

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LIFE IS NOT FAIR, Part 1

James 5:7-12

### Those to whom James wrote were being treated unfairly.

- Wealthy, powerful, influential people used the courts to be vindictive or to gain some financial advantage
  - 2:6 - *Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?*
  - 5:6 - *You have condemned (a judicial verdict) and put to death (judicial murder by involuntary bankruptcy or taking away their livelihood) the righteous man*
- Wealthy landowners withheld their pay
  - 5:4 - *The pay of the laborers who mowed your fields...has been withheld by you*

### How should they/we respond when life was/is unfair?

#### Common sinful responses when we are unfairly treated:

1. Accuse \_\_\_\_\_ of injustice and unfairness
  - *“God, you are responsible for the injustice that has happened to me!”*
2. Harbor anger and bitterness at the \_\_\_\_\_ behind the injustice
  - *“I can never forgive that person for what they have done to me!”*
3. Take our own \_\_\_\_\_
  - *“I’m going to get back at that person!”*

James 5:1-6 - Unjust/unfair attacks (withholding wages and judicial “murder”) by the wicked, powerful wealthy on the first century Christians to whom James wrote

#### Q: How should they respond?

James 5:7-12 - *“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup>You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup>Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. <sup>10</sup>As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup>We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. <sup>12</sup>But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment.*

A: Wait in \_\_\_\_\_ for the coming of the Lord

- The wicked will be judged
- All wrongs will be made right

John Blanchard - “In the opening six verses of this chapter, James has been exposing and challenging the lives of the wealthy, ungodly men who defrauded and persecuted the poor and who lived in self-indulgent luxury. Now he turns from the oppressors to the oppressed, tells them how they should behave under pressure and encourages them to look for the day of deliverance, that will one day be theirs.”

This approach is seen all throughout Scripture:

The oppression of the wicked → The response of the righteous: Wait for God to act

**Example:**

Psalm 37	
<b>The oppression of the wicked:</b> <i><sup>12</sup>The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth...<sup>14</sup>The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow to cast down the afflicted and the needy, to slay those who are upright in conduct...</i>	<b>Our temptation in response to this:</b> <i><sup>1</sup>Do not fret because of evildoers, be not envious because of wrongdoers...<sup>7b</sup>Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.</i>  We are tempted to _____ or _____
<b>The right response:</b> <i><sup>7a</sup>Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him...<sup>8</sup>Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret; it leads only to evil doing.</i>  <b>How can we have that kind of attitude in the face of injustice?</b> <i><sup>9</sup>For evil doers will be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land. <sup>10</sup>Yet a little while and wicked man will be no more; and you will look carefully for his place, and he will not be there...<sup>15</sup>Their sword will enter into their own heart, and their bows will be broken...<sup>20</sup>But the wicked will perish; and enemies of the Lord will be like the [flowers] of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away...<sup>37</sup>Mark the blameless man, behold the upright; for the man of peace will have a posterity. <sup>38</sup>But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked will be cut off.</i>	

The consistent message of Scripture:

Don't look for justice here. Look to the future. Wait for the Lord. Justice is coming with Him.

# HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LIFE IS NOT FAIR

## ❶ Be \_\_\_\_\_ until the Lord's coming

### v. 7 - *be patient, brethren*

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makrothymeō = being patience with difficult \_\_\_\_\_

vs.

hypomonē = enduring difficult \_\_\_\_\_

### v. 11 - *You have heard of the endurance of Job*

*patient* (makro thymeō)

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\_\_\_\_\_ = long-\_\_\_\_\_ (the opposite of short-tempered)

- Edmond Hiebert - *"It is an attitude of self-restraint that enables one to refrain from hasty retaliation in the face of provocation."*
- *makrothymia* (noun) = long-\_\_\_\_\_
- Romans 12:19 - *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.*
- We are to suffer long with people in the same way that God suffers long with people

## Injustice comes to us in two ways:

### 1. Out of the overflow of the \_\_\_\_\_ of people

- Titus 3:3 - *For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.*
- 1 Peter 2:18-20 - *<sup>18</sup>Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect; not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable (skolios).*

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*<sup>19</sup>For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.*

### 2. Deliberately and purposefully because of our \_\_\_\_\_

- Matthew 5:10-12 - *<sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness... <sup>11</sup>Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

## **v. 7 - *be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord***

*coming* (parousia) = “to be alongside of” = “presence” = “\_\_\_\_\_”

- 1 Corinthians 15:23 - *Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at his coming (parousia).*
- 1 Thessalonians
  - 2:19 - *For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming (parousia)?*
  - 3:13 - *[I pray] that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming (parousia) of the Lord Jesus with all His saints.*
  - 4:15 - *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming (parousia) of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.*
  - 5:23 - *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1 - *Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you be not quickly shaken.*
- 2 Peter 3 - <sup>3</sup>*Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup>and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming (parousia)? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” ...<sup>8</sup>But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
- 1 John 2:28 - *Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (parousia).*

**The coming of Christ should be the constant \_\_\_\_\_ of our minds.**

- The second coming of Christ is mentioned 1,835 times in the Bible (300 in the NT)
- John Trapp - *“This is penned as a badge to the sleeve of every true believer: that he looks for, and longs for, Christ's coming.”*
- Martin Luther - *“I preach as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow.”*
- Titus 2:11-13 - <sup>11</sup>*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup>instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup>looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.*

What is it that keep us from living a life “looking” for the appearing of Christ?

Ellen Thompson - *“Life is too comfortable and things too important for us to want to leave this world, making it hard to sing with integrity,*

*‘On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand  
And cast a wishful eye  
To Canaan’s fair and happy land  
Where my possessions lie.’”*

Her point: The modern western church has too much here to sing words like these today

James’ point: As we face injustice in our life, we are to be “looking” for the appearance of Christ. And that will be our anchor in the midst of an unfair world.

### **An illustration**

**v. 7b - *The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.***

- Before the farmer can enjoy the harvest, he has to wait and be patient
  - Application: When we are treated unfairly, we need to wait and be patient... but patient for what?
- The image of a harvest is a picture of God’s \_\_\_\_\_
  - Joel 3:12-14 - <sup>12</sup>*Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.* <sup>13</sup>*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.* <sup>14</sup>*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.*
  - Matthew 3:12 - *His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*
- Douglas Moo - *“Every reference to “early and later rains” in the OT occurs in a context affirming the faithfulness of the Lord (Deu. 11:14; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zec. 10:1; Jer. 5:24) James’s readers, being biblically literate, would have detected in the language of this verse an echo of this broader biblical theme and been thereby given a further reinforcement of the confidence they could place in the coming of the Lord to judge their enemies and deliver them.”*

## The illustration applied to us

### v. 8 - *You too be patient*

- In the same way that the farmer waits for the harvest, you wait for the coming of Lord and the judgment that He will bring.

2 Thessalonians 1 - <sup>4</sup>...we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endured...<sup>6</sup>For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup>dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

### What about when believers mistreat us or do injustice to us, where do we look for justice?

John Piper - “All the wrongs that have been done against us by believers were avenged in the death of Jesus. All the sins of all God's people were laid on Jesus. The suffering of Christ was the recompense of God on every hurt I have ever received from a fellow Christian. God takes the sins against us so seriously that, to make them right, he gave his own Son to suffer more than we could ever make anyone suffer for what they have done to us. Therefore, when God says, “Vengeance is mine,” the meaning is more than we may have thought. God undertakes vengeance against sin not only by means of hell, but also by means of the cross. All sin will be avenged—severely and thoroughly and justly—either in hell, or at the cross.”

When injustice is done to us by an unbeliever, we look forward to the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.  
When injustice is done to us by a believer, we look back to the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.

1 Peter 4:19 - ...those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.