

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Christian Submission to the Masters

1 Peter 2:18-20

Part One

This country was founded on the belief that every individual had the right for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This belief has formed the foundation of a great nation.

Do people in fact have rights? Are we entitled to enjoy or experience certain things? The only rights that we or anyone else would have are only those rights that the Lord Himself has granted us.

And it does appear that the Lord has extended to mankind certain rights. This is apparent, by virtue of the fact that he has commanded that people be treated in certain ways. We have a right not to be murdered, we have a right not to be beaten, we have the right not to be deprived of our property or to be defrauded, we have the right to be spoken to in a civil and respectful manner and so on and so on. It would therefore appear that the Lord has in fact granted us certain rights.

If mankind has a problem it is not with accepting the fact that we may have God given rights. The problem with mankind is how they respond when they feel that their rights whether rightfully or wrongfully have been violated.

The world emphasizes the importance of fighting for our rights. The world emphasizes the importance of sticking up for our rights. The world emphasizes the importance defending our rights. As a result of this mentality we are continually being bombarded by women's rights, children's rights, homosexual rights, ethnic rights, student rights, criminal rights, homeless rights, unemployed rights, etc, etc, etc.

The underlying mentality is, "No one is going to take advantage of me! If you don't give me what I have a right to I will not tolerate it. I will fight back. If necessary I will harass you. I will protest against you. I will undermine you by whatever means are at my disposal including jeopardizing your ability to succeed at whatever you have purposed to do."

Is this the attitude that we are to nurture in our lives as the followers of Christ? Of course not! This is especially true when it involves our relationship with various human institutions and those who are placed in authority over us. Hopefully you remember **1 Pet. 2:13** which says "**submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution.**" There is no hint of any kind of concern for rights. When we are placed under an authority in our society our concern is not with our rights but our righteousness.

Peter then goes on to apply this exhortation regarding submission to our relationship with governmental leaders in **VV. 13-17**. And now he will apply the same principle to the master/slave relationship in **VV. 18-20**.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The master/slave relationship was not a relationship established by the Lord. It is purely the outworking of the thinking of man. But it is clear that the Lord very much wants us to honor these man made institutions and the authorities that man has set over us and respect them. This obviously is true even of the human institution of slavery.

Let us turn in our Bibles to 1 Peter 2:18-20 **“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 man 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.”** Clearly in this passage there is not the slightest hint that these slaves were to “fight for their rights.” Or “stick up for their rights.” Or “to defend their rights.” On the contrary these servants were being exhorted to **“patiently endure.”**

Peter is not stressing the rights of the slave, but rather his Christian responsibility. Slaves should not make their Christian liberty an excuse for evil doing and resisting their masters was evil. Not respecting the authority over them even in the master/slave relationship was not right.

Even though this passage is addressed very specifically to slaves the truths contained in this passage has a great deal to say to us. In order for these truths to come alive for us we need to understand the basic elements contained in this passage. **WHAT ARE THOSE BASIC ELEMENTS?**

MANDATE

“Servants, be submissive to your masters.” The word for “servants” is the word “OIKETAI.” This is not the usual word translated “slaves” or “servants.” It occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only three times (Luke 16:13; Acts 10:7; Rom. 14:4). These particular slaves were house slaves. And would be more exposed to suffering from the vices and bad temper of their masters, than those in the field.

The institution of slavery was a deeply rooted part of the economy and social structure of the ancient Near East and of the Greco-Roman world. In Rome and the large cities of the empire, more than half of the total population in the New Testament times were slaves. Conditions and treatment of slaves naturally varied greatly, but their lot in life was a lowly one and often very difficult. This group of people were of all people the most easily taken advantage of. And house slaves, which Peter was specifically addressing here, were the group most taken advantage of.

These household slaves who were in such a vulnerable position were being commanded by Peter to be submissive to their masters. It is interesting to note that the word translated “masters” is the Greek word “DESPOITAIS.” From which we get the English word “despot.” The master, the DESPOITAIS, was the one who exercised absolute ownership and unlimited control over the things and persons in his household.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

These slaves had the right to be treated as a person. They had been created in image of God. This right was granted to them by their creator. But rather than being treated as a person they were considered to be property. They had no legal recourse in the courts and could not even contract a legal marriage. They were totally at the mercy of their owners.

These Christian slaves who had been created in the image of God and who had become joint heirs with Christ, and who had been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus are being commanded to be submissive.

Today we do not have slaves. But though the master slave relationship has passed away through time let me ask you a question. What human institution has replaced it? The answer is very clearly is the employer/employee relationship.

When we agree to the terms offered by an employer and become his or her employee we in effect become his or her slave. They have bought eight , ten, or twelve hours of our lives for however many days we have agreed to receive their money. And they become the authority over our lives. And we just as much as the slave in Peter’s time are being called by the Lord to be submissive to them.

If your boss tells you doing the time period that he has hired you to go and take a nap then what should you do? If your boss tells you to take a long lunch break then what are you to do? If he tells us to go and get him a cup of coffee what are you to do? If he tells you to get a report done at a certain time and have it done in a certain way what are you to do?..... Submit!! If you don’t like it you can what?

1) Talk to them respectfully

2) You can quit!

If you are ever tempted to feel sorry for yourself remember these Christian slaves that Peter is addressing. These slaves were obligated before the Lord and in the eyes of man to serve their masters 24 hours a day all year round. There was no looking forward to 3:30 or 4:00 or 5:00 to go home and to be free from their obligation. They had no weekends to look forward to. And if they were abused they had no legal recourse in the courts. They were slaves seven days a week every day until they were able to acquire their freedom.

RESPECT

Their submission was to be done with “**with all respect.**” Or more literally “**with all fear.**” And I believe that this “**respect**” or “**fear**” was not toward their masters but rather toward God. There are a number of reasons for this but let me suffice it to say that this is the most natural reading in light of **V. 17.**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

If there is any doubt about the fact that our submission is rendered out of respect or fear of God consider the following verses.

Eph. 6:5-7 “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; (6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; (7) With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

Again we see the same truth stated clearly in **Col. 3:22 “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.”**

The slave masters to be viewed as the Lord Himself! Employers are to be viewed by us as if they were the Lord Himself!!! This eliminates for us that possibility of protesting or striking. The reason is simple we could not do either of these in respect to our service to the Lord.

Valley Bible Church is my employer. You are my employer. I need to be submissive to you and seek to serve you as I would submit and seek to serve the Lord. If you are employed at NASA, GTE, Edison, the City of Lancaster or the State of California you are to seek to be submissive to them and to serve them as you would the Lord. BUT HOW FAR DOES THIS MANDATE EXTEND?

EXTENT

“... Not only to the good and reasonable, but also to those who are unreasonable.” The mandate to submit ourselves to our master with all respect extends not only to the good but also to the unreasonable. The word translated “unreasonable” (SKOLIOIS) literally means “crooked or perverse.”

It was comparatively easy to submit to masters who were good and gentle in character and action. It is quite another to be able to submit to those masters who are unreasonable. Who deviated from what was right or just, being cruel and unfair in their reactions.

We are to serve masters, we are to serve our employers, as we would serve Christ whether they are good or unreasonable. This has far reaching implications for the way we approach our work.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

CONCLUSION

We will be talking about some of those things next week. But as a preview let me ask you question. In light of all that I have shared with you this morning what would you think my position would be in respect to the baseball strike?

If you said that I do not believe that Christian ball players should be participating in this organized work stoppage you would be exactly right. We will be talking more about this next week.