

Practical Christianity; Growing Patient or doing right when done wrong

What's the most natural reaction when we have been wronged? You've been cut off in traffic - **again**; a co-worker or supposed friend is **constantly** gossiping about you; or you get blamed **again** for something you didn't do. How do you react?

The most natural action is to, "Do onto others **as** they had done onto us or 'I don't get mad, I get ahead.'" The words that describe that action is "revenge or Retaliation" (returning evil for evil, or sometimes it's in the passive form of holding a grudge or feeling of resentment toward another person). We believe fighting back helps us get where we want to go; it protects our interests and defends our territory.

The world we live in has convinced believers in Jesus Christ that we **must** get even. It takes place in a home between a husband & a wife, between parents & children or the other way around. It occurs between brothers & sisters, on the job with the boss & employees, or between employees, it even happens **in the church** & between people who have never met before. This happened to me once or twice. The traffic was heavy and the right lane was ending, so I slowed down to let a car get into my lane. Unfortunately, I did this just as another car – who quickly and without turn signals – tried to pull in behind me from the left lane and he had to swerve back into his lane to avoid hitting me. Unfortunately, when traffic allowed him to get along side of me, he waved to me without using all his fingers. Then as soon as the opportunity came, he cut in front of me and slammed on his brakes.

Remember the song, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine? Well I was going to - with my high beams!" But I didn't, how often do we hear about road rage. **WE NATURALLY FIGHT BACK!** But God has a better idea. It isn't natural; it's supernatural. Let's look at 2 scriptures: the 1st, Peter tells us what God's better idea is. The 2nd James will tell us how to do it. 1st - 1 Peter 2:18-20.

You servants must submit yourselves to your masters and show them complete respect, (I'll add, anyone can be submissive to a good boss or a loving spouse. That's natural, but Peter isn't talking about natural, he's talking about doing something supernatural.) not only to those who are kind and considerate, but also those who are harsh. God will bless you for this, if you endure the pain of undeserved suffering because you are conscious of his will. For what credit is there if you endure the beatings you deserve for having done wrong? But if you endure suffering even when you have done right, God will bless you for it.

Last week, we talked about how sin can cause us to be like a plugged drain, stopping God's blessings from flowing through our lives because it separates us from God. When people act out of revenge or retaliation, the same thing happens.

Not only that, when a person reacts wrong when someone does them wrong, *they block the flow of blessings* because they are **not** trusting God. And what happens when a plugged sink that's filled with water sits for a period of time? Its starts to stink and get rancid, and in the same way, a person's **faith** gets stale and smelly when their spiritual life is plugged and God's blessings are not flowing. **Today, God isn't talking** to your husband or wife, your boss or your parent, your child or that person you can't stand. God's talking to you... **because** today's scripture is talking about **how** to trust God by *doing right, when you've been done wrong*.

Let's go to James 5:7-12.

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

¹² Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." Otherwise you will be condemned.

In these 6 verses, James has said a mouthful. But to really appreciate it, we need to understand three truths that will give us some perspective to this scripture.

1. *This scripture is talking to Christians who are trusting God.*

James addresses brothers four times. He's making a point, a person who is not trusting Jesus Christ, is a person without the Holy Spirit – the one who provides the power.

The patient endurance James speaks of can only be found in a person who has received God's grace and trusts God! All other efforts result in frustration and often unsuccessful attempts to control his or her temper.

2. These verses are related to the previous six.

There James spoke about rich Christians who oppressed others. But in this scripture, James goes a step further and discusses how to live in an unbearable situation.

3. And the 3rd truth is that: *Included in these verses are four powerful principles.*

Each verse sheds light onto how to trust God and participate in the Powerful victorious Christian when experiencing impossible or frustrating conditions.

The four principles are:

1. We must be patient.

Like farming, we must be patient. Patience is crucial because patient people are not short-tempered or blow at the drop of a hat - they have a long fuse. This is important for two reasons.

- **Patience is the first response of love.**

1 Corinthians 13 explains what love is, and the very first definition of love is patience or as some bibles put it, love is long-suffering. It is true agape love that motivates us to overlook an offense or delay anger when we've been hurt or abused.

- **Second, Patience is essential to learning.**

There is no such thing as an impatient learner. An impatient person may grab facts here and there, but a patient student carefully learns how and why something works so they can really understand it. A Christian who wants to trust God must take the time and effort to grasp God's truths. Oh ya, in every unjust experience we go through, God wants us to learn something – so without patience, we can never learn the lessons God has for us.

Now in verse 7, James explains, “*See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.*” I never met a farmer who could rush a plant to grow faster. The soil is prepared & the seed sown, a farmer can fertilize and weed the fields, but can only wait until the seedlings germinate and break the surface of the soil.

Talk about patience, think about a bamboo tree! A farmer plants the seed, waters and fertilizes it, but the 1st year nothing happens. The 2nd year they water and fertilize... nothing happens. The 3rd and 4th years, they water and fertilize - nothing happens. Then the 5th year they water and fertilize – but sometime during that year in about 6 weeks, the Chinese bamboo tree sprouts and grows 90 feet! **Now**, did it grow 90 feet in 6 weeks or did it grow 90 feet in 5 years? **Answer**, it grew 90 feet in 5 years, because if the farmer did not water and fertilizer each year, there would not have been a bamboo tree.

In the same way, *God wants us to be patient*, to trust in God, allowing the Holy Spirit to handle the problem. Each time we have our Joys and Concerns, we always talk about God’s specialty, you remember – handling “Impossible situations.” God allows them to surround us and tells us to sit down, and wait.

2. The 2nd principle is, “Do not be discouraged!”

In verse 8 the Good news bible explains it as, “We must keep our hopes high.” **When you’re patient and don’t react, you know what the next tendency in the flesh is?** To be discouraged! If you’re not fighting, you’re often filled with self-pity. You know those feelings! (O, nobody has got it as bad as I got, *Cry*) It’s called a pity-party. To this James says, “Strengthen your heart!” The idea here in the Greek is to prop up or support something that’s heavy laden. When we have been done wrong, when we’ve been hurt & our heart is heavy; ***God say’s let me support your heart, let me help you in this situation.***

A good way to avoid being discouraged is to use what Chuck Swindall calls the “50:20 principle.” Taken from Genesis 50:20, this principle will help you not be discouraged by changing your focus. *If you remember the story of Joseph, you’ll remember the roller-coaster life he had. He was dad’s favorite & his brothers’ punching bag. After they sold him as a slave, he earned his masters respect, but was than falsely accused by his boss’s wife and thrown into prison. There he saved a man’s life, but quickly forgotten.*

When finally remembered, he interpreted Pharaoh’s troubled dreams and promoted to 2nd in command of Egypt. **When his met his brothers again, he spoke the words that make the 50:20 principle: “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for Good!”**

Rather than looking at ourselves or the unfair circumstances, this principle helps us focus on God. When we apply this principle to our lives, we're freed to see God as our teacher and the other person as a tool God uses to make us into the person God intends us to be! If you cannot see beyond the one who hurt you, you'll retaliate!

3. The third principle is, **“Do not complain!”**

Verse 9 reads, “Don't grumble or complain. In other words, don't groan or sigh.” This moaning, groaning & complaining reveals an internal, unexpressed attitude of holding a grudge, the cancer of resentment. And all this is the forerunner to bitterness and hatred. It blocks us from the blessings God wants to give us and from the hope and help God offers. Another thing that happens if we complain and hold a grudge... verse 9 says, “We come under judgement!”

I see Christians holding grudges in so many subtle ways; time doesn't allow me to even start the examples. *So when holding a grudge, be careful... you come under judgment and your block yourself off from God's blessings, not to mention you hurt yourself emotionally and spiritually.* **So what James is telling us to do is not to complain and look for some one to blame for our problems, just look up to and trust God!**

4. Finally, James tells us, **“Do not to swear!”**

In verse 12, James tells us not to swear, you may think I mean profanity - and in a broad sense it does. But in the Greek context, it means to use something **sacred** as a support of what we are saying! It's the idea of **calling** God onto the scene and using God to **validate** what you say. Like when a person goes to court and is sworn on the bible to tell the truth. James is encouraging us to be plain & honest when we speak... especially when we are treated unfairly and done wrong. We are encouraged to speak and think with thoughtfulness, humility and with clarity. *Let our yes - be yes and our no - be no.* In other words, we are to show integrity, honesty and character in what we say and do.

PRAYER:

If you have never if you've opened your life up to Jesus I have some practical information for you. Jesus didn't die just to take care of eternity, He died and was resurrected so He could bring help and victorious living to your life today – that's **one** part of eternal life.

Another part of eternal life is eternity in heaven. Jesus death and resurrection was a sufficient payment for sin so that now having Him in your life, you can handle the sin factor. So for the first time in your life you can know a control you've never known.

Sit with your eye's closed and have your hands in your lap, open and with palms up. This is because you can't keep holding onto things. Now talk to God about those things you may have been struggling with:

Have you battled frustration and anger? Combat it with patience that comes from God through the Holy Spirit... don't fight for revenge.

Have you been focusing just on yourself and struggling with self-pity. Trust God and use the 50:20 principle, don't see that person as an enemy, but as a tool God can use to make you more like Jesus.

If you frequently look for someone to blame, ask God to empower you to stop it. If you continue, you will end up complaining and find God's blessings blocked in your life.

inally, don't focus on the present, look to the future for the insight of why it happened.

Now: You can know a dimension and definition in life you've never entered into. And Jesus stands and waits for **you to say to Him**, "Lord Jesus I want you now in my life – please come in. I ignored you, I've rejected you, I have turned away from the help you have patiently and lovingly been offering me and I kept screwing things up royally. I'm a sinner. Your Holy and powerful, I need your security and I have nothing to offer except my faith. Lord, I acknowledge your right to rule in my life totally. Not by force, but by a willing submission of my heart. Jesus, forgive my rejecting and ignoring you and I now invite you into my problems, my

difficulties, my weaknesses and my life. Thank you Lord, In Jesus name we pray.
Amen.