

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 26, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

GETTING PRACTICAL WITH YOUR FAITH A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES “Doing Right When You’ve Been Done Wrong” *James 5:7-12*

We have all experienced that hurt of mistreatment and misunderstanding. Such hurts come in a variety of packages: intolerable work situations, domestic conflicts, parents, children, or relatives taking advantage of us, friends who turn against us, neighbors who entertain untrue opinions, and dozens of other painful circumstances. Our natural tendency is to retaliate, to return evil for evil, to get back, or to hold a grudge and become bitter in our souls. God has a better plan, and James reveals this alternative in the passage we’re going to be looking at in this study. Not only does James tell us what to do in place of retaliation, but he tells us how to do it.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM (Matthew 5:38-42 and 1 Peter 2:18-21)

Perhaps some of Jesus’ hardest words for us to ingest have to come from His Sermon on the Mount. No doubt in his eldest half-brother’s early and non-believing life, these words must have seemed particularly... well “crazy,” “outlandish,” and “dangerous.” Yet it is amazing how later in James’ life as a believer and leader in the early church, those same “outlandish” words would find their way into his teaching and encouragement to believers such as ourselves. Jesus’ words in **Matthew 5:38-42** seem particularly hard to apply to our own lives... maybe to someone else, but not ourselves.

“³⁸ ‘You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.’-Matthew 5:38-42 (NKJV)

This is Jesus’ clear teaching on retaliation and it may leave us scratching our heads and feeling a bit like a “door-mat” at times.

Jesus’ Teaching on Retaliation in Matthew 5:38-42:

1. **Don’t resist an evil person (v.39)** – The phrase don’t **“resist an evil person,”** in verse 38 deal only with matter of personal retaliation, not criminal offenses or acts of military aggression. Jesus applied this principle of non-retaliation to affronts against one’s dignity (v.39, lawsuits to gain one’s personal assets (v.40), infringements on one’s liberty or

freedoms (v.41), and violations of property rights (v. 42). He was calling for a full surrender of all personal rights. Why?

2. **Turn the other cheek (v.39)** – Verse 39 says, “... *But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.*” What does it mean to “turn the other cheek”? It means if you are wronged, you don’t retaliate or threaten back, but rather with dignity and grace you “let it go.” To slap one on the “right” cheek or to spit on one was to disgrace that one, shame that one, and essentially declare a curse upon them. Remember that when Jesus was being unjustly tried he was slapped and spit upon, yet he did not open his mouth. He did not try to defend himself, spit back, curse back. Why? God is in control of the life of a believer and He will avenge. It is His to avenge not yours. Some in the crowd that crucified Jesus actually turned to Christ, perhaps precisely because He turned the other cheek rather than lashing back... the Centurion, some Jews in the crowd, and perhaps this even made an impact in his unbelieving half-brother, James.
3. **Sacrifice your own comfort (v.40)** – Verse 40 says, “⁴⁰ *If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. ⁴¹ And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*” The most important piece of clothing that person had in New Testament times was his “cloak.” Clothing was a sign of status... the tunic, but the cloak was your very survival. Jesus was essentially saying to lay aside your very life for the sake of Christ and others.
4. **Go the extra mile (v.41)** – In other words go over and beyond what is expected. Jesus said, “⁴¹ *And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.*” In New Testament times the Jewish people living in Palestine were essentially held captive in their own land by the Roman government and occupation. Jews were often treated as common slaves and were at the mercy of the occupying Roman army. By law, if a Roman soldier asked a Jew to carry his heavy equipment he or she was required to carry it, like a pack mule or animal, but no more than one mile. Jesus is suggesting that even to the oppressive occupying Roman military who was brutal and abusive to carry the equipment an extra mile, not because you have to or are compelled to, but because you are giving of yourself in service to God... as a witness, an act of kindness. Wow!
5. **Give freely and benevolently (v.42)** – And this outlandish idea of non-aggression and retaliation ends with this in verse 42, “⁴² *Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*” This one may challenge us a bit because the idea is that we freely give to help others even knowing that it may be taken advantage of. When we give to help others we like to say, “Well, if I give they might use it to buy drugs, alcohol or tobacco!” or “I don’t want to enable them, they may become dependent on my giving!” Jesus doesn’t seem concerned with that, but rather with our heart in giving. We must leave the rest up to Him!

Man’s approach to all aspects of life is both natural and self-protective. Because if this, his methods result in failure of varying sorts. Life in the human dimension falls short of God’s design for His creatures. By His grace He offers us a supernatural alternative. When we are hurt, taken advantage of, or used by others, our nature tells us to “do unto others as they have done unto us... or worse!” Peter introduces us to God’s approach:

“¹⁸ *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. ²⁰For 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. ²¹For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” – 1 Peter 2:18-21 (NKJV)

How easy is this? Why? _____

Anyone can submit to someone who is considerate, gracious and gentle; however, there is no great virtue in such submission because there is no effort expended. Peter deals with the kind of situation classified as “unreasonable,” where the suffering experienced is unwarranted. One who breaks a law deserves the consequences; but the one who carefully conforms to the law and yet is mistreated, if he patiently endures, will find favor with God. The term “commendable” contains the thought of an action that is beyond the ordinary and expected course of human response and is, therefore, commendable. Thus, when we respond with actions that are beyond the ordinary, we find favor in God’s heart. Patient endurance; that’s God’s approach! Whereas Peter informs us of this, James tells us how to implement it in our lives.

EXPOSITION OF THE PASSAGE (James 5:7-12)

In order to better understand James’ timely message, we will first make several general observations about the text. Then we will outline the four specific steps that constitute James’ instruction to those who suffer unjustly.

3 General Observations from James 5:7-12: An acquaintance with these will help us better understand the words of James 5:7-12 and what James, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has in mind in this passage.

1. **The message is addressed to the believer** – In these verses, the word “brethren” is used no less than four times. It is as if James overworks this word in order that we will know he is not talking to the person who is without Christ, and also in order to set up a distinction between these verses and those that precede them. He is definitely talking to “believers”... Christians in verses 7-12.
2. **These six verses are directly related to the preceding six verses** – In verses 1-6, James talks to the wealthy who used their resources to twist the judicial system in order to provide unfair treatment for Christians. As he moves into verse 7, James is essentially saying, “Having said what I’ve said to the rich, now I want to talk to you who have been condemned and unjustly treated.”
3. **The advice is presented in the form of four commands** – The first two are positive, the remaining two negative. The first two are given in grammatical tense that says “Right now, let it take place,” “Do it at once...immediately!” On the other hand, the second two are given in the tense that says “Don’t start the habit... stop what you have started doing habitually!”

4 Specific Instructions for Believers Who Have Experienced Unjust/Unfair Treatment:

1. **Be patient (vv.7-8)** – The text reads in verses 7-8, *“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 rains. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”* The word “patient” results from the combination of two Greek words. The first one means “far, distant, long”; the second means “passion, heat, rage, anger.” Together they produce the thought of being “long-tempered.” James tells his suffering readers to be long-tempered “for the coming of the Lord.” This is not only a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, but, in a very practical sense, His appearance on the scene when we’re in trouble. Instead of being long-tempered, however, we usually try to hurry God’s intervention. WE want to help Him out. But God knows how to surround us with impossible situations and then say, “Sit down and wait... patiently!” **ILLUSTRATION: The ancient Israeli farmer – The rocky, dry, crusty soil of Palestine challenged the farmer of the day. As often as he planted, he lived with the reminder that he had to be patient. Depending on rain rather than irrigation, he was faced with yet another challenge to his patience. In time, with the help of the early and late rains, the farmer would receive his “precious produce of the soil.” The point is that the suffer, like the farmer, must wait.**
2. **Establish your heart (v.8)** – When we have been patient and held back a reaction, the next tendency of our flesh is to become discouraged and overcome by feelings of self-pity. So James command to us as believers in verse 8 is, *“Establish your hearts...”* The wording here, in the original Greek, means “to prop up and support something that is heavy.” Again James refers to the coming of the Lord, saying that it is “at hand.” And again, the practical application of this phrase is not to wait until the Rapture, but to wait until the Lord comes onto the scene of suffering to provide relief. **How do you prop up and support a “heavy heart” that is going through tough stuff?**
3. **Do not complain (vv.9-10)** – James’ counsel is very practical. When we refuse to fight, exercising patience instead, and when we refuse to be discouraged and submerged in self-pity, then our next natural tendency is to complain and hold a grudge. James puts it this way in verses 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.”* The word “grumble” used here conveys the idea of “complaining, griping, sighing or groaning”; it suggests holding a grudge. **ILLUSTRATION: The Durable Prophets – These modeled patience in the midst of suffering. Instead of blaming their persecutions, they stuck with proclaiming God’s thoughts to those who needed to hear.**
4. **Do not swear (v.12)** – Verse 12 says, *“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’ be ‘no.’ lest you fall into judgment.”* What is James saying? The Greek term translated “swear” means “to grasp something firmly or sacredly for the purpose of supporting what one is saying or doing.” It connotes the idea of calling God onto the scene and presenting Him in order to give validity to what you’re doing. Keep in mind the context of this verse. We can say, in way of application, that in our moment of suffering, we should not try to fill it with a lot of super-spiritual explanations. We need to let our yes be yes and our no be no. Insight into suffering, or any other experience, comes only as its conclusion. It is at the end of such a season that we can look back and say, “This is why it happened.”

APPLICATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS

From the four pieces of counsel James has offered, we can draw the following lessons.

4 Lessons on Doing Right When You've Been Done Wrong: **based on the four pieces of counsel James has offered in James 5:7-12.*

1. Don't focus on the situation, or you'll become angry –
2. Don't focus on yourself, or you'll become filled with self-pity –
3. Don't focus on someone to blame, or you'll begin complaining –
4. Don't focus on the present, or you'll miss the point of what God is wishing to achieve in your life -

HOMEWORK:

It's one thing to observe suffering and patience in the life of a prophet, but it's quite another to observe it by experience in your own life! Do the following exercise at home, just between you and God.

- Put a check [✓] by the area(s) that presents a constant struggle in in your life
 - [] Anger
 - [] Self-pity
 - [] Complaining
 - [] Defensiveness
- Write down three ways you can apply the message of this study and James 5:7-12 in order to counteract the above tendency
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- Spend the last few minutes in prayer. Ask God for strength to fight the natural tendency reaction and, in its place, use the supernatural response God provides.