

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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Anatomy of a Complainer

The story of the Israelites rejecting the Promised Land stands as a warning to all of us: Life may be challenging, but complaining about it only makes things worse.

“So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron . . .” (Num. 14:1-2).

The Israelites’ rejection of the Promised Land was rooted in their complaining spirit. A study of these people can provide clues to recognizing the same weakness in ourselves.

The overriding conviction in the complainer’s heart is his obsession with *failure*. God promised the Israelites a new home in a land flowing with milk and honey, but they were not convinced. “They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, but murmured in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord” (Psa. 106:24-25). “We are not able” (Num. 13:31) became their motto, and no amount of reasoning or pleading could dislodge that opinion.

As complainers, they could see nothing but the hardships that lay before them. “The cities are fortified and very large” (13:31). To their minds, the land of Canaan was “a land that devours its inhabitants,” and they saw themselves as

being “like grasshoppers,” doomed to be squashed by a far superior force (13:32-33). God’s assurances of protection were buried beneath a flood of exaggerated fears. All they could see was a host of dangers that would end in disaster.

For these people, failure was more than just a possibility—it was a foregone fact. They had not yet fought a single battle, yet they already knew the outcome: “Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword?” (14:3). They grieved like people who were already defeated. In fact, they *were* already defeated—in their own minds.

Like most complainers, these people were never satisfied. A few months earlier they had been complaining of their harsh treatment in Egypt. Now what do they want to do? “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt” (14:4). The proclivity for complaining was so deeply embedded in their psyche, that they looked for the worse in every situation—and found it.

They were so convinced of their impending failure that they sought to stone the few courageous souls who

believed success was possible (14:6-10). Complainers cannot tolerate optimism. If the optimists cannot be silenced by words of discouragement, they will be silenced by whatever other means are available.

What happened to these complainers? Why, they failed, naturally. Their feeble efforts to take the land were repulsed, just as they had feared (14:39-45), and they never saw the land again. They spent the rest of their miserable lives wandering aimlessly in a wilderness, without hope or happiness.

The story of the Israelites’ rejection of the Promised Land stands as an object lesson for every child of God today. Heaven is in the next life, not this one, so we shouldn’t expect life to be perfect. We can enjoy a happy marriage, build a prosperous career, have solid friendships, and eventually go to heaven; but none of this will happen if we spend our lives complaining about the difficulties along the way. Instead of complaining, we must train ourselves to face life’s challenges with cheerfulness, looking to God for strength to finish the race.

– David King