

Submission in the Workplace, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:19–23

Code: 60-27

INTRODUCTION

A. Spiritual Warfare

God's Word reveals that the world is a battleground. It is the arena of a spiritual war.

1. Genesis 3:15--The Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." That specifies the conflict between Satan and Christ, the seed of the woman.
2. Daniel 10:12-13--An angel said, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia." God's angels were battling Satan's demons.
3. Ephesians 6:12--"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." We too as God's servants are in conflict with Satan's forces.
4. John 8:44--Christ said to the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father." Christ made a clear distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil. There is inevitable conflict between the two.
5. John 15:18-19--Christ said to His disciples, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." The world hates both Christ and His followers.
6. John 16:2-3--Because of the world's hatred, Christ warned that unbelievers "will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me." In the name of religion the ungodly will persecute God's true children. Because Satan hates God and believers, he attempts to discredit and destroy the church's testimony. One of his favorite tactics is to parade the scandals of professing believers before the lost. That's because what we do sends a clearer message than what we say. Therefore it's vital that we have godly behavior and shine as lights "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. 2:15).

B. Godly Behavior

The book of 1 Peter calls the believer to godly behavior.

1. 1 Peter 1:6-7--"You have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Trials purge away sin and purify us.
2. 1 Peter 1:14--"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior."
3. 1 Peter 2:1-2, 9--"Putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.... You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that

you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are to hunger for God's Word so we can grow spiritually.

4. 1 Peter 2:12--"Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation." Godly living attracts the lost to Christ and leads them to salvation.

5. 1 Peter 2:15--"Such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." Godly behavior silences the believer's critics and brings them to salvation.

6. 1 Peter 3:1-2--"Wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." The believing wife is to win her unbelieving husband to Christ by respecting him and living a pure life.

7. 1 Peter 3:13-16--"Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 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, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame." By living a godly life the believer will shame those who falsely accuse him.

8. 1 Peter 4:2--We're "to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." Our behavior is to be in line with God's will.

9. 1 Peter 4:12-16--"Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God." Our suffering should be for godly living, not wrongdoing.

10. 1 Peter 5:8-10--"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." Whatever our circumstances, we are to be true to Christ.

The book of 1 Peter also says that godly behavior includes a submissive attitude in the workplace.

REVIEW

I. THE MANDATE FOR SUBMISSION (v. 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."

It's not wrong for you as an employee to seek change through the proper channels, but it is wrong to disrespect your employer. Ephesians 6:5-8 describes the servant as showing the right behavior by obeying his master, the right attitude by fearing God, the right commitment by being conscientious in his work, and the right intensity by being diligent. If you work like that, your workplace will be a mission field for evangelizing the lost and building up believers. So don't be angry or discontent, but be faithful and obedient.

II. THE MOTIVE FOR SUBMISSION (vv. 19-21a)

LESSON

A. God's Presence (v. 19)

"This finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."

"This finds favor" can be translated "this is a grace." It refers to what is intrinsically attractive or pleasing to God. When a servant patiently endured harsh treatment to honor God's name, God was pleased. In our day God is pleased when we don't retaliate against an unjust supervisor or employer. Our "conscience toward God" refers to our general awareness of God's presence, and is therefore an incentive for godly conduct. The Greek term translated "bears up" (hupopher[ma]o) means "to endure"; "sorrows" (lup[ma]e) refers to physical or mental pain. We are to maintain a good testimony before the lost by enduring mistreatment, confident that God sovereignly controls every situation. In Peter's day mistreated slaves could not relocate to another workplace since their masters owned them. They weren't able to join a labor union, consult a vocational counselor, or file a civil suit like many do in today's society. Their patient endurance was not only a testimony to the power of salvation, but also an opportunity to exercise great faith. When the lost see the believer's tranquility in the midst of a great trial, it will attract them to Christ.

B. God's Pleasure (v. 20)

"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."

This expands what verse 19 just said. "Harshly treated" (Gk., kolaphiz[ma]o) means "to strike with the fist," like our Lord was treated before His crucifixion (Mark 14:65). God is pleased not when we strike back in vengeance, but when we patiently endure mistreatment for doing right. That is a recurring theme in Scripture.

1. 1 Peter 3:14--"If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled." God blesses believers who suffer unjustly.

2. 1 Peter 4:14-16--"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God."

3. Matthew 5:11-12--Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great."

4. 1 Corinthians 4:11-13--Paul and his associates left us this example: "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate."

C. God's Purpose (v. 21a)

"You have been called for this purpose."

"Called" refers to the call of salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; 5:10). Part of that call involves patiently enduring undeserved punishment. As 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Although being a friend of God makes you an enemy in the world's sight (John 15:18-20), unfair treatment in the workplace should not keep you from being a model employee. If your behavior is not Christlike in the workplace, it sends a message to the lost that your heart is set on earthly things, not on heavenly priorities. As a believer, your behavior should reflect your settled conviction that God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19).

III. THE MODEL OF SUBMISSION (vv. 21b-23)

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." Although Christ suffered verbal and physical persecution from His enemies, He did not retaliate. In

meekness and humility He committed Himself to God. His response toward mistreatment is our "example." The Greek term refers to a writing or drawing that's placed under a sheet and traced. We're to pattern our lives after Christ. That we're to follow in His steps means He has left a line of footprints or tracks for us to walk in. As One who patiently endured mistreatment, Christ is the perfect example for us to follow.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What conflict does Genesis 3:15 specify?
2. What clear distinction did Christ make in John 8:44?
3. According to John 15:18-19 whom does the world hate?
4. What in particular does Satan attempt to discredit and destroy? How and why does he attempt to do that?
5. What is more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:6-7)?
6. According to 1 Peter 2:9 why did God choose us to be His people?
7. What brings shame to those who slander the believer (1 Pet. 3:16)?
8. What is our behavior to be in line with (1 Pet. 4:2)?
9. According to Ephesians 6:5-8 how is the servant to work?
10. What does "conscience toward God" refer to in 1 Peter 2:19?
11. In what particular way are we to maintain a good testimony before the lost?
12. "If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are " (1 Pet. 3:14).
13. According to Matthew 5:11-12 what is cause for rejoicing?
14. What is part of our call to salvation (1 Pet. 2:21)?
15. What should our behavior reflect in the workplace (Phil. 4:19)?
16. In what particular way is Christ our perfect example to follow (1 Pet. 2:21-23)?

Pondering the Principles

1. In God's calling us to salvation, we have the privilege of suffering for His name (1 Pet. 2:21). The English minister Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "We are like the school boy who would like to evade certain things, and run away from problems and tests. But we thank God that because he has a larger interest in us and knows what is for our good, he puts us through the disciplines of life-he makes us learn the multiplication table; we are made to struggle with the elements of grammar. Many things that are trials to us are essential that one day we may be found without spot or wrinkle" (The Miracle of Grace [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986], p. 39). When you encounter trials in the workplace, view them as opportunities for spiritual growth and for others to see Christ in you.
2. As believers we are to work with an awareness of God's presence. That's an incentive not only for godly behavior, but also for trusting in His sovereign control of every situation. Theologian A.W. Pink wrote, "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 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1930], p. 225). Express your thankfulness to God for sovereignly controlling every situation in your workplace.

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