

Christian Submission in the Workplace

1 Peter 2:18-21

I. Introduction

A. Weak soldier story:

1. Sergeant kicked with his boots – during training
2. So badly had to be carried back to the barracks – in pain, unable to walk
3. Next morning – Sergeant finds his boots next to his bed – POLISHED PERFECTLY
4. “Who did this?” - told the young weak recruit did.
5. Asked the young man – HOW could you do that?
6. Answer: Christ gave me a love for you... and gave testimony / gospel
7. Sergeant was saved!

B. Proposition: **STUDY God’s REQUIREMENT for the CHRISTIAN in the workplace (SUBMISSION) SO THAT you achieve the RESULT (favor with God).**

C. TURN TO Passage ...1 Peter 2:18-21

D. Review

1. Large Section from 2:13-3:7 driven by SUBMIT in v.13
 - 13 SUBMIT YOURSELVES for the Lord’s sake to every human institution...
 - 18 SERVANTS, be SUBMISSIVE to your masters...
 - 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,
 - 1 In the same way, you WIVES, be SUBMISSIVE to your own husbands ...
 - 7 You HUSBANDS in the same way, live with *your wives* ...

E. 1 Peter 2:18-21

18 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. 19 For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

II. The Requirement: Submit to your employers (v.18)

18 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.

A. “Servants,” = “household slaves/servants”

1. Direct Address – “Bill!” to get his attention
2. Slavery
 - a) Dominant social status of Roman Empire
 - (1) All people conquered became slaves!
 - (2) Estimates that 50-75% of entire Roman empire were slaves

(3) Estimates that 90% of Christians were slaves!

“1 Corinthians 1:26-27 26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, = Slaves!”

b) Makes sense that slavery is written about so much in NT!

c) NO legal rights AT ALL.

(1) NOT a person

(2) Just a THING – PROPERTY.

d) Schaff

This evil has rested as a curse on all nations, and at the time of Christ the greater part of the existing race was bound in beastly degradation—even in civilized Greece and Rome the slaves being more numerous than the free-born and the freedmen. The greatest philosophers of antiquity vindicated slavery as a natural and necessary institution; and Aristotle declared all barbarians to be slaves by birth, fit for nothing but obedience. According to the Roman law, "slaves had no head in the State, no name, no title, no register;" they had no rights of matrimony, and no protection against adultery; they could be bought and sold, or given away, as personal property; they might be tortured for evidence, or even put to death, at the discretion of their master. In the language of a distinguished writer on civil law, the slaves in the Roman empire "were in a much worse state than any cattle whatsoever." Cato the elder expelled his old and sick slaves out of house and home. Hadrian, one of the most humane of the emperors, willfully destroyed the eye of one of his slaves with a pencil. Such legal ...cruel treatment had the worst effect upon the character of the slaves. They are described by the ancient writers as mean, cowardly, abject, false, voracious, intemperate, voluptuous, also as hard and cruel when placed over others. A proverb prevailed in the Roman empire: "As many slaves, so many enemies."

3. Remember: Scripture Condemns Oppressive Slavery

Leviticus 25:39-43 'If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. 40 'He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. 41 'He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers. 42 'For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold *in* a slave sale. 43 'You shall not rule over him with severity, but are to revere your God.

4. OK SO - v.18 Servants = Household slaves

5. MOSTLY – they were FREE LABOR = WORKERS today

B. "Be submissive to your Masters"

1. "Masters" = despot = absolute ownership as seen above

2. "Be Submissive"

a) Remember v.13: Submit Yourself = main command

(1) "to arrange under in military fashion under a military leader."

(2) = IMMEDIATELY, READILY, PUT YOURSELF under human authority in each passage - ATTITUDE / ACTION.

b) V.18 FURTHER DESCRIBES submission as CONTINUOUS

C. “with all respect”

1. BETTER (LITERAL): In all FEAR TO GOD not to Masters
2. Going back to 1:15-17 and seen throughout epistle.

D. not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

1. Peter covers ALL MASTERS with this!
2. “good and gentle”
 - a) good, reasonable, fair, yielding
 - b) NOT = to Christian good and gentle! – Just world’s!
 - c) IMPLIES SOME did treat SLAVES OK!
3. “those who are unreasonable”
 - a) Greek word “skol-ee-ois”
 - b) Modern derivative: “scoliosis” = curvature of the spine
 - c) = bent, crooked =Metaphorically - unbending, unkind, unfair, morally perverse
 - d) NOT a religious classification (i.e. rejected Christianity)– JUST how they treated slaves!

E. Bottom line: THE SYSTEM STANDS! SUBMIT!

F. Parallel Passages: (TURN TO)

1. Colossians 3:22-4:1

22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. 1 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

2. Ephesians 6:5-9

⁵ Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. ⁷ With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. ⁹ And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

G. Today = WORKPLACE.

1. God REDUCES ALL the CHOICES of the WORKPLACE to a simple command:
 - a) BE SUBMISSIVE! – REGARDLESS of HOW YOU’RE TREATED.

- (1) OK to work WITHIN the SYSTEM
 - (a) DON'T VIOLATE the SYSTEM
 - (b) DON'T DISOBEY EMPLOYER

- 2. PRINCIPLE: NOT our concern to have PERSONAL RIGHTS in the workplace WHEN in conflict with our EMPLOYERS
- 3. NO PLACE FOR REBELLION against THEIR LEGAL WISHES.
 - a) JUST be OBEDIENT
 - b) Remember v.15 – THIS SILENCES the CRITICS when you obey!
 - c) You are still an ALIEN / STRANGER in this WORLD – DOING God's WORK
 - d) NOT HERE to MAXIMIZE personal Preferences or "Rights"
- 4. NO ONE HERE who has a SECULAR JOB! – You are ALL MISSIONARIES on DIFFERENT mission FIELDS!

H. WE DON'T WANT FOR ONE MOMENT FOR ANYONE TO THINK THAT ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD MATTERS TO US! SUBMIT!

I. NEVER LOSE your TESTIMONY FOR SOMETHING in this WORLD. – LOSE your USEFULNESS to God.

J. You are on a SPIRITUAL MISSION – to the PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH – GOD has PLACED you THERE – DO HIS WORK (NOT YOURS!).

K. Serve CHRIST through your WORK!

L. Today – PERFECT CONTRAST to the rest of the WORLD – ONLY common denominator is RIGHTS! (diversity, inclusivism, etc). – we are the opposite (as usual).

M. Transition: (1) The Requirement: SUBMIT!

III. The Result: This finds favor with God (v.19-20)

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

A. "For this finds favor" = Literally: "This is a grace" = "An act which is intrinsically attractive to God."

- 1. APPEALS TO HIS NATURE
- 2. "that which counts with God" / "that with which God is pleased"
- 3. ALSO seen at the end of v.20 – which brackets the verses
- 4. VERY SPECIAL GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE! (Chiasm)
- 5. WHAT is REPEATED is THE ASSURANCE of APPROVAL
 - a) 2X THIS FINDS FAVOR!
- 6. What finds favor with God?

B. Peter presents two sides of the Suffering coin

- 1. First, the Principle of unjust suffering
- 2. Second, the Reality of sinful suffering

C. Principle of unjust suffering

1. v.19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
 - a) **PRINCIPLE OF UNJUST SUFFERING: *You will find favor with God, when you endure unjust suffering for doing what is right.***
 - b) if for the sake of conscience toward God
 - (1) “conscience” = “the result of being with knowledge”
 - (a) Includes an internal dialogue with yourself – like talking to yourself!
 - (b) Best translation = “consciousness,” or “awareness” – not conscience.
 - (c) BEST: “you are conscious of God”
 - (d) Meaning: your commitment to do it for His sake.
 - (e) YOU NEED MORE THAN JUST YOUR CONSCIENCE TO BEAR UP UNDER UNJUST SUFFERING!
 - (2) = YOU CONSCIOUSLY THINK ABOUT your COMMITMENT to GOD and DO IT FOR HIS SAKE!
 - c) a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly
 - (1) “a person” SIGNIFICANT – IMPLIES this is a GENERAL PRINCIPLE
 - (a) A HYPOTHETICAL person – NOT DIRECTLY referring to a SLAVE / WORKER.
 - (b) Peter - Let’s START with THIS GENERAL PRINCIPAL - Then (v.20) APPLY IT TO this SITUATION.
 - (2) “a person bears up under”
 - (a) Great literal picture of what you do
 - (b) This is ACTIVE and CONTINUAL BUT PASSIVE!
 - (i) Passive – RESPOND by SUBMITTING
 - (ii) NO SENSE of AGGRESSION or RESISTANCE
 - (c) CONTINUAL means you DON’T SUCCUMB!
 - (d) PICTURE – Person HOLDING a WEIGHT placed UPON them!
 - (3) “sorrows” = PAIN! = anything that causes sorrow, grief, pain! = TRIALS!
 - (4) “when suffering unjustly”
 - (a) “suffering”
 - (i) FIRST usage by PETER! BUT becomes his characteristic word to describe both the suffering of Christ and of Christians!
 - (ii) USES 11X (out of the 42 usages in the NT!).
 - (iii) THIS BOOK IS ABOUT SUFFERING!
 - (iv) Literally = “to be acted upon” -Became “suffering” both stand alone and with qualifiers (like “unjustly”)
 - (a) *When use positively it is always qualified to mean good being done to you.*

(b) “UNJUSTLY”

- (i) ONLY NT usage of “UNJUST”
- (ii) = UNDESEVERVADLY!
- (iii) Defined in v.20b: “when you do what is right and suffer for it.”
- (iv) KEY WORD of this PHRASE!

(a) *It is the UNJUST sufferings that FIND FAVOR with God!*

(b) *ONLY UNFAIR, UNDESERVED suffering*

(c) *As Jesus said: Matthew 5:11*

¹¹“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

2. **So, Principle of Unjust Suffering:** You will find favor with God when you endure unjust suffering for doing what is right.

D. Reality of Sin-caused Suffering (v.20)

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?

1. **REALITY OF SIN-CAUSED SUFFERING: Patiently enduring suffering brought on by your own sin doesn't even impress men, let alone God.**
2. v.20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?
 - a) Implied answer: NONE!
 - b) No FAVOR, VIRTUE – getting PUNISHED because YOU DESERVE IT!
 - c) NOTE: Peter switches words – CREDIT, not FAVOR
 - (1) ONLY use of this word in the NT.
 - (2) “Credit” means good report, fame, glory – among men
 - (3) Being a bit sarcastic by switching from God's favor to Man's credit
 - (4) He's referring here to credit from man – not from God.
 - (5) I.e. You're NOT GOING TO EVEN GET A GOOD REPORT FROM YOUR MASTERS (implied then – LET ALONE GOD!)
 - d) DON'T even BEGIN to think this would find favor with God BECAUSE it doesn't even IMPRESS MEN!
 - e) “sin” (actually – SINNING) and “harshly treated” IMPLY ONGOING PATTERN of WRONG DOING and consequent punishment– not just an ISOLATED incident
 - (1) “harshly treated” = struck with the fist, buffeted, beaten”
 - (2) Same word to describe the beatings Jesus received after His trial.
 - f) “you endure it with patience”
 - (1) Same word here and in the next phrase where you endure UNJUST suffering.
 - (2) Literally; “remain under – abide under”
 - (3) ONLY RESPONSE = Take the harsh treat = endure it

g) Peter repeats in

(1) 1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you **suffer** for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

(2) 1 Peter 4:15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

3. **REALITY OF SIN-CAUSED SUFFERING: Patiently enduring suffering brought on by your own sin doesn't even impress men, let alone God.**

E. But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

1. **Previously: Principle OF UNJUST SUFFERING: You will find favor with God when you endure unjust suffering for doing what is right.**

a) Peter said "a person bears up..."

b) Here: Peter APPLIES THE PRINCIPLE to this situation of the workplace by personalizing it with "you"

2. **"But" = STRONG CONTRAST**

3. **"do what is right and suffer for it"**

a) How has Peter portrayed **"do what is right"** in this section?

(1) V.11 abstain from fleshly lusts

(2) V.12 keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles

(3) V.13 Submit to all human institutions

(4) V.18 Submit to employers

b) **"suffer for it"** [do what is right]= unjust suffering (as above)

4. **"you patiently endure it"** = same as above: you "remain under it" - you take it!

5. **"this finds favor with God"** = Finishes chiasm by repeating that this God is pleased and this counts with Him.

a) Remember NOT ONLY is God pleased when you SUBMIT but also

(1) V.12 keeping behavior excellent leads to salvation

(2) V.14 leads to praise of government

(3) V.15 "by doing right" you "silence the foolishness of ignorant men"

(4) V.19-20 TWICE says this behavior FINDS FAVOR with God when the doing right is returned with unjust suffering

F. Transition

1. The Requirement: **SUBMIT to employers!**

2. The Result: **This finds favor!**

IV. The Reason: You were called to this (v.21)

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

A. You say "I am not answering that CALL! Let it go to the message machine!"

B. SORRY BUT - You were called to suffer unjustly while doing good!

C. Just like Christ did for us!

D. What did Jesus tell Ananias (not the bad one) to tell Saul right after his conversion on the Damascus road?

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.

E. Paul confirmed this to the Thessalonians!

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, 3 so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. 4 For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

F. But this verse says US! SO do a lot of other verses!

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

G. We are going to expand on this greatly in the coming weeks! – THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN SUFFERING.

V. CONCLUSION

A. How do we do this? BEAR UP STUFF? Look at Christ...

1. 1 Peter 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while **suffering**, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

a) = BEARING UP UNDER!

2. We're called to do the same in both

a) 1 Peter 2:21 He is our example to follow in His footsteps and He

2:23...He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

b) 1 Peter 4:19

¹⁹Therefore, those also who **suffer** according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

3. God promises: 1 Peter 5:10

¹⁰After you have **suffered** for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

B. Remember: Romans 12:19

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.

1. We are not about "RIGHTS" in this world

2. We are to be like Christ

C. Another way to see this: Peter is going to Summarize this whole Section in 3:8-12

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. 11 "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. 12 "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

D. Today = SUBMISSION in the WORKPLACE.

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