



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N12 March 24, 2024

HIGHER UP

“Suffering Under Injustice”

1 Peter 2:18-25

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Grace

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy, and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Colossians 3:13



How are Christians to respond to unfair workplace practices?

In 1 Peter 2:18 without using the word, the apostle Peter instructs his readers, who are slaves, that is, household servants, to act kindly toward their masters, “not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh” (v. 18). As one commentator writes: “It goes without saying that it is easy to work for masters who are kind, beneficent, and generous, but it is hard to have the same disposition to those who are nasty, irascible, and capricious” (Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Peter*, 164). In order to understand what Peter means, let alone to do what he says, we need to understand what slavery was like in a first-century Roman world, for it was nothing like the New World slavery institutionalized in the United States (see S. S. Bartchy, “Slavery (Greco-Roman),” *ABD*, 6:65-73). For example: race played no role in first-century slavery; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves being better educated than their masters); slaves could own property and even have other slaves; their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of free persons; and the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by age 30.

The following description of first-century slavery is worth quoting: “Slavery was a diverse institution in the ancient world, altering itself from one culture to another. Yet the Roman and Greek world anchored their economic system in this institution. Some have estimated that one-third of the population in urban areas was slave population. In both worlds, especially the Roman world, slavery was not usually a permanent condition of life. Rather, it was a temporary condition on the path toward freedom. Many ancient people voluntarily chose to be slave of a Roman citizen so that, upon being granted manumission as a result either of good behavior or adequate savings, they could become full Roman citizens. In fact, it is entirely possible that one reason Peter (and Paul) urged Christian slaves to be submissive and obedient was that by living obediently, they could be set

free (if the slaves even wanted freedom; cf. 1 Cor. 7:21).

“To be a slave was not to be assigned to a specific, especially low-class, station in life. Slaves had the status and power that was connected with their masters; if their master was powerful, they indirectly inherited that power too. Thus, it was desirable at times to be a slave. While most slaves of the New Testament documents were born that way (because their mothers were slaves), many chose slavery over the vagabond existence of finding odd jobs. The tasks characterizing slavery were immensely diverse, and we must avoid the notion that all slaves were manual labor servants. ‘Doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, agents, bailiffs, overseers, secretaries, and sea-captains’ all comprised the slave population.

“If it is true that slavery was the central labor force of the Roman economy, it follows that if Christians became known for opposing the institution, the Roman authorities would immediately, and perhaps even irreparably, damage the movement. Put differently, it was important to the survival of Christianity for its slaves to be good slaves. Since this was the case, one motive for Peter’s exhortation would have been the desire to survive as a movement” (McKnight, 166-67).

All this lends itself to the inference that while slavery as practiced in the New World *was immoral in itself*, slavery as it was practiced in the Roman world *was not necessarily so*. Given the differences between the institution of slavery in the ancient world and the institution of slavery in the modern world, as well as the fact that the former doesn’t exist in the modern world, how are Peter’s instructions to be applied today? While significant differences between then and now remain, “it is customary to find in this passage ‘advice for the employed’ . . . Whatever we think of the ancient institution of slavery, slaves were in some kind of employment relationship with their master. This was how they ‘made a living’” (McKnight, 172-73).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25

18 *Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.* 19 *For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God.* 20 *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.* 21 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

22 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

23 *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.* 24 *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”* 25 *For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Read in another translation

18 *Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse.* 19 *For this finds God's favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly.* 20 *For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God.* 21 *For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps.* 22 *He **committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth.*** 23 *When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly.* 24 *He **himself bore our sins** in his body on the tree, that we may cease from sinning and live for righteousness. **By his wounds you were healed.*** 25 *For you were **going astray like sheep** but now you have turned back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. (NET)*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle “Slaves” in v. 18.
- Bracket “in reverent fear of God” in v. 18.
- Circle “submit yourselves” in v. 18.
- Box “but” indicating *contrast* in vv. 18, 20 (2x), 25.
- Circle “harsh” in v. 18.
- Box “For” in vv. 19, 25 and “because” in vv. 19, 21 indicating *reason*.
- Circle “pain” and “suffering” in v. 19.
- Bracket “conscious of God” in v. 19.
- Circle “example” in v. 21.
- Underline “no sin” and “no deceit” in v. 22.
- Bracket “bore our sins” in v. 24.
- Box “so that” indicating *purpose* in v. 24.
- Circle “healed” in v. 24.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, “This text is about _____.”



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. *Describe* the “slaves” whom Peter addresses in verse 18— who are they?
 2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 18.
 3. Explain the *reason* behind Peter’s instruction.
 4. Transform the *rhetorical* question in verse 20 into a *direct* statement.
 5. To what does “this” refer in verse 20 and in verse 21?
 6. Verse 21 might be paraphrased “that you should *retrace* his steps.” Why so? (See note on “example” in v. 20.)
 7. *Add* the two statements in verse 22. What do they *total*?
 8. Describe the relationship of verses 24-25 to Isaiah 53.
 9. Who is this “Shepherd” (v. 25) and what makes you think so?
 10. **Discussion:** *Contrast* the recourse available to exploited workers *now* with that of wronged slaves *then*, and discuss whether Peter denies today’s exploited workers from accessing that recourse.
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Commentary On The Text

Peter's instructions to "slaves" (also rendered "household slaves" and "servants") in 2:18-25 belong to that section of the epistle (2:13-3:7) containing what are called "household duty codes," which also appear in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-6:9. These codes prescribe the behavior of various members of the Christian household to one another. Three sets of relationships are addressed in the epistles containing these codes: "wives, submit to your husbands"/"husbands, love your wives" (Col 3:18; cf. Eph 5:22, 25); "children obey your parents"/"fathers [i.e., parents], do not embitter your children" (Col 3:20-21; cf. Eph 6:1, 4); "slaves, obey your earthly masters"/"masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair" (Col 3:22; 4:1; cf. Eph 6:5, 9). The duty code in 1 Peter is different from the ones in Ephesians and Colossians. Slaves are addressed but not masters, and the relationship of children to parents is missing entirely. One commentator suggests reasons for the differences. He writes: "The reason servants are addressed but not masters is that Peter envisions a social situation in which some of his readers are household servants but few – if any – are masters. Wives are addressed at length but husbands only briefly because Peter's concern is for Christian wives married to pagan husbands. The reverse is not a problem . . . Peter assumes that pagan women married to Christians would ordinarily adopt their husbands' religion and become 'co-heirs of the grace of life' (3:7). His emphasis throughout is on those points at which the Christian community faces outward to confront Roman society. The function of vv 13-17 is to give to the household duty code that follows in 2:18-3:7 its distinctively 'outward-directed' orientation" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 49, 1 Peter, 122-23).

In verses 18-21, Peter instructs slaves to follow in Christ's footsteps, which, he writes, is what they were called as Christians to do (v. 21), by neither *passively* nor *actively* rebelling against their masters and that out of reverence for God – rather than regard for their masters – irrespective of whether they are "kind and fair" or "unjust" (ISV). As one writer observes: "Christian *oiketai*, which may be roughly translated 'unfree house servants' (there is no exact term in English – see Additional Note) probably had pagan masters, who at best would be unsympathetic to a novel religion preaching 'freedom' and speaking of another and superior Master. Peter wants to encourage Christians to face the suffering that in varying degrees would inevitably be their lot in such circumstances" (Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, NIBC, 83). Then the apostle explains the reason behind his instruction. One the one hand, enduring the grief (cf. 1:6) of unfair treatment – only made possible by being "conscious of God" – is commendable (v. 19).

On the other hand, enduring the consequent pain resulting from doing wrong is not (v. 20). As another writer observes, "Patient endurance of justly deserved punishment is not remarkable or especially commendable – many wrongdoers know that they are getting what they deserve, and bear the punishment without complaint" (Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, TNTC, 127). More importantly, God commends the one who endures suffering when it results from doing good (v. 21). Verse 21 not only presents Christ as the exemplar of one who suffered evil for doing good, but it also introduces the description of his example that follows in verses 22-25.

Peter opens by quoting Isaiah 53:9 to the effect that Jesus was sinless in all he did, that is, in his *works* – i.e., "He committed no sin" – and in all he said, that is, in his *words* – i.e., "no deceit was found in his mouth" (v. 22). Choosing to neither threaten nor retaliate against his nemeses, Jesus suffered in silence when he was unjustly accused (Mt 27:12-14, 39-44), mocked, humiliated, and physically tormented (vv. 27-31), choosing instead to wait on God, the just judge, to vindicate him. As Peter's repeated quotations from Isaiah 53 indicate (vv. 23-24), Jesus offered himself as an atonement for humanity's sins, dying in our place as our substitute for our benefit, so that "we might die to sins and live for righteousness" (v. 24; cf. Ro 6:1-23). And like Peter's readers, we are no longer like sheep going astray now that we have returned to the Good Shepherd, who recovers and cares for stray sheep.

It's the *application* of this passage rather than its *interpretation* that is problematic since there are no *oiketai* in the contemporary church. There are workers, who are like "household servants," and there are employers or bosses, who are like "masters," but there are significant cultural differences that make an application free of caveats impossible. For example, contemporary workers have protections and freedoms that first-century workers did not, e.g., various worker rights protected by law, workplace guarantees stipulated in employment contracts, etc., and contemporary workers can always terminate their employment to go work for a different employer. However, when treated unfairly, household servants had little recourse – manumission was only a remote possibility.

By way of application, Peter's instructions do not prevent today's workers from pursuing all the avenues of recourse available to them when they believe they have been treated unfairly on the job. But when all else fails, as long as they remain employees, they are not to "spit in their employer's soup," so to speak. They are to do what is right by respecting the terms of their employment, submitting to the ones over them, and fulfilling the obligations of their positions.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 18 *slaves* “The Greek word for **slaves** here is not *douloi*, the common term for slaves (cf. v. 16), but *oiketai*, which refers to household or domestic servants (cf. Luke 16:13; Rom. 14:4)” (Roger M. Raymer, “1 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 847). “The horrible degradation of slaves in 19th-century America gives the word ‘slave’ a far worse connotation than is accurate for most of the society to which Peter was writing. Although mistreatment of slaves could occur then too, it must be remembered that 1st-century slaves were generally well treated and were not only unskilled labourers but often managers, overseers, and trained members of the various professions (doctors, nurses, teachers, musicians, skilled artisans). There was extensive Roman legislation regulating the treatment of slaves. They were normally paid for their services and could expect eventually to purchase their freedom (OCD, p. 995; also p. 793, art. ‘peculium’)” (Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, TNTC, 123-24).

v. 18 *reverent fear of God* Lit., “be subject with all fear to your masters; cf. “be subject to your masters with all reverence” (NET). “The clear distinction in 2:17 between reverence toward God and respect for the emperor demands that here too [*phobos*] means reverence toward God and not toward human masters” (J. Ramsey Michaels, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 49, *1 Peter*, 138); contra. Grudem, “the probable sense is ‘with healthy apprehension of their [i.e., masters] displeasure’” (125).

v. 18 *submit yourselves* Cf. “‘You servants must with deep reverence [for God] *defer* to your masters’” (Michaels, 137, italics added). “The word translated **submit** (*hypotassomenoi*) is a nominative participle that continues the idea of submission expressed in 1 Peter 2:13 through the aorist imperative *hypotagēte*” (Raymer, 847).

v. 18 *harsh* Various rendered “crooked,” “unfair,” “unjust,” “cruel,” “perverse,” “overbearing,” “unreasonable,” “not kind,” “surly,” etc. “‘Harsh’ is from the Greek *skolios* (lit., ‘curved,’ ‘bent,’ or ‘not straight’). The medical term ‘scoliosis,’ referring to curvature of the spine comes from this word” (Raymer, 847). “Metaphorically [the word] means ‘dishonest, morally evil’ . . . The ‘crookedness’ of such masters suggests not only physical mistreatment but also dishonesty regarding pay, working conditions, expectations, etc.” (Grudem, 126).

v. 19 *pain, suffering* Peter doesn’t seem to have physical pain and suffering in mind. “The word translated ‘pain’ (*lupē*) is better rendered ‘sorrow’ or ‘grief’ (see note on the related verb ‘suffer’ at 1:6 [trans.

‘suffer grief’ NIV], and cf. BAGD, p 482) . . . Peter’s emphasis is on enduring the various kinds of mental anguish (the word is actually plural, ‘sorrows’) which accompany unjust suffering” (Grudem, 126).

v. 19 *conscious of God* Either “conscience” (NASB) or “consciousness” (CSB). “*Grk* ‘Conscious(ness) of God,’ an awareness of God and allegiance to him” (*The NET Bible*, 44tn on 1Pe 2:19).

v. 21 *example* “The Greek word translated example (*hypogrammon*) refers to a writing or drawing that someone placed under another sheet of paper so he or she could trace on the upper sheet” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Peter,” 2023 ed., 59, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/1peter.pdf); e.g., letters of the alphabet for children to trace (Michaels, 144).

v. 22 *no sin, no deceit* Cf. Mt 27:4; Jn 8:29, 46; 18:38; 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1Jn 3:5. “Peter now begins to make use of a stream of phrases from Isaiah 53:4-12 LXX, although he gives no direct indication that he is quoting (v. 22, Isa. 53:9; v. 24a, Isa. 53:12; v. 24b, Isa. 53:5; v. 25, Isa 53:6) . . . As **committed no sin** relates to wrong actions, so the second part of the quotation from Isaiah 53:9, **no deceit was found in his mouth**, refers to wrong speech. Together the two clauses cover all of life, whether expressed in deeds or in words” (Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, NIBC, 85).

v. 24 *bore our sins* “The fact that Christ bore our sins means that God the Father counted our sins against Christ and, in a way not fully understood by us, ‘laid on him the iniquity of us all’ (Is. 53:6). The Father thought of our sins as belonging to Christ; he ‘made him to be sin who knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21), and then punished him with that anger against sin, separation from God, and consequent death which we deserved. In this way Christ was a substitute for his people, one who stood in their place” (Grudem, 131). He died in our place as our substitute for our benefit!

v. 24 *healed* “Some writers have cited the third part of this verse to support the non-biblical doctrine that Jesus, by His death, made healing from any physical ailment something that every Christian can claim in this life. This is the belief that there is ‘healing in the atonement.’ The context of Isaiah 53, as well as the past tense ‘were healed’ here, implies spiritual healing from the fatal effects of sin, rather than healing from present physical afflictions” (Constable, 61).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Follow Jesus' example of suffering for doing good by being workers willing to accept unfair workplace practices when without recourse, for doing so is commendable before God.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When I was young, my older brother would mess with me to the point where I would erupt like Mt. Vesuvius. He would just laugh and tease me even more, saying I looked like the cartoon Tasmanian Devil coming at him with tornado arms. That would make me even more angry and frustrated and I would add crying to the yelling and swinging. He would laugh even harder until eventually my mom would bust up the fight. And who do you think got in trouble? Yep, me. Even though he provoked me and he started the fight nearly every single time, I was punished because of my reaction. It was the worst injustice for a kid! Isn't it true that living with siblings is perfect practice for living in the real world? I had to learn how to take a pause and not only handle my anger appropriately, but also temper my reaction to my brother and the unjust punishment that ensued. Can you imagine what would have happened if I carried that volatile anger into the workplace or adult relationships? That's why we do the hard work now with our kids. They're in our home and under our careful instruction, learning how to handle life when they're provoked, how to deal with the injustices that come their way and how to have a proper respect for authority. How are you teaching your kids to turn the other cheek? How are you teaching them to accept and submit to authority? How are you educating your kids in the appropriate time and place to fight for injustice? We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Peter 2:18-25

1. How should people submit to authority?
2. What is commendable to God?
3. How did Christ suffer? Write His reaction to unjust treatment.

What Do You Think?

If we are to react to our own unjust treatment with grace, when is a good time to advocate for unjust treatment?

What Do You Do?

Play the "What If" game with your family. Have everyone come up with ideas of unjust treatment and talk about how to react.

CORE COMPETENCY: Grace

I show forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 1:3

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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