

# **SIX THINGS TO REMEMBER** **WHEN WE ARE UNFAIRLY TREATED**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

1. **How do you react when someone treats you unfairly? Let's say someone double crosses you or cheats you. Maybe someone lies about you and your reputation is damaged. Perhaps your boss chews you out for something you know you didn't do or singles you out because he doesn't like what you stand for. What is your typical response? Do you:**
  - a. **Retreat into a depression?**
  - b. **Withdraw from human interaction?**
  - c. **Look for a way to get even?**
  - d. **Vow that you'll never do anything nice for anyone again?**
  - e. **Cheat the next guy down the line because you conclude that it's a dog-eat-dog world?**
  - f. **Become so cynical about the world that you no longer enjoy life?**
2. **These responses are all too common.**
3. **As Christians, we are called by God to be different from the world and this is one area where that difference can really show.**

**IN TODAY'S MESSAGE, I WILL SHARE**  
**SIX THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN**  
**YOU ARE UNFAIRLY TREATED.**

# **I. THE FIRST THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT THIS LIFE ISN'T FAIR.**

- 1. I suppose some of you might think it is redundant for me to say that, but it never ceases to amaze me that so many Christians get so upset when things don't come out even.**
- 2. Whoever said that this life was fair, anyway? I'm not aware of any Bible verse that teaches such a thing. Of course, God will ultimately even things out at the judgement - a point the Bible makes often - but in the here-and-now there are no guarantees. In fact, in a fallen world like ours, with mankind corrupted by a sinful nature and God allowing freedom of choice, it only follows that things are not going to be fair all the time.**
- 3. Yet, it bugs us, doesn't it? It bugs me! The bad guy sometimes wins. The criminal gets off Scot-free. The ladder climber who steps on everyone in his path gets the penthouse. The politician lies and gets away with it because the economy is good.**
- 4. I'm not suggesting here that we shouldn't do whatever we can when we can to make things right. I'm simply saying that sometimes making things even is beyond what we can do. At that point, so that we don't go insane at the unbalanced nature of it all, we need to remember that we live in a fallen world and until God redeems this place from the curse and removes sin, it's not always going to be fair.**
- 5. I'm not recommending defeatism or fatalism here. I'm simply trying to be realistic. Don't set your expectations too high. In this life, no matter how you live or what you do, life isn't always going to be fair.**

## **II. THE SECOND THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT WHAT HAPPENS IN YOU IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU.**

- 1. Things are going to happen in this life that we are powerless to change. We usually cannot rearrange someone else's behavior toward us, nor can we undo the moments in which someone has hurt us. Maybe it can be prevented next time, but once it has happened, it has happened. There is no backing up.**
- 2. If we keep reliving the unhappy moment and devote endless hours to appealing the verdict of a wrongdoing in our minds, we will be left spent and miserable. Though it is sometimes hard to see, time passed in the courtroom of our mind trying the case over and over is really time wasted. Even though we're sure the verdict is guilty, there is usually no way to bring about justice in this life without becoming guilty ourselves. Our best (and sometimes only) recourse is to ask the Lord to change our inner life - to use this evil to bring about good in us.**

3. We've seen that Joseph knew this truth. For all that was done to him by his brothers, he could have died a bitter and unhappy man. He didn't do that though. At some point along the way he decided he would concentrate his energies on being the best person that he could be for God in whatever circumstance he found himself. Over the process of a lifetime, because of this attitude, God could take him from a pit to a palace. One has to wonder how different it might have been had Joseph chosen to spend endless hours licking his wounds and rehearsing his hurts. After 23 years of living with this choice of betterness rather than bitterness, as his brothers stood before him in a position where revenge could have been a snap-of-the-fingers away, his verdict was this: "...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good..."
4. Suppose you hold a glass of water as you walk towards me. I carelessly (or deliberately) bump into you. Whatever you have in the glass will probably spill out.
5. That is the way our lives are. When we are bumped, whatever is inside comes out. For most of us, an injustice done to us personally is a very jarring bump. Sadly, it is disgraceful sometimes the things that spill out.
6. God wants the things inside the glass cleaned up. From time to time He will allow us to be bumped, sometimes quite forcefully and unjustly, to reveal what is there. A life where the work of the Holy Spirit has been neglected will reveal a cup full of hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissention, faction, and envy. God wants all of that to change. What happens in you is far more important than what happens to you.

### **III. THE THIRD THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT GOD IS WATCHING TO SEE WHAT YOU WILL DO.**

1. My dear brothers and sisters, there is more happening when an injustice is done to us than just the unpleasantness of the moment. God is watching to see what we will do and He sees it all, from beginning to end. As the Scripture clearly reveals, He is testing us. There are so many verses on this subject that I hesitate to pick just one, however, there is a passage that I have found quite helpful at such times. Maybe it can help you.



(1 Pet. 2:19-20) says, "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."

2. God is watching to see how we handle unjust suffering. So what does God want us to do when we suffer unjustly? These verses tell us that it finds favor with God if we "bear up under the pain of unjust suffering." When we suffer, lets make God proud by enduring the pain and handling it properly.

## **IV. THE FOURTH THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT YOU MUST NOT BOW TO BITTERNESS.**

1. All of us need to set some standards for ourselves. We need to draw the line in the sand and say, "Beyond this point I will not go - not for comfort - not for security - not for revenge - not for anything!"



Paul wrote to the Ephesians "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Eph. 4:31).

- a. You see there is no part of "all" that allows for an exception. God wants all the bitterness out of you and me.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

A doctor told a man that he had rabies. Upon hearing the diagnosis, he took out a piece of paper and started writing on it. The doctor thought, "Oh, he must be making up his will," so he asked, "What are you doing, making up your will?" The man said, "No, I'm just writing down every person I'm going to bite."

2. Sadly, that is how some folks handle injustice. They are so bitter that they bite everyone else around them.
3. We must never bow to bitterness.

## **V. THE FIFTH THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT WHAT YOU DO IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOW YOU FEEL.**

1. God has spelled out what our behavior is to be in the kind of situation we're discussing in many places in Scripture. I'll mention just a few:



Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..."



Luke 6:27-28 says, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you..."



Romans 12:20 says, "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink..."

2. It isn't particularly difficult to figure out what these verses say we must do. The difficult part is our feelings, isn't it? Why is it so hard...

- To get on our knees and pray for that person whose carelessness or neglect caused us so much pain?
- To go down to the store and buy a gift and send it to that person whom we know must hate us?
- To say something that blesses them rather than cursing them under our breath?

3. The answer is simple. Every feeling in our bodies is screaming that it isn't right!

4. Ah! We've come to an important crossroad in this matter. We've come to the place where we learn whether we're serious about our faith or not. The true Christian will strive to do what is right even if his/her feelings aren't in favor of it.
5. Many of us have yet to learn this very important part of our faith. Doing the right thing isn't always the thing that makes us feel good at the moment.
6. Many of the things God has called us to do require us to go against our feelings for the moment. "Love your enemies?" Who feels like doing that?
7. But, you see the Christian knows that actions lead, feelings follow. Want to see an example?



John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son...."

8. God loved us so much that He gave His Son. How do you suppose that made God feel? Was He jumping for joy when His Son hung suffering on the cross? What do you think would have happened had God acted on His feelings that day rather than His loving commitment to offer a way for the world to be saved?
9. The right thing isn't always the thing that feels good at the moment. Actions lead, feelings follow. Where did the good feelings come in then, when Jesus died on the cross? They came later, after the sacrifice had been made and people were coming to God because of what Jesus did!



Hebrews 12:2 says exactly that: "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross..."

10. The joy followed the cross. It didn't come prior or during. Likewise, the good feelings that result from our doing right usually come after the act, not before. If we wait around in the beginning, hoping to get our feelings to go along with our actions, we'll seldom do what is right.

## 11. How about it?

- Are you returning good for evil?
- Are you turning the other cheek when it is appropriate? Are you walking the second mile?
- Are you praying for that person who has hurt you so?
- Are you, like God, allowing whatever blessings you have in your life to fall on the just and the unjust, or are you selective, based on the records you've kept of wrongs done against you?
- Are you blessing rather than cursing? (The word "bless" in this case means literally, "to speak well of.")

12. "But I don't feel like it!" Welcome to the world of discipleship. It's that way for all of us.

## **VI. THE SIXTH THING TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY IS THAT YOU ARE STILL THE BIGGER DEBTOR.**

1. In (Matthew 18), Jesus tells the story of a man who owed a king ten million dollars. There was no way he could pay his debt and in that day, there was no bankruptcy - only debtor's prison or slavery. As he was about to be thrown into prison, he begged the King to give him another chance and more time to pay. The King listened to his pleading and felt mercy for him. He didn't just give him more time to pay. He completely forgave the debt. The man walked away free.
  2. You probably know the rest of the story. As soon as he got home he found someone who owed him a few hundred dollars. The man didn't have the money, so this man who had just been forgiven a debt of millions of dollars had his own debtor thrown into prison. After all, it's only just. "It's what the man had coming for what he did to me. He should learn to pay his debts on time! It's his fault. Fair is fair, right?"
  3. Then the King got word of the whole thing. He was angry and resummoned the man he had forgiven just a short time before. To make the long story short, he called the unforgiving man "wicked" and reinstated his millions of dollars of debt. The man went to prison until he could pay it off - which, of course, was never. He went to prison for the rest of his life.
-  Then Jesus said, "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."
4. My friends, no matter whom might wrong us, we are still the bigger debtor. We always will be. God has forgiven a huge debt that we could never pay on our own. Because of that, is it really that much for God to ask us to overlook some of these hurts we experience here? I think not.

5. Are you one who feels you must even the score here? Then expect God to even the score on you when you get to judgement.

### CONCLUSION:

1. I doubt that the following story is true, but it does illustrate the truth I've been talking about.

### ILLUSTRATION:

A certain tenant farmer had worked hard for many years to improve the production of the land he leased. Then something happened that caused him to become very bitter. When it was time to renew his lease, the owner told him he was going to sell the farm to his son who was getting married. The tenant made several generous offers to buy it himself, hoping the man's decision would be reversed, but his pleading got nowhere. As the day drew near for the farmer to vacate his home, his weeks of angry brooding finally got the best of him. He gathered seeds from some of the most pesky and noxious weeds he could find. Then he spent many hours scattering them on the clean, fertile soil of the farm, along with a lot of trash and rocks he had collected. To his dismay, the very next morning the owner informed him that plans for his son's wedding had fallen through, and therefore he would be happy to renew the lease. He couldn't understand why the farmer exclaimed in agonizing tones, "Oh, Lord, what a fool I've been!"

2. Try as we might to even up the score when we're treated unfairly, the result for us will be the same as it was for that tenant farmer. At the end, we'll exclaim, "Oh, Lord, what a fool I've been!"