
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

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1 Peter 2: 18-25: Responsibility to those in Authority!

General idea: Peter is calling upon servants to obey their masters. This not only applies to slaves but also to us today! We may not be slaves, but we are called to accept the authority of those who are in authority over us, even when they are harsh and cruel. This is hard for most Christians to understand because it is a call that goes against our nature and even our culture. This passage is not saying we are to be mistreated, taken advantage of, or abused; it is a firm call to be a good employee, student, and to strive to be a model Christian by sowing kindness, respect, and following through with good work ethics.

We are not to give up or skip out on opportunities or duty because they get difficult. We also are not to seek revenge or conspire to hurt others because we have been hurt. This is about being a good worker so we reflect Christ and give Him glory. It is also about being a good witness by showing that extraordinary virtue. The backside of this is there is no glory or honor in enduring rebuke and punishment that we deserve!

This passage was originally directed to servants who worked as household slaves to look at their situation as a privilege rather than despair over it. They were, as a whole, treated much better than the field slaves or war slaves. Peter knew there was nothing he could do to free them, so he gave them pastoral advice to work within the system and do their best for a greater purpose. It is far better to deal with your situation constructively than to cause more unrest.

Vs. 18-20: This passage is a tough one as it asks us to do what we naturally do not want to do and for which we can easily rationalize our disobedience. However, to God, a greater theme is presented, one we usually do not see in our horizon, of putting Him first so our character and virtue are the display case for His work and person.

- *Servants* referred to slaves or hired workers. They were much like the butlers and maids we have today, except they were usually owned by another person. Some could save their money and buy their freedom, but most did not as their lifestyle was better than it would be if they were on their own. However, even the best-treated servants were subjugated to extreme prejudice. Others were in a hopeless situation. They were being encouraged to obey and allow their virtue to win others over. The stoic philosophers also taught this. The flipside is slaves and servants were to be treated with respect and dignity, never mistreated, and as spiritually equal before God (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:11; 4:1). Peter is not condemning or condoning slavery, just stating it as a matter of fact; thus, he urges them to learn to live with it and reform it

by good character and the Gospel (Deut 24:1-4; Matt. 19:8; Eph. 6:5; Philemon). Slaves were also encouraged to seek their freedom by all legal means (1 Cor. 7:21-24; Philemon). (I firmly believe if we had done that in the U.S., we would not have the ongoing racial bigotry that we have in the U.S. I write this as a man who is descended from African and European ancestry!)

- *Conscious of God* means submission; we should focus on our duty and respect authority because it is for God. This is about being a good worker as our work reflects God (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10).

In the ancient world, such people were treated as property and had little to no rights. There were many slave uprisings, but they only accomplished the killing of the slaves and made matters worse for future slaves. Peter wanted to fix the problem, but he could not. So, he called slaves and everyone else to a higher standard.

Slaves, in the early slavery period of Europe and America, were the vital forces that kept the economy going. Peter is not condoning slavery, but calls us to work within it for reform. If slavery had suddenly been eliminated, the society and economy would have broken down and anarchy would have replaced it. This would have made life worse for everyone, just as it did in 1860s America. It was the American and English Christians in the 1750s and onward who led the end of slavery by understating and applying this passage. If slavery here had been eliminated gradually, as it was in England, we might never have had the Civil War or the racial problems that have followed for decades! Ironically, such problems are not as apparent in England as they are in America—the “land of the free.”

Vs. 21-25: Jesus faced all of the temptations we face, yet remained true to and never disobeyed God. He cut no corners and took no shortcuts; therefore, we can have eternal life by receiving and enduring His extreme suffering that He did not deserve! This section gives us the picture of the sinless nature of Jesus (Luke 14:25-33; Heb. 12:3-13; 1 Pet. 1:19). This is important because if Jesus were not sinless, He could not have been God nor paid the debt for our Redemption (Acts 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 3:10; 1 John 3:5)!

- *You were called.* The call is the patient endurance of injustice and suffering, a call that seems no sane person should desire, yet it is our call. The Christian life is not about health and wealth but just the opposite—suffering and growth (John 15:18-20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Christ suffered for us and we are to understand the significance, power, and impact of this (Isa. 52:13-53:12; 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:10; Phil. 3:1-14; 1 Pet. 5:12). Thus, do not be harsh; endure harshness. Our conscience toward God may bring about suffering!

- *An example.* Philosophers were obsessed with the idea that we must have good and perfect “forms” of templates and examples from which to learn and follow. Jesus is our perfect example! Many people today are fixated on justice and proper treatment. This is important; however, who we are in our situation is more important!
- *Who...* is a quote from Isaiah 53:9. The rest of this passage has the entire chapter in mind, the model of the suffering servant and a prophecy about Jesus, which He fulfills.
- *Committed no sin.* Jesus was perfect and totally sinless (John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). This was necessary to please God, so He took our place by living a perfect life in our behalf; this is called “propitiation.” All have sinned, and we are separated from God because of sin (Rom. 3:23; 8:7). Only Christ, who pleased God for us, was sinless.
- *His mouth* meant Jesus had the right and power to defend Himself in a society that valued and respected authority. He chose to submit and take the abuse. Not responding is the greatest defense, as God is one’s defense (Matt. 27:12-14, 34-44)! This would have been astonishing yet of incredible encouragement to a slave. Hence, many slaves became Christians, as they could identify with Christ.
- *Bore our sins* refers to Jesus, who not only set the example, but more importantly, also redeemed us (Isa 53:12). This also refers to the “substitutionary atonement.” Christ was the innocent, sacrificial lamb who died for the guilty—for our sins!
- *Tree.* This is metaphorical reference to the cross (Isa 53:5; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Rom. 6:3-14; Gal 3:13).
- *His stripes/wounds* refer to what Christ endured for us. He suffered for us and gave us an example of suffering (Isa 6:10; 53:4-5; Jer. 6:14; 8:11). The wounds were not from the literal, physical torture; rather, they were from sin—our sin that He bore for us! Jesus is also our example of submission!
- *Have been healed* normally refers to a physical healing. However, here it means something a whole lot more—our atonement (Matt. 8:16-17). This is about how Christ’s work on the cross brings salvation to those who put their faith in Him.
- *Sheep* is a metaphor for people who follow God (Psalm 23; Isa 40:11; John 10:1-18). *Sheep going astray* refers to the nation Israel, how they tended to stray far from God’s path, and how He kept disciplining and rescuing them (Psalm 119:176; Hosea—whole book, Isa. 40:11; 53:6; Jer. 50:6; Ezek 34:6). This is a call to us to heed their history lest we too go astray!

- *Shepherd* provides for us an image of leading and protecting. Jesus comes as the Good Shepherd to rescue His lost sheep. We have gone astray and have given in to sin; He brings us back to His fold (Psalm 23:1; Isa. 53:6; Jer. 50:6; Ezek. 34:5; Matt. 14: 13-21; John 10:11; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:20; James 5: 19-20). This is also a name for Jesus (Psalm 23, 79:13, 95:7, 80:1, 100:3; Gen. 49:24; Isa. 40:11).
- *Overseer/Guardian* refers to being a guardian and protector—like a sentinel. This was someone who protected an estate or farm, and served its owners. Our Overseer is Christ (John 10:1-18)! Elders now fill this role, as Christ's workmen, as both shepherds and overseers; they are to look out for the welfare of the flock—the church—by training, caring for, and administering His love and precepts (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:2-7; 5:15; Titus 1:5-16; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

We glorify God when we endure with our faith and character—no matter what we might face or experience. The chief purpose for Christians, above all else, is to glorify God (Luke 22:42; John 17:22; Eph. 4:1-16). Christ is our great example for respect and endurance; He endured and suffered for you, He took your place in God's wrath, and as a sinless, innocent person, went to the cross for us all. We then follow in His steps—not for our salvation, as it has already been given to the Christian—but to show another picture to those who are watching us. We exemplify Him by being a good example! Why? He has healed and saved us, so we need to trust Him out of our gratitude, and allow Him to be our Shepherd, Guardian, and Lord over all.

The key to this passage is possessing the attitude that Christ is our employer so we do our work for Him. We should view our job as a mission field and keep coworkers and bosses in constant prayer. If you feel stress, hatred, lack of accomplishment, or if you are unhappy and in the wrong place, then pray more! We are to be our best for His glory, regardless of our circumstances (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 6:5-8; Phil. 2:1-11). We may have a paycheck from McDonald's and a boss who may need some acne treatments, but our ultimate authority and manager is Christ Himself! We show our value—that Christ paid a price for us—so we in turn can respond with a good work ethic (1 Cor. 7:23). We must adjust our mindset to see work as an opportunity to please Him, and in so doing, be a blessing to those around us with our practical obedience and diligence! This allows us to do our best for Christ's highest with excitement and passion in order to complete our work and call from the Lord. He asks us to love our call and pursue our work so we are doing our best for His glory. (Prov. 10:4; Rom. 12:11; Col. 3:23).

Here are some more Scriptures about being an employee: Exodus 23:12; 35:2; Proverbs 10:26; 25:13; Ecclesiastes 2:4; 5:12; Colossians 3:17, 22-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 6:2; Titus 2:9,10; 1 Peter 2: 18-20

See the article [Employment: Blood, Sweat, and Tears!](#)

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you feel about authority figures? Do you automatically respect them? Despise them? Fear them? Want to be one of them if you are not already?
2. Why would Peter ask servants to obey their masters? Why not lead an insurrection or an underground railroad (some Christians did these for good reasons)? How does this apply to you today?
3. What does it mean to you to accept the authority of those who are in authority over you? What about when they are harsh and cruel? Why is this hard for most Christians to understand?
4. How is this passage a call to be a good employee, student, and to strive with a good work ethic to be a model Christian?
5. How can this passage help you persist and to not give up or skip out on your opportunities and duty when it gets difficult? What is the balance between putting up with a hash environment and show Christ there and moving on to a new location?

6. How does a good worker reflect being a good witness for Christ and give Him glory? Why is Glorifying God so important? What would this mean to you in further practice?
7. How does suffering and enduring hardships help us see a greater purpose in life in others and in God?
8. Why is it important to obey and allow our virtue to win others over in our work situations?
9. Why is the sinless nature of Jesus so important? How can what He did for you encourage you to remain faithful?
10. Knowing that Jesus faced all of the temptations we face and remained true and never disobeyed God help you when you are in a difficult situation?
11. How can you help urge yourself and others to learn to live with hardship (as long as there is no illegality or abuse), work for improvement so we can reform it by good character and the Gospel?
12. How can you do a better job at focusing on our duty and respect authority? How can knowing that we are doing it for God help you in this endeavor? How can the suffering of Christ help you go through situations that are difficult for you or outside your control?

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. 1 Timothy 6:1