

First Peter 2:18-23

Kingdom Living as Servants: The Requirement of Submission

Verse 18

Continuing on with ways we are to abstain from "fleshly lusts," Peter now insists that we must submit to the authority of our employer.

"Slaves" = not the common word for servant (doulos) but service within a household (oiketēs). In the first century, being a slave was often a temporary station in life and viewed as a path toward full Roman citizenship (1 Cor. 7:21, also consider Philemon and Onesimus). Slavery was more desirable than living a spurious existence moving from job to job. Slaves could be doctors, teachers, accountants, etc.

"Submission" is a willingness to carry out the directives of one who is in authority over another. What type of master/employer does Peter have in mind (Note: "harsh" is literally "crooked")?

What kind of attitude is required for submission (Note: "with all respect" (NIV) is literally "in all fear")? How can fear be used to motivate someone to submit? "Fear" in human relationships is often a healthy desire to avoid the displeasure of another. What we are to avoid is a careless disregard for those in authority over us?

Kingdom Living as Servants: The Reason for Submission

Verses 19-21a

How does being "conscious/mindful of God" give us a reason for submission (see 2:13)? Peter does not say that it is pleasing to God merely to endure unjust suffering. Rather, it is when one is focused upon God's sovereign control over all circumstances and entrusts him/herself to God that enduring unjust suffering has its benefits (see 2:23).

What kinds of results occur when you are not rightly focused on God while unjustly accused? Resentment, revenge, self-pity, despair, rebellion? Peter says "to this you have been called." What is he referring to? Clearly believers are to trust God while suffering unjustly (see Jn. 15:18-20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:2-3, 2 Tim. 3:12).

Kingdom Living as Servants: The Example of Submission

Verses 21b-25

Peter uses two images here to illustrate our calling:

1. "Example" literally is hypogrammos or "pattern." The hypogrammos was a wax tablet used to teach children to write their letters that were embedded in wax.
2. "Steps" conveys the idea of walking behind someone in their footprints.

Note: 1 Pt. 2:22-25 lean heavily upon Isaiah 53: 1 Pt. 2:22 corresponds to Is. 53:9; 1 Pt. 2:23 corresponds to Is. 53:7; 1 Pt. 2:24 corresponds to Is. 53:5, 12; 1 Pt. 2:25 corresponds to Is. 53:6.

Verse 23

The imperfect tense "entrusted himself" indicates Jesus repeatedly trusted God. Jesus did not vent his anger nor hold it in, but continually gave himself and his circumstances over to God with a settled confidence that God will in time judge justly (see Lk. 23:34).

Verse 24

This is the heart of the Gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:3-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:28). The significance of alluding to Christ's substitutionary atonement is clearly "so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness." Having died to sin at salvation we now live for God in our sanctification (Rom. 6:1-23). Becoming a Christian is profoundly practical!

Verse 25

Peter drives home the reality of our need for a Savior and the gracious provision of our God as Shepherd and Overseer (Lk. 15:4-7).

Summary: Guidelines for Christian Employees

The following is from I. H. Marshall, *1 Peter*, 89-90, 97-98, quoted in *1 Peter*, Scott McKnight (p. 175).

1. All our social relationships should find a behavior that is driven by a desire to do God's will.
2. Our conduct ought to be consistent with the obligation we assume in our relationship to that person and job.
3. Our conduct ought to be determined by that relationship, not by what we think of the personal traits of the employer.
4. When we disregard our relational contract with its obligations, we do disservice to the gospel.
5. If we suffer as a result of our obligations, such suffering is both commendable and Christian; it is not unchristian.