

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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What Are You Complaining About? (Part 3)

Exodus 16:7-12; Philippians 2:14

Last month we began looking at the life of Joseph so we would have an example as to how to respond in difficult times and not complain. We saw that he was misunderstood because of his dreams. The dreams led to his father and brothers disputing as to what the dreams meant. Also, the misunderstanding led to *The Despising*. Joseph's brothers hated him because he was the special son of their father (Genesis 37:4). After the first dream, the hatred increased as stated in Genesis 37:5. You wonder if their hatred had reached its limit, but the end of Genesis 37:8 says, "*And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.*" Every time Joseph revealed the dream that God gave him, it caused his brothers to increase in their hatred for him.

There is much to compare between the life of Joseph and the life of a believer. Although no one will admit it, there is a natural animosity between the sinner and the believer. Even though a believer will not try to cause any hardship, often the sinner thinks that the believer considers himself "better than him." I heard those words said to me when I worked a public job. I tried to live a life based upon the Word of God. Even without saying anything to them, the unsaved often resented me. (This is not to say that everyone acted this way. Some, though unsaved, showed great respect, but others did not like me simply because I was saved, and they were not.) Our lives, if we live them according to the Word of God, will cause the unsaved to act antagonistically toward us.

Joseph's brothers hated him because of his relationship to his father. Then when he revealed the message of God, the hatred increased. Each time he revealed a dream, the brothers increased in

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their hatred. We mentioned the reaction of people in describing the dispute, but it must be brought up again. When we declare the Word of God, the world will not like it. I have been waiting to mention two passages, so I will insert them here. Jesus said that the world would hate believers in John 15. Verses 18 and 19 say this, "*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*" The Apostle John remembered what the Lord said there in that upper room, and he also had experienced what the Lord said in his own life and in the lives of his fellow apostles. Led of the Holy Ghost, he writes I John 3:13, "*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*" John is writing to second generation Christians and beyond to remind them that the world will not appreciate their lives, their testimonies, nor their preaching.

It should not be a surprise to us if the world hates us. They hated Joseph, Jesus, John, and other believers. They will hate us as well. They will hate us because of our relationship to God and His goodness to us. Then when we try to tell them what God says in His Word, the hatred will become worse. We must be prepared for that and not respond to their unkindness with unkindness. In the flesh, it will be impossible. That is why we must be under the complete control of the Holy Ghost at all times. He will enable us to endure and overcome the hatred that will come our way when we live close to God and proclaim the truth of His Word.

The misunderstanding was only the beginning. It led to The Mistreatment. From chapters 37-40, we see Joseph mistreated in some awful ways. In none of those times, did Joseph deserve what he received. Scripture does not record a wrong word or a wrong action of Joseph. Yet in spite of an unblemished life, he was mistreated. We must be prepared for the occasions when we will do everything right, but others will treat us wrongly. They did it to Joseph; they will do it to us.

The first mistreatment was by *The Brothers*. As chapter 37 continues, Joseph is sent by his father Jacob to check on his brothers who were feeding the flocks in Shechem. It took a few days to find them, but Joseph was faithful to the task and found them in Dothan. As he was making his way to them, they saw him, and “*conspired against him to slay him*” (Genesis 37:18). Verse 19 says that they commented to each other, “*Behold, this dreamer cometh.*” I can only imagine the hatred and sarcasm that came out of their mouth as they stated those words. They did not like anything about Joseph—his position nor his proclamations. They were now planning to do something about it.

As the brothers debated killing Joseph, Reuben, the oldest, convinced them not to. He suggested that they throw him in a pit. He intended to help Joseph escape later (37:20-23). The mistreatment by the brothers begins as they *Strip him* of the coat of many colors. This no doubt gave them great pleasure. The colored coat declared to all that Joseph was the special son of his father. That was the beginning of the hatred. It resulted in the beginning of the mistreatment.

But they did not stop with the stripping of the coat. Verse 24 says that they *Sunk him* into a pit. The pit, as described in the verse, was an abandoned well. It was not full of water, but the bottom could have been muddy as in the case of Jeremiah. I will not make more of it than the verse says, but regardless of whether it was completely dry or muddy on the bottom, it was a terrible place to be. I can only imagine what went through the mind of Joseph. I know that in my flesh, I would have been terrified. Joseph probably called out to them from the well because it is mentioned in Genesis 42:21 that he “*besought*” them. He perhaps asked them to bring him up, but they refused to respond. Yet in spite of being thrown into a pit, Joseph still did not respond in anger.

The final mistreatment of the brothers was when they *Sold him* to the Ishmeelites heading to Egypt. How brothers could sell their own

brother into slavery is beyond my comprehension, but how these brothers did any of these things is beyond it as well. But as awful as their actions were, even more amazing is the response of Joseph. There was never any hint of hatred or revenge in the mind of Joseph. He is a great character, and one that we should desire to emulate as we live our lives.

So far in considering the life of Joseph, we have seen him misunderstood and mistreated. But the mistreatment does not end with the brothers. The story of Joseph continues in Genesis 39. The Ishmeelites sell Joseph to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. Joseph becomes an exemplary servant. Potiphar is so impressed that he puts Joseph in charge of the entire house. The Bible does not say exactly, so we estimate that Joseph is in Potiphar’s house for a few years. Somewhere along the line, Potiphar’s wife begins to lust after Joseph and desires to commit sin with him. She tempts him several times, but Joseph remains steadfast and refuses. One day she tempts him again. Joseph refuses and runs out of the house. In the process, Potiphar’s wife grabbed Joseph’s coat, and he left it with her when he ran.

This results in Joseph being mistreated by *The Boss*. Even though Joseph was a *Desirable Worker*, Potiphar mistreated Joseph. We mentioned briefly how hard Joseph worked. There was no one better in Egypt. Potiphar no doubt had seen many workers during his time. Not one of them had ever been as trustworthy as Joseph. Yet when he was falsely accused, Joseph was put in prison.

Perhaps you have been in the same position as Joseph. You have worked hard. But you have not received the promotion or the raise that you thought you deserved. You have been mistreated. The result may not have been as severe as Joseph’s, but the disappointment and hurt were real just the same. How did you respond? Did you react in anger and disgust? If so, you sinned. Joseph did not respond that way. In spite of doing everything right, he was still mistreated. Yet, Scripture records no anger in Joseph’s response. We must respond

the same way.

There is a second part to consider about Joseph's mistreatment by the boss. He was mistreated even though there was a *Deceiving Woman*. Not only was Joseph mistreated by Potiphar in spite of being a faithful and hard worker, he is lied about. In Genesis 39:17, Potiphar's wife says, "*The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me.*" The statement of Potiphar's wife was a complete and total fabrication. She was the one that chased after Joseph and begged him to sin with her. She was the instigator of the whole matter. When she was repulsed by Joseph, she turned against him and lied about him. Joseph had done nothing wrong. In fact, he had done everything right. He should have been commended. He should never have been punished. Potiphar's wife is the one doing wrong. She should have been put in prison or been put to death. But she lied and the innocent party—Joseph—is cast into prison. Joseph is mistreated again; but again, he responds with no anger or hatred towards anyone.

You may have been mistreated because someone lied about you. What was your response? Did you handle it in a Biblical manner as Joseph did? Have you complained because of what someone said about you? If you did, it was sin. Complaining is never right. May the Holy Ghost reveal the truth of what God expects of us. We will continue next month.