

Studies in James

Lesson 19

Doing Right When We've Been Wronged

INTRODUCTION:

- I. We have all experienced the hurt of mistreatment and of being misunderstood.
 - A. These hurts often come from a variety of situations:
 1. Intolerable work situations.
 - a. Working with people who do not love the Lord.
 - b. Being urged to do things contrary to Christian character.
 2. Domestic conflicts.
 - a. In marriage.
 - b. With children.
 - c. With relatives.
 3. Conflicts with friends or neighbors – sometimes even among brothers and sisters in Christ, as **James** showed us in the first part of chapter four.
 - B. Our natural tendency is to retaliate.
 1. We're tempted to either:
 - a. Return evil for evil – to get even, or...

- b. To hold a grudge and become bitter in our souls, and feeling resentment.
 - C. However, God has a better idea, and James reveals this alternative in the passage we're about to consider.
 - 1. James not only tells us WHAT to do in place of retaliating, but also HOW to do it.
- II. But before we begin, let's try to understand why we sometimes have a problem with "Doing Right When We've Been Wronged."
 - A. Our natural way of handling wrongs is both CARNAL and SELF-PROTECTIVE.
 - 1. Because of our natural tendency to react out of a CARNAL nature, and because we naturally seek to protect ourselves in situations like this, we often DO THE WRONG THING when we've been wronged.
 - a. We're tempted to "Do unto others AS they have done unto us!"
 - 2. Therefore, we often fall short of God's standard of conduct.
 - B. But the apostle Peter shows us a better way – God's way of doing the right things when we've been wronged.
 - 1. **1 Peter 2:18-20** – *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one*

endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

2. ANYONE can submit to someone who is considerate, gracious and gentle.
 - a. There's NO GREAT VIRTUE in submitting to THAT kind of person because there's no real effort expended.
3. However, Peter deals with the kind of situation that he classifies as "WRONGFUL" or " UNJUST."
 - a. James says if we do something wrong OURSELVES, we deserve the consequences of that wrong-doing.
 - b. But, if we ENDURE GRIEF, SUFFERING WRONGFULLY, when we've tried to do the RIGHT thing, and we endure it PATIENTLY, we will find favor with God.
 - (1). The idea expressed here is finding ourselves in a situation where doing RIGHT is something that is BEYOND the ordinary and expected course of human nature – doing RIGHT under EXTRAORDINARY circumstances – THAT'S when we find "favor" with God.
 - c. Notice, Peter says, *"if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God."* **(1 Peter 2:20)**

(1). The word "*patiently*" describes an action that is BEYOND THE ORDINARY human response, and thus wins the approval of God.

(2). Why would this be "commendable" with God?

(a). Because IT'S GOD'S APPROACH – PATIENCE
ENDURANCE is GOD'S APPROACH!

C. But, the BIG question is HOW do we do this? And, that's where James comes in – he provides us with the answer.

1. But before we look at James' answer to DOING RIGHT WHEN WE'VE BEEN WRONGED, we need to remember that what he says in James chapter five is directed specifically to the one who has BEEN WRONGED – NOT to the one who has DONE the wrong, but to US!

D. And so, let's look at the passage together.

1. **James 5:7-12** – *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. 9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! 10 My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count*

them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. 12 But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

BODY:

- I. Let's begin by noting some "General Observations" about the passage.

(James 5:7-12)

- A. There are actually THREE GENERAL OBSERVATIONS we want to make.

1. FIRST, we need to understand that this message is addressed to the believer.

- a. In these SIX verses, the word "brethren" is used FOUR times.

(vs. 7, 9, 10, 12)

- b. It is as if James OVERWORKS (overuses) this word for the sake of making a point.

- (1). James wants it clearly understood that he is NOT talking about the behavior of an UNBELIEVER.

2. The SECOND thing we need to observe is that THESE six verses are DIRECTLY RELATED to the PRECEDING six verses.
 - a. In verses 1-6, James talks about the wealthy who used their resources to twist the judicial system in order to treat Christians unfairly.
 - b. Now, as he moves to VERSE 7, James is essentially saying, "THEREFORE, having said what I've said about the rich, I NOW want to talk to you who have been MISTREATED by them."
3. And the THIRD observation we want to make is that the advice presented here comes in the form of FOUR COMMANDS.
 - a. The first two commands are POSITIVE – they're given in the grammatical tense that says, "Right now, let it take place."
 - b. The last two commands are NEGATIVE – and are given in the tense that says, "Don't start the habit; stop what you are doing habitually."

II. And so, with that background, let's turn our attention to the SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS given by James: (Remember the question is, "How should we act correctly when we've been treated incorrectly?")

A. James begins by giving us FOUR SIMPLE, but SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES:

1. First, James says "*BE PATIENT.*" (**James 5:7-8**)

a. The word "*patient*" comes from a combination of two Greek words.

(1). The first means "far, distant, or long."

(2). The second ("THUMEO") means "passion, heat, rage or anger." – it's the same word from which we get the word THERMAL (meaning HOT)!

(a). Taken together these words produce the thought of being "long-tempered" or "long-suffering."

(3). In 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul uses this same word ("patient") as the first description of "Love" – "*Love suffers long...*" (**1 Corinthians 13:4**)

(4). In the example given by James, he tells us the farmer waits PATIENTLY for the early rains (about October or November), then waits again for the late rains (the Spring).

- (a). The farmer plants the seed, then waits PATIENTLY for the rain that will produce a mature crop.
- b. But James says we need to be PATIENT *"until the coming of the Lord."* **(James 5:7)**
 - (1). Some say this refers to the "Second Coming of Christ," and others to the "Destruction of Jerusalem."
 - (2). But in a very real sense, it means wait until the Lord arrives on the scene to bring help and relief.
 - (3). In other words, wait PATIENTLY until the Lord, working through His divine providence, brings about the help we need.
- c. Unfortunately, rather than being "Long-tempered," we usually try to hurry God's intervention – we LOSE patience and want a resolution RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!
 - (1). But we need to remember that we may VERY WELL BE in the PLACE WHERE GOD WANTS US.
 - (a). There may be some valuable lessons He wants to teach us.
 - (b). Therefore, the Lord tells us to, "Sit down, and wait... patiently!"

(2). Have you ever HURRIED into a situation, and then later realize you've made a terrible mistake – all because you didn't exercise patience?

(a). One thing God specialized in is IMPOSSIBLE SITUATIONS.

(b). He SURROUNDS us with them (impossible situations) then tells us to, "Sit down and be still."

2. The SECOND command James gives us during these kinds of situations is to "*ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS.*" (**James 5:8**)

a. When we have been patient and held back a reaction, the next tendency is to become discouraged – overcome by feelings of hopelessness and even self-pity.

b. James says, "*Establish* [strengthen] *your hearts.*"

(1). The word ESTABLISH means "to prop up and support something that is heavy," and is the idea conveyed in to related passages – one from the Old Testament, and the other from the New.

(a). **Psalm 55:22** – "*Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*"

(b). **1 Peter 5:6-7** – *"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

c. But notice that James refers to the coming of the Lord once again, saying that the coming of the Lord is *"at hand."*

(1). Once more, some think this means the "Second Coming of Christ," and others the "Destruction of Jerusalem."

(2). But I believe the idea is that the coming of the Lord to bring us help during times of suffering is *"at hand."*

d. The best way to ESTABLISH [strengthen] our HEARTS during times of trials is to employ THE 50-20 PRINCIPLE.

(1). Do you remember when Joseph had been sold into slavery, but the Lord made him a ruler, then after a severe famine struck the land, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food – and actually appeared before JOSEPH, not knowing who he was?

(a). Joseph could have retaliated, but didn't. He used the Genesis 50:20 principle.

(b). Joseph told his brothers, "*But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.*"

(Genesis 50:20)

3. The third command of James comes in the form of a negative –
"Do not grumble [complain]."
 - a. **James 5:9-10** – *Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.*
 - b. James' counsel here is very practical.
 - (1). When we refuse to fight, exercising patience, and when we refuse to be discouraged and immerse ourselves in self-pity, our NEXT natural tendency is to complain and hold a bitter grudge.
 - b. James says, "DON'T GRUMBLE or COMPLAIN!"
 - (1). The word "*grumble*" conveys the idea of "sighing or groaning," while bearing a grudge or deep-seated resentment.

(a). The focus of verse 9 is sighing or groaning against
SOMEONE ELSE – specifically the one who is the
SOURCE of our trial.

c. That's why James tells us to consider the prophets who
modeled patience in the midst of suffering. **(v. 10)**

(1). **Hebrews 11:32-40** – *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy.*

They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

- (2). Rather than complain about their persecution, they continued proclaiming God's word.
- d. And so, when we've been wronged our reaction SHOULD be to respond graciously to an ungracious act.
4. And finally, the FOURTH command that comes in the form of a negative is, "*Do not swear.*" (**James 5:12**)
 - a. The Greek word "swear," as used here, means, "to grasp something firmly or sacredly for the purpose of supporting what one is saying or doing."
 - (1). It carries the idea of calling on God and presenting Him as One who VALIDATES what we are doing.
 - b. In context, James says that in our moment of suffering, we should not try to appear "super-spiritual" and fill our situation with a lot of providential or supernatural explanations.

- c. Why does James say this? Look at verses 11.
 - (1). *You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*
- d. By looking at Job's life, we're were able to see the OUTCOME.
 - (1). INSIGHT comes AT THE OUTCOME – NOT NOW, but LATER.
 - (2). If we gain ANY insight into our suffering, it will come ONLY AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SUFFERING.
 - (a). Only THEN can we look back and say, "Perhaps THIS is why all that happened."
 - (3). So, James warns us to NOT try to project a specific purpose of God into everything we encounter UNTIL AFTER WE HAVE COMPLETELY ENCOUNTERED IT.
 - (a). ONLY THEN will we have any understanding – IF AT ALL.
 - (4). Be quiet and "Let your yes be yes, and your no be no."
 - (a). Don't be saying "this is God's will" with your LIPS, while your HEART sees you as being a victim of fate.
 - (b). Otherwise, our wavering lack of faith will condemn us.

III. So, how can we make application of all this?

A. I think there are FOUR LESSONS we can learn from this teaching of James.

1. First, don't focus on the situation, or you'll become frustrated and angry.
 - a. Be patient, and admit that you've been wronged and leave it at that.
2. Second, don't focus on yourself, or you'll become filled with self-pity.
 - a. Stay objective and use the 50-20 perspective.
3. Third, don't focus on someone to blame, or you'll begin complaining – the very thing James says NOT to do.
4. Fourth, don't focus on the present, or you'll miss the point of what God is wishing to achieve in your life.
 - a. Look to the future for insight. Don't expect to have completely understanding as to WHY all these things are happening NOW. The answer will come in the future, if it comes at all.
 - b. In other words, we may NEVER know why.

CONCLUSION:

I. How do you handle mistreatment?

A. Are you able to:

1. Be patient – until the Lord arrives on the scene to help?
 2. Support your heart – knowing that the Lord is "at hand" in helping you with your situation?
 3. Not complain – but rely on God to handle the situation?
 4. Not swear – grasping firmly to the idea that God has a purpose you can understand before you've even completed the trial?
- II. Learning these principles will make us closer to the image of Jesus Christ.
- A. If ANYONE understands what it's like to be wronged, it would be the Lord Himself. Let's go back to our passage in **1 Peter chapter two** and read these verses once again in their context.
1. **1 Peter 2:18-24** – *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return;*

when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.

2. The Lord left us an example to follow:
 - a. We need to purge sin from our lives, and deceit from our mouths.
 - b. And then, when we are reviled, we won't revile in return.
 - c. When we suffer, we won't make threats of retaliation.
 - d. Rather, we will simply commit ourselves to God who judges all things righteously.
- B. Jesus endure all this for US – He bore OUR sins, so that having died to sins, we might live for RIGHTEOUSNESS.
 1. Do you fully appreciate all that Jesus Christ did for you on the cross?
 - a. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ...
 - b. As a Christian, have you CONTINUED to faithfully follow the Lord...