

John Bevere: How Complaining Halts Your Destiny

Joseph's descendants were very different than him. They obeyed when their desires were met and when God manifested His mighty power on their behalf. Whenever they were discouraged or felt abandoned, they quickly drifted into disobedience.

The first symptom of such drifting always came in the form of complaining. Those offended with God usually are not so foolish as to directly oppose Him. Instead, they resist His Word or leadership. The children of Israel complained about their leaders, but Moses answered with, "Your complaints are not against us but against the Lord" (Ex. 16:8).

Complaining is a killer. It will short-circuit the life of God in you faster than almost any other thing! Complaining indirectly communicates to the Lord, "I don't like what You are doing in my life—and if I were You, I would do it differently." Complaining is nothing more than a manifestation of insubordination to God's authority. It is extremely irreverent! God hates it! Joseph feared God, and he never complained.

That is why the Lord admonishes us, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing" (Phil. 2:12-14).

God sternly warns us not to allow complaining to take root in our hearts. We are not left helpless by its intense attack. The fear of the Lord is a force within us that will keep that killer out. Proverbs 14:27 confirms this: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death."

Joseph lived in a spiritual desert for more than 12 years. It

appeared that nothing was going his way. There was nothing to strengthen and encourage him. But there was a fountain from which Joseph drew—one deep within.

This fountain provided the strength Joseph needed to obey God in tough, dry times. It was the fear of God! Joseph was able to avoid the pitfalls of hatred, offense, jealousy, resentment, anger and adultery through the life-giving waters of that fountain.

When others would have fallen into the traps of death, Joseph was able to turn away and minister to others—even in his darkest hours.

Joseph was wise in his behavior because he feared God: “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom” (Prov. 15:33). Those who fear God are wise. Daniel points out, “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

Joseph passed the ultimate heart test by giving of himself and declaring God’s faithfulness in his darkest hour. It wasn’t long before Joseph’s wisdom caused him to shine brightly in Egypt. His virtue could not be hidden but was revealed to an entire pagan nation.

Interestingly, it was Joseph’s behavior while in prison and his response to his fellow prisoners that eventually led to his promotion. In Genesis 40, we read that the Pharaoh’s chief butler and chief baker were among the prisoners. Both had dreams, which were interpreted by Joseph.

To the butler, Joseph proclaimed the meaning of the dream: “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler”

(vv. 12-13).

But for the baker, the interpretation was not so good. Joseph said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you" (vv. 18-19).

If there had been a morsel of complaint in Joseph's heart, he would not have ministered to either the butler or the baker. If he hadn't ministered to them, he would have remained in prison until his death.

In his final moments, Joseph would have still been murmuring about what appeared to be God's unfaithfulness, when in reality God's promise would have been aborted because of Joseph's lack of godly fear. But God was faithful to release Joseph from his prison chains. At the appointed time, Joseph was summoned by the pharaoh himself to interpret a dream, at the recommendation of none other than the chief butler. And an entire nation was delivered from famine because one man—Joseph—feared the Lord.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the church has displayed a lack of the fear of God. Therefore, we are viewed as a reproach rather than as shining stars before our nation in need. Our sins are frequently broadcast by the media, and we have lost the respect that believers should have. We have not demonstrated the faithful, God-fearing qualities found in Joseph. May God help us with His grace!

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