

Sunday, December 5, 2021 pm

## STUDIES IN 1 PETER (15)

### Submissive servants

#### 1 Peter 2:18-25

Tonight, we continue our study of 1 Peter. We have begun a series of lessons in this letter dealing with submission. We have noted the need for conduct honorable among the “gentiles” (in this case, unbelievers) and that such needs to be prevalent in every area of our lives. Peter will address this throughout much of the rest of 1 Peter. We have 3 specific examples in our surrounding text. In our last lesson we addressed being submissive to governing authorities, doing our best to silence the criticisms of foolish men. Tonight, we continue our study by examining servants and their submission.

#### I. Servants and masters

- a. This is a controversial and complex subject today because of how the Bible addresses the subject.
- b. A detailed discussion of this subject is not the premise of this lesson. But then again it is not something we want to avoid addressing either. Thus, there are some considerations that I mention here:
  - i. Slavery was engrained in the Roman Empire. It is estimated that between 10-40% of the population were slaves (depending on dating and location). Therefore, it is something scripture had to address BECAUSE we know that some slaves became Christians. So while the New Testament did not outright condemn slavery, NEITHER did it outright endorse it. But it did regulate it among believers.
  - ii. In the Roman empire, as is often the case in history, slaves were treated as property by many, rather than human. HOWEVER, the New Testament is clear that to God – a slave is equal in God’s eyes to that of a freedman – Remember Galatians 3:27-28, 1 Corinthians 12:13.
  - iii. The Bible’s regulations for both slaves AND masters show standards that were radical for the times in which they were instituted.
    1. Colossians 3:22-4:1, Ephesians 6:5-9, etc.
    2. They also show the compassion of God for us – especially in how we treat each other.
  - iv. The Christian faith is not about social reform – it is about saving man’s souls.
    1. God does not care about one’s societal status. He cares about HOW you behave!
    2. For the gospel to spread effectively in the Roman Empire (and at any period of time), Christians had to work WITH the social norms as much as they could (recall 1 Peter 2:12 – conduct honorable among the Gentiles that removes occasion for accusation). Such did NOT imply endorsement, but rather seeking peace and OPTIMAL opportunity to convert souls (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – Paul became all things to all men).
    3. We need to remember this when we think about the church as well.
      - a. God NEVER intended for the church to be about social activism - it is about saving souls.
      - b. And that is the ONLY way to effectively change society for good at a foundational level.
      - c. This is why we renounce the social gospel, and we limit our work to the pattern prescribed in the New Testament. You don’t win souls to Christ entertainment, meals and activism. Cf. Romans 1:16.

- v. It is my belief that it was God's intention that slavery eventually be done away with (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:21, Philemon). God's teachings about brotherly love, compassion, and equality of all points toward this. But Christians, being a very small minority in that empire, would not be able by social means to abolish it. But they COULD control how they lived – and that is what God expected of them.
- vi. Like many things, it is something in life that has a spiritual connotation –
  1. Slavery to Satan and sin – are we in bondage to Him?
  2. Sometimes, it was punishment for wrongdoing – see Israel's history and captivities
  3. Spiritually, we are to be slaves of someone – Romans 6:16-18 – the question is who? Is it Satan or God?
  4. Consider also that being a slave/servant of God is about freedom – freedom from the enslavement of sin, AND eventual eternal freedom with Him.

## II. **Submission in serving (18-20)**

- a. Our text is about submission. One source noted that our last section (Government) was associated with submitting to governing authorities, this lesson addresses social institutions (in times past we have made application to the employer/employee relationship), and the next lesson (wives and husbands) is about personal relationships.
- b. ***Servants are called upon to be submissive with all fear –***
  - i. The word *fear* (NASB – respect) indicates with reverence or respect (the word for phobia is based upon this Greek word). It is a realization of the authority one has when you rebel.
  - ii. This word is used in reference to God in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 10:31.
  - iii. This could be respect for their masters or for God, or both! If you fear God, you will respect your master, or who has charge over you.
- c. ***Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.***
  - i. It has been suggested in this text that many of Peter's audience would have been of servant class, and being taught about their freedom in Christ, they might have reasoned that they could be rebellious against their masters (after all, God was greater than any worldly master), especially if he was harsh (NASB - unreasonable), a word meaning one who is crooked or perverse (cf. Acts 2:40, Philippians 2:15). If so, Peter is saying, *Don't do that!*
  - ii. Again, we are reminded that Christians are to be examples – 1 Peter 2:12, Matthew 5:16, etc. That is why we behave properly, regardless of how ugly the other party is. It is EASY to be respectful when things are going well, but not so much when they are bad. Romans 12:18 – as much as depends on you, live peaceably...
  - iii. This is where our light can shine brightest, when we maintain godliness in ugly times. This is where you stand out.
- d. ***This is commendable if because of conscience towards God***
  - i. The idea of being commendable is to be gracious – this is the word for grace. Peter's point is God KNOWS what you are doing and is watching. Be more concerned about God than others.
  - ii. He notes that it is for conscience sake – the question is, are you asking, "How will this affect my standing before God?" or "Is God pleased with the way I am acting right now?" or "How will my response reflect upon my relationship with God?"
  - iii. Note that Peter here mentions suffering wrongfully – you do not deserve to be treated the way you are.
- e. ***But if your suffering is because of your own sinful faults that is not commendable.*** That is justice being served. You are getting what you deserve. Don't "play the martyr card" when you are guilty or acting wrongly.
- f. ***But when suffering is for good, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God –***
  - i. This is one who continues to do good

- ii. AND he acts with patience - a foundational quality in the lives of Christians. We hear about longsuffering – that is associated with this – you patiently endure, even for a long while – 1 Corinthians 13:4 – the very first quality described; Galatians 5:22 describes it as a fruit of the Spirit
- g. **Lesson:** Our lives as Christians is about serving others, and how pleasant that is, is not a factor. That is how you let your light shine.
- h. **We should consider this in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in** – yes, we can apply this to the work environment, dealing with others who are over us in whatever capacity, etc. Always think about how your example looks to other.

### III. Our ultimate example (21-25)

- a. **For to this you were called** – this IS our calling! Be a godly example at all times. With what Peter has just said, he gives us the ultimate example of how to act toward the harsh in positions of authority. You are called upon to suffer – 2 Timothy 3:12
- b. Jesus sets the ultimate example of unjust suffering.
  - i. In so many things, Jesus gives us an example of how to properly live - 1 John 2:6 says, *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.* We learn from Him:
    1. How to serve – John 13:15
    2. How to love – Ephesians 5:2
    3. How to submit to the Father – Hebrews 5:8-9
    4. How to forgive – Colossians 3:13
    5. How to be humble – Philippians 2:5ff
  - ii. But there is no greater example than that of His willingness to suffer unjustly for us
  - iii. Will we follow in His steps, even in suffering?
  - iv. He suffered for US! Let us never forget that.
    1. 1 Peter 3:18, He suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, the He might bring us to God...
    2. Isaiah 53:5-6, He was wounded for our transgressions
    3. 2 Corinthians 5:21, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us...
- c. **Who committed no sin - He was completely innocent** – no sins. Quote taken from Isaiah 53:9. Hebrews 4:15-16 – tempted, yet without sin. 1 John 3:5 notes that in Him there is no sin.
- d. **When He was reviled, He did not revile in return** – consider how He was maligned (cf. Matthew 26:67-68). Even as He was “on trial” and false accusations were being made, He opened not His mouth (cf. Isaiah 53:7).
- e. **But committed Himself to Him who judges righteously** (God) - here we find His righteous determination. In recent lessons we have noted the commitment of Jesus (cf. John 17:1-5 where He had finished the work given Him). Jesus physically did not want to endure everything that was about to happen – but He made up His mind and went through with it. Remember His prayer in the garden – Matthew 26:39, etc.
- f. **He bore OUR SINS in His body** – we have been making this point.
- g. **Through His sacrifice, we can live for righteousness** – this is just one of many passages in scripture that reminds us of our spiritual blessings found in Him. FURTHERMORE, His righteous example of suffering serves as an example for us.
- h. **By whose stripes you were healed** – just another reminder that it was for us He suffered. He went through all of this because it is what WE need!
- i. **He is our true Shepherd** – we are like the straying sheep of His parable in Luke 15:1-7 that He has searched for and found. He rescued us and now is the overseer of our souls.

And thus we can see Peter's call to submission in whatever environment we find ourselves. Why should we be willing to suffer wrong? Why should we put up with ungodly attitudes and actions against us? Because it is part of being a godly example in an ungodly world. And furthermore, it is what Jesus did for us. It is HIGHLY unlikely that we will suffer to the degree that Jesus did. Probably, we will not even suffer as the servant class of the first century might have, if they had unscrupulous masters. BUT we are likely to be wronged from time to time. And we might be in a job where our boss is less than virtuous. If so, remember this text. What we do endure, we MUST respond with a proper attitude striving to give Him the praise in everything. How is your example before others? Think about it!