us to do, and we may have helped someone that we thought in turn may have returned the favor in some way. But instead, they forgot about us, and there was no help. Joseph could have been bitter at the butler. He could have taken revenge when he was exalted to second in command. But there is no record of revenge. Why did not Joseph not become angry and complain? Because his faith was in God, not the butler. He was trusting in God to put him in the right place at the right time. We may be mistreated—forgotten about—by someone who should remember us and return the favor. But if they do not, may we respond as Joseph—no complaining and absolute trust in God.

We have considered the misunderstanding and mistreatment that Joseph encountered, but there is also *The Message* that Joseph delivers. It is found in Genesis 50:20. All of our children have

learned this verse in Bible class over the past few years, and I am amazed at what Joseph says when we quote it together. Each year when we finish reading through the book of Genesis, my heart thrills to read it. I never get tired of reading or quoting this verse. Joseph says, “*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 says this to his brothers after Jacob dies. They are afraid that he will seek revenge on them. It might be worded a little different at the beginning, but Joseph could have said something similar to Potiphar and the butler. None of them treated Joseph right, but God took it and made something good out of it.

Joseph does not excuse his brothers wrongdoing; he calls it “*evil.*” Joseph knew the truth of what Paul wrote in Romans 8:28, and what we mentioned earlier. God is able to take all things, even bad things, and work them out for our good. Could God have gotten Joseph to Egypt some other way? Obviously, he could have. But God took evil and made something good. God did it for Joseph. He can do it for us. With a God like that, what is there to complain about?