

Servants, Be Submissive: I Peter 2:18-25

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

Perhaps one of the most disquieting aspects of scripture is its honest dealing with the world's situation at the time it was written. One area that is particularly bothersome to our modern sensibilities is the treatment of slavery. We see slavery as a complete anathema to biblical principles and yet there are passages like **I Peter 2:18-23** that mention slavery without skipping a beat. While this passage spoke directly to servants, there are lessons we can learn about Christianity in general.

Discussion:

- I. The gospel was given to change lives, not change social order.
 - A. Perhaps one of the biggest misunderstandings Christian religion faces today is a misunderstanding of purpose. People want to make the gospel a social advocacy plan. They want to use it to provide social welfare, promote political agendas and change national laws. But that was not God's purpose. I am convinced as much as anyone that God despises all of the injustices that went along with one person owning another. In fact, history has born out that it was the influence of the Bible's teaching about how men should treat one another that has led the almost complete abolition of slavery.
 - B. Yet, when God sent His Son into the world to die and sent the Spirit to reveal His word, He did not do so to change society. He did so to change individuals within that society. His goal was not to change the world so that individuals could live within it. Rather, His goal was to change individuals who had to live in the world. Therefore, in passages like **I Peter 2:18-23**, **Ephesians 6:5-9** and **Colossians 3:22-4:1**, God did not try to change the societal order in place at the time. Instead, He tried to change the individuals so they would live righteously within the order that was prevalent.
- II. God asks us to do hard things.
 - A. Put yourself in the shoes of the common house servant in the first century. Certainly, some of them had good and gentle masters. Treating their masters with respect was probably pretty simple. But what about the ones who had unreasonable, harsh, ill-tempered and abusive masters? In **I Peter 2:18**, they were told to submit to their masters and suffer patiently, even when they had done what was right.
 - B. Let's face it. That is not easy. We would not want to do that. In fact, with our modern mentality, we would be screaming for justice and rights. We would be certain God would never ask us to put up with an abusive master and submit to him because that is just too difficult. But, here it is. Let's face it, Christian living means going against the grain. It means living different and difficult lives. God asks us to do difficult things and we must do them, because that finds favor with God.
- III. Our behavior is based upon our relationship with God.
 - A. Notice upon what basis these servant Christians were to conduct their relationships with their masters. In **I Peter 2:19-20**, the servant was supposed to submit to his master not because of anything his master did. Rather, he was to submit because of his relationship with God.
 - B. While we no longer have slavery, this is a general principle that we need to learn regarding our relationships. The Bible says a lot about various relationships—relationships with brethren, with family, with neighbors and friends, etc. What is the basis for our behavior in our relationships? The basis is not what the other people in our relationships do. It is not about them and whether or not they fulfill their roles properly. Our behavior is to be based on our relationship with God. We may have lousy neighbors, but we are to be good neighbors. We may have rotten friends, but we are to be good friends. We may have bum of a spouse, but we are to be a godly spouse.
 - C. Most of us could never imagine being the servant of a harsh and abusive master and receiving this teaching from the Lord. Why? Because we have bought into worldly philosophy that our relationships are all about our own personal happiness. If the other people are not making us happy, then we do not have to live by God's commands. That, however, is not what God taught.

- IV. God has called us to patiently endure suffering, not just persecution.
- A. One of the interesting issues of the suffering in this passage is that it has little to do with persecution. It simply had to do with being in a bad situation. A master might certainly be harsh to a servant because of his Christianity, however, the text does not limit this encouragement to persecution. It was about suffering just because the servant had a jerk for a master. Despite the fact that the servant was being the best servant he could be, his master was unreasonable. Some translations say, "Harsh" (**I Peter 2:18**)
 - B. In modern society, this servant would be told, even by Christians, despite this verse, "Oh, Mr. Servant, God would never expect you to deal with someone who is harsh. God wants you to be happy and never intended that anyone be stuck in a relationship with someone who is unreasonable. You should just run away." Why? Because we have bought in to the modern myth that Christianity is all designed to make us personally happy. That is just not the case. Christianity is designed to get us to heaven. While we can have contentment in this life, we may not have much happiness. The real happiness is reserved for heaven.
 - C. Brethren, in all honesty, we face this most in the modern marriage. Most people today, including many Christians, believe that all of God's marriage laws are about personal happiness. I certainly understand that marriage was instituted to provide completeness, wholeness and happiness. But there is nothing in the Bible that says we can disregard God's marriage laws just because our marriage is not fitting the bill. Then when somebody talks about suffering we act as though the only suffering God ever expected for us to go through was persecution because we were Christians. Absolutely not. God very well understood we would go through all kinds of suffering. When we suffer even though we are doing right, we must patiently endure it because that is what finds favor with God. I am sorry if your spouse does not treat you right and they will be judged for that, but we must let God be the judge and simply serve Him the best we can in our relationships. If we suffer, we must take it patiently.
- V. When we patiently endure suffering, we will be rewarded and those who mistreat us may be saved.
- A. Why on earth would any servant take harsh treatment? That would be so unjust and so unfair. They should demand their rights. They would be crazy to just patiently endure it. They would do it because they were more concerned with pleasing God (**I Peter 2:19**) than personal happiness. They would do it because they were more concerned with pleasing God than fitting in. They would do it because they were more concerned with pleasing God than being politically correct. They would do it because the momentary suffering would not be worthy to be compared with the glory which they would receive for pleasing God.
 - B. Pay special attention to Peter's use of Jesus as an example (**I Peter 2:21-25**). Jesus is our example. Though He was reviled, He did not revile in return. He did not threaten his oppressors. He simply trusted God to take care of it in His time. But notice what happened. Because Jesus suffered, not only was He rewarded but He provided salvation for many. When we endure suffering patiently, those who cause us to suffer may just be moved by how we live and be turned to the Lord by it. But they will certainly never turn to the Lord if we act like everybody else does when we suffer.

Conclusion:

Here is one of the kickers about Christian living. God never promised it would be easy. Too many want an easy gospel. They do not want much to be asked of them. They will bless others as long as others bless them. They will love others as long as others love them. They will be kind as long as others are kind. But if others will not live by God's standards, then they won't either. But **I Peter 2:18-25** strips away our Christian veneer and says buck up. This is about serving God, not having an easy life.