

Submission in the Workplace

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1 Peter / 1 Peter 2:18–20

INTRODUCTION

- Please take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter chapter two
- Today we are continuing our topic of submission
- Last time we saw “submission to civil authority”
- Today we’re looking at “submission in the workplace”

• Peter says beginning in verse 18...

1 Peter 2:18–20 NASB95

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.

- There are several other passages that address this subject of submission in the workplace in the New Testament

Ephesians 6:5–9 NASB95

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.

Colossians 3:22 NASB95

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.

Titus 2:9–10 NASB95

⁹ Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,

¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

- All of these passages call for the same thing
- But what we find in common with these passages is the lack of rights
- All three passages begin with the word “slaves” or “servants”
- It has been estimated that there were some 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire (Barclay), and that as many as one third of the populations of large cities such as Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus were slaves (Bromiley).
- The church was primarily made up of slaves
- All the work of Rome was done by slaves
- It was a way of life
- Slaves were employed in every occupation, ranging from menial manual labor to professionals like doctors, teachers, musicians, actors, secretaries and pastors

The Letters of James and Peter (Revised Edition) The Duty of the Christian as a Servant

In Roman law a slave was not a person but a thing; and he had absolutely no legal rights whatsoever. For that reason there could be no such thing as justice where a slave was concerned.

- It was the gospel that eventually ended all slavery

J. Vernon McGee said, “The very nature of the gospel condemned slavery. It eventually broke the shackles of slavery from the bodies of men and cut the fetters from their minds and souls. Multitudes of slaves came to Christ, as we learn in [Romans 16](#)—many of those named there were slaves or members of the Praetorian guard. (Thru the Bible, 5:275).

- When we look at slavery in the Bible we learn that it does not speak against slavery itself, only it’s abuses

Exodus 21:16 NASB95

¹⁶ “He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.

Exodus 21:26–27 NASB95

²⁶ “If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye.

²⁷ “And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.

- There were certain types of slavery that were permitted, or even advocated, in the Old Testament
- And these were considered to be non-abusive and beneficial
- For example, a thief who could not make restitution could be *indentured until repayment was worked out
- *Indentured meant to be required by contract to work for another for a certain period of time (Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indentured>)
- Another example of this is found in [Leviticus 25:44](#) where God says that the Israelites were allowed to buy slaves from the pagan nations around them but fellow Israelites could not be bought or sold, although they could voluntarily indenture themselves until the year of Jubilee according to verses 39-40
- But according to verses 40-41, and 46, during their time of service they were to be treated as hired workers, not as slaves
- [Deuteronomy 23:15-16](#) taught that a slave who fled from an oppressive master was to be given asylum and protection

Deuteronomy 23:15–16 NASB95

¹⁵ “You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.

¹⁶ “He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.

- [Exodus 21:2](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:13-15](#) taught that a fellow Israelite could not be used as a slave for more than six years, at the end of which he was to be given liberal provisions as a form of severance pay
- And every fiftieth year, which was the year of Jubilee, all slaves were to be freed and returned to their families

Leviticus 25:10 NASB95

¹⁰ ‘You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.

- A slave who loved his master and preferred to remain with him could voluntarily indenture himself for life by having his ear pierced by his master

Exodus 21:5–6 NASB95

⁵ “But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’

⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

- When Paul or Peter mentions slaves, they are not writing to overthrow slavery or the Roman government or any of its institutions
- They are writing to demonstrate the kind of behavior a slave is to have to his master and the kind of behavior a master is to have to his slave
- Whether their masters or slaves are Christians, they are to be submissive
- The text in 1 Peter is referencing Christian slaves and Christian and non-Christian masters
- Peter begins verse 18 with the word “servants”
- This is not the commonly used for servants or slaves (doulos)
- This is the Greek word oiketai (noun) which refers to...

I. Household Slaves (v.18a)

- A household slave lived with his master
- His duties were restricted to the household

The Letters of James and Peter (Revised Edition) The Duty of the Christian as a Servant

Many slaves were loved and trusted members of the family

Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament Submission to Masters (2:18–25)

Nonetheless, his admonition to slaves here fits in with his larger concept of honoring everybody (2:17)—with a view toward winning people over to the glory of God (2:12).

- So we could apply this word to the modern understanding of “employee”

· **As a Christian employee you are to...**

II. Be Submissive to Your Masters or Employers (v.18b)

- Peter again uses the Greek word hupotasso for “submissive”
- He also uses it in the present tense to state this an ongoing action
- They were always to be submissive to their masters regardless of who their master was or how he treated them
- The same is true in the workplace

- Regardless of who your Employer is or how he/she treats you, you are to be submissive
- You are to line yourself under their authority
- This word has imperative force

1 Peter 1. The Duty of Submission by House Servants (v. 18)

“It is a built-in fact of life that in any society or organization, there must be authority on the one hand, and obedience to that authority on the other.”

Paul told Timothy in [1 Timothy 6:1-2](#)

1 Timothy 6:1–2 NASB95

¹ All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against.

² Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these *principles*.

- There is a certain behavior that is expected of a believer
- Submission is one of them

• The second is...

III. Respect Your Masters (v.18c)

- Peter already used this word in verse 17 translated “fear”
- It’s the Greek word phobos

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Mandate for Submission

The submission of servants was to be rendered with all respect, that is, without bitterness or negativity, but with an attitude of gracious honor. That was a way to show respect to God Himself and to fulfill Peter’s teachings about the fear of God

- They were to respect those who “are good and gentle” and “those who are unreasonable”
 - The good (agathos) refers to those who are “upright” (MacArthur)
 - These are those who are benevolent in their inner disposition and their treatment of their slaves (Hiebert)
 - The “gentle” (epieikes) are those who are “considerate” (NIV), reasonable, fair (MacArthur)

› They had a...

1 Peter 1. The Duty of Submission by House Servants (v. 18)

sweet-tempered nature in dealing with failures. They were willing to moderate the harsh demands of the law according to circumstances. Peter assumed that there were such kindly masters.

- Those who were “unreasonable”
 - “unreasonable” (skolios) means “crooked” translated “harsh” in the NIV
 - It metaphorically means “perverse” or “dishonest.” (MacArthur)

Believer’s Bible Commentary C. As a Servant in Relation to His Master (2:18–25)

Obedience should not vary according to the temperament of the employer. Anyone can submit to an employer who is good and gentle. Believers are called to go beyond that and be respectful and obedient to the harsh, overbearing boss. This stands out as distinctly Christian behavior.

James says in [James 3:17](#)

[James 3:17](#) (NASB95)

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

James to Jude Chapter 2

Any one who is a servant or domestic is liable to be employed in the service of such a master; but while the relation continues, the servant should perform his duty with fidelity, whatever may be the character of the master.

• A principle arises from this that we must remember...

IV. Submission Finds Favor Over Rebellion (vv.19-20)

- Samuel said to Saul in [1 Samuel 15:22-23](#)

1 Samuel 15:22–23 NASB95

²² Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

²³ “For rebellion is as the sin of divination,

And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

He has also rejected you from *being* king.”

- Rebellion becomes a temptation when were treated harshly

- But we must not avenge ourselves

Romans 12:17–21 NASB95

¹⁷ Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

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.

²⁰ “BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD.”

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- We must love our enemies

Matthew 5:43–48 NASB95

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’

⁴⁴ “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

⁴⁶ “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

⁴⁷ “If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

⁴⁸ “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

> We must remember...

- Rebellion brings an even harsher treatment

Colossians 3:25 NASB95

²⁵ For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

- When you submit to those who are "unreasonable," "this finds favor"
 - "favor" is the word *charis* which means "grace"
 - Such action is evidence of grace in the life of the individual (Barbieri, Louis. First & Second Peter- Everyman's Bible Commentary (Everyman's Bible Commentaries) . Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)
 - A good example of this behavior is Joseph
 - He was treated harshly by his brothers

Genesis 37:4 NASB95

⁴ His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and *so* they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Genesis 37:11 NASB95

¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying *in mind*.

Genesis 37:18–28 NASB95

¹⁸ When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.

¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!

²⁰ "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!"

²¹ But Reuben heard *this* and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life."

²² Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

²³ So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him;

²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

²⁵ Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring *them* down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood?”

²⁷ “Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our *own* flesh.” And his brothers listened *to him*.

²⁸ Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled *him* up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

Genesis 37:36 NASB95

³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

- He was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife

Genesis 39:7–18 NASB95

⁷ It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”

⁸ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.

⁹ “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”

¹⁰ As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her *or* be with her.

¹¹ Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside.

¹² She caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me!” And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.

¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside,

¹⁴ she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

¹⁵ “When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside.”

¹⁶ So she left his garment beside her until his master came home.

¹⁷ Then she spoke to him with these words, “The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me;

¹⁸ and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside.”

- Because of this, “Joseph’s master took him and put him into the jail” (v.20)
- He was forgotten about while in prison for 2 years ([Gen.40:23](#))
- But the Lord was with him the entire time ([Gen.39:2, 21](#))
- During all of this we do not hear him rebelling or speaking perversely toward his brother’s, Potiphar’s wife or Potiphar himself
- He told the cupbearer that after he is restored to his position with Pharaoh in [Genesis 40:14-15](#)

Genesis 40:14–15 NASB95

¹⁴ “Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

¹⁵ “For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.”

- He never held a grudge or became bitter even though he suffered unjust treatment

Psalms 105:17–19 NASB95

¹⁷ He sent a man before them,

Joseph, *who* was sold as a slave.

¹⁸ They afflicted his feet with fetters,

He himself was laid in irons;

¹⁹ Until the time that his word came to pass,

The word of the LORD tested him.

- He later told his brothers in [Genesis 50:15-21](#)

Genesis 50:15–21 NASB95

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"

¹⁶ So they sent *a message* to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying,

¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

¹⁸ Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?"

²⁰ "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

²¹ "So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

> Peter gives us the key to this kind of behavior in verse 19

> He says in [1 Peter 2:19](#)

1 Peter 2:19 NASB95

¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

- Conscience toward God refers "to the general awareness of His presence" (MacArthur)

Psalm 26:3 NASB95

³ For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,

And I have walked in Your truth.

The servant who submits to an unreasonable or cruel master is bearing up under sorrows, but he is not enduring for the sake of sorrows. He endures because of his conscience toward God, for he is aware that God's presence is with him even in this situation.

Barbieri, Louis. First & Second Peter- Everyman's Bible Commentary (Everyman's Bible Commentaries) . Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

> A.W. Pink said...

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Motive for Submission

As [one] sees the apparent defeat of the right, and the triumphing of might and the wrong ... it seems as though Satan were getting the better of the conflict. But as one looks above, instead of around, there is plainly visible to the eye of faith a Throne.... This then is our confidence—God is on the Throne. (The Sovereignty of God, rev. ed. [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1961], 149–50; emphases in the original)

> Lenski adds...

The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude Slaves, v. 18–25

Arbitrary pagan masters may abuse the slave and often do this because he has become a Christian. All such “griefs,” which are inflicted to make the poor, helpless slave suffer, are in reality “grace or favor” that comes to him from God if he, indeed, bears up under (ὑποφέρει) them because he is conscious of God who sees all and will reward him.

- “bears up under” is the Greek word hupophero (pres.act.ind.)
- It means to constantly “endure, withstand up under”
- “sorrows” (lupe) is “sadness” or “pain” (NIV)
- “unjustly” (adikos) means “wrongfully” (KJV)

> William MacDonald also writes...

Believer’s Bible Commentary C. As a Servant in Relation to His Master (2:18–25)

When we suffer unjustly, we win God’s approval. He is pleased when He finds us so conscious of our relation to Him that we endure undeserved pain without vindicating self or fighting back. When we meekly take unjust treatment, we display Christ; this supernatural life gains God’s “Well done.”

> So...

1 Peter: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary The Motive for Submission

Whether it was a slave in Peter’s day patiently enduring brutal treatment, or whether it is a modern-day employee not retaliating against an unkind and unjust supervisor, God is pleased.

- Peter concludes in verse 20 with a rhetorical question
- He asks, “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?”
- What is the answer Peter implies? There is no credit
- Believers who sin deserve chastening and they ought to endure it with patience

Jeremiah 5:25 NASB95

²⁵ ‘Your iniquities have turned these away,

And your sins have withheld good from you.

Daniel 9:8 NASB95

⁸ “Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

- On the other hand “But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God”
- It always pleases God to see His children faithfully accept and deal with any adversity

1 Peter 3:14 NASB95

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

1 Peter 4:14 NASB95

¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

CONCLUSION

- What about you?
- What is your behavior like in the workplace?
- Are you submissive?
- Do you endure when you are treated unjustly?
- Or do you rebel?
- Remember how we respond will promote or undermine the Gospel
- We will see how Jesus responded in these similar situations next time
- But for now, I need to ask, “Do you know Him?”
- “Have you committed your life to Jesus?”
- I would like to share more with you after the service if you would like to know more
- But let me suffice it to say before we close, “If you haven’t committed your life to Him, you have no hope of heaven but only a sure promise that hell awaits you!”
- Turn to Jesus now and embrace Him as the only way to heaven
- Turn from your sin and confess Him as Lord
- Let’s pray

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