

Just you wait

What happens when a person is treated unfairly? Those with a sense of fair play usually expose it. Thus, when you discover someone lies to get a person into trouble you are inclined to inform the appropriate authority of the fact. But what happens when people falsely accuse us?

Generally speaking we react in one of two ways. We either protest and try to defend ourselves, or we harbour a grudge against the person who has acted unjustly. Some people do both.

Are these reactions right? We may quickly assert that both are understandable. After all none of us is perfect. We are all marred and spoilt by sin. Our understanding is defective, our emotions skewed, and our patience found wanting.

Does God want us to get our own back on those who upset us? Does he want us to bear grudges against those who do us wrong? The answer to both questions is a resounding No.

We know it is exceedingly difficult to cope with a barrage of falsehoods and half truths. It is hard to remain cool and collected in the face of lies. And it is frustrating when information is used selectively to establish a dubious point. Within we feel a sense of outrage. It irks us to see our enemy manipulate events and information to secure an outcome he or she desires.

Under such tension we are apt to over react. We either denounce our accuser as we protest our innocence. or we walk away trying to work out how we can get our own back.

Joseph was ill-treated by his brothers (*see Genesis 37*). Their motive was jealousy. At one point they planned to kill him. Reuben argued against that idea. Instead they threw him into a waterless pit. Then they sold him to a group of Ishmaelite traders who took him off to Egypt.

A gross injustice was done. How did Joseph react? There is no hint that he harboured a grudge against his brothers. It is for that reason we sometimes hear of Joseph foreshadowing

Jesus Christ. Jesus was perfect. When he was ill-treated he did not retaliate. He was despised and rejected by men. He was betrayed and falsely accused. Yet he bore such injustice with patience and went to his death like a sheep to the slaughter.

Joseph was ill-treated in Egypt (*Genesis 39 and 40*). First, his master's wife falsely accused him of trying to seduce her. The reality was the very opposite. Joseph wisely fled the temptation she put before him. Yet he ended up in prison. Whilst in prison he helped the Pharaoh's chief cupbearer when he was in need. Although Joseph the chief cupbearer to remember and give help to him, he forgot about him. Yet Joseph did not complain.

When Joseph was reunited with his brothers (*Genesis 42-50*), but especially after their father Jacob died, they expressed a fear that Joseph would hate and repay them for all the evil they had done against him (*Genesis 49.15*). Joseph's response has much to teach us. It reveals he learned to look beyond people to see what God is doing. His brothers meant to do him evil; but God used the events to do him and many other people good (*Genesis 50.20*).

Joseph learned how God loves his people, provides for his people, and protects his people. He discovered how God brings good out of evil. He found that instead of retaliating or harbouring a grudge we are to rely upon the God to whom vengeance belongs. He is the judge. He will do right.

Our responsibility is to ask God to make us like the Lord Jesus: to pour out his Spirit upon us; to teach us not to rush to justify ourselves nor bear grudges; to enable us to be patient, forbearing, forgiving and kind toward our enemies; to make us wise to see what he is doing in our lives; and to try to discern what he is doing at this point in history. All of this calls for humility. Sadly meekness and humility are not virtues we see extolled in a generation that focuses on desires, demands and rights.