

Submission to Masters in the Workplace

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[0 : 00] Well, we've been going through various aspects of Godly submission.

And we're going to continue to examine submission, but instead of government, we're going to look at kind of a unique part of this, is submission in the workplace.

And here's the passage we're going to examine, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 18 to 21a, the first part of 21, servants be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if, when you do good and suffer for it, you endure?

[1 : 38] This is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For this you have been called. It seemed to me that we live in a day that everybody is concerned about their rights.

Some of those are even made up. It's true of our country, basically true almost globally. Dr. MacArthur points out in his commentary, no one any longer speaks of sacrifice or privilege. People prefer to speak about rights. And today in America we hear about ethnic rights and reproductive rights and immigration rights and homosexual rights and workplace rights. People believe that personal freedom guarantees them a job. Nothing in the Constitution about that. If they do not get what they want, there's an increase in work slowdowns, walkouts, strikes, boycotts and such. And sometimes management will respond by locking out employees or terminating those responsible for the work stoppage.

[3 : 04] I remember a few years ago I hired a police officer. He had great promise. I swore him in on a Sunday morning at Wesleyan Church in the sanctuary from the pulpit.

And he had great promise. But one day he had a meeting with a bunch of the officers. And a couple of them came running to me.

I didn't, I let it run its course. But he said, let's do a work slowdown. Let's call in all, let's call in sick. Well, when you're a police officer or fireman, that's illegal.

That's a crime. And I eventually went to him and told him, that's a crime. So you might want to consider when you're saying that.

Because if people need a police officer or fireman, they've got to be available. They've got to be on duty. As Christians, when we speak of rights as it pertains to employment, we are to examine not what the president of the company has to say and not what the union has to say.

[4 : 23] We in here have a different master. We're to examine what God has to say about this subject.

And our focus as believers should be on obedience and submission to the express will of God. What does God have to say about it? I remember when the air traffic controllers were led by their union leadership to go on strike.

Probably the only person there, or maybe Paul too, or Stan, but Mike, we had a fellow that grew up in our church. He was grown by then, married and family.

And he was serving as an air traffic controller in Lubbock, Texas. And he was required to be a member of the union, which he understood that, and he joined.

[5 : 29] Well, they met and informed the members that the national leaders of the union announced that they're all going to go on strike next week. And when he announced that, there was an outburst of applause and cheering in the meeting.

And one of them said, we're going to bring, and it was Ronald Reagan, we're going to bring President Reagan to his knees. When things had quieted down and the local union leaders went around the room and said, is everybody good with this?

Our friend from church stood up and asked to speak. He said when he became an air traffic controller, he signed an agreement that as a federal employee, he understood he was prohibited from striking.

And everybody in that union had to sign that. And they couldn't strike. They're federal employees. So the strike was not only illegal, but it was prohibited by the contract or the terms of his employment. And he told the group, he says, I'm not going to strike.

[6 : 56] I'm going to go to work. He said, as a Christian, I'm not permitted to break the laws unless those laws conflict with a clear command of God in the Bible.

Well, people began to boo and to yell. They threw paper wads at Jim. And over the next 48 hours, many of his windows of his house were broken, including plate glass windows.

His car was vandalized. But Jim went to work. He didn't cave in. What Jim did was made him a standout.

He was concerned with what do the scriptures say. I signed this document. Basically, my signature was a promise that I was going to abide by the laws and the rules.

I wasn't going to violate them. I've given my word. And every true believer, if caught in similar circumstances, should reflect on what the will of God is in those circumstances.

[8 : 17] The Apostle Paul is always a good resource when we have questions on God, on government, or in the workplace. These are his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

Romans 12, verses 17 to 19. Paul and Peter, and for that matter, none of the writers of Scripture wrote anything that advocated that subordinates should rise up against their superiors.

And we saw in the last few weeks how we were to submit to government in our study, and now we're going to look at submitting to those in the workplace.

[9 : 41] First, we're going to look at the mandate for submission. This is in 1 Peter 2, verse 18.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

Unreasonable. And I looked it up, that's the same word for unreasonable. People that are behaving unreasonably. Much of the workforce in the Roman Empire, when Peter wrote these words, was made up of slaves.

And their treatment varied greatly. It was, for the most part, left up to those who owned them how they were going to be treated.

And there are some examples in history of some very good treatment and some very poor treatment. Some might have been treated no differently than a family member.

[10 : 54] But many did not experience that type of treatment. One report in history indicated that a wealthy woman had her slave clean her favorite teacups and one of them was accidentally broken.

This was in Gibbon's Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. And it was broken. And she had every slave in her household killed and bought new ones.

Now that's an extreme example. But Rome, early on, didn't pass any laws protecting slaves. It was up to the slave owner. However, because of things like that, they enacted laws.

Even the Caesar signed off on it. Here's the problem in Rome. Slaves were considered property and not persons.

We had something very similar in the Civil War in the United States in some places. The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote this, A slave is a living tool and a tool is an inanimate slave.

[12 : 27] That's how he believed. There was a Roman author, Marcus Tarentus Varro. He was called a Roman polymath.

I had to look that word up. Anybody ever heard that word? It means he knows, he's got encyclopedic knowledge. And I'd never heard that word before.

I looked it up. He was a prolific author. He is regarded as ancient Rome's greatest scholar and was described as the third great light of Rome after Virgil and Cicero.

And he had this encyclopedic knowledge. Varro, in spite of his vast knowledge, said this, the only thing distinguishing a slave from a beast or a cart was that the slave could talk.

That's the only difference they saw. But the fact is that when Christianity began to spread through the Roman Empire and the Roman world, many of the converts to Christ were slaves.

[13:48] Listen to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 26 and following. For consider your calling, brothers, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards.

Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is the foolish things in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. That's where our boasting should come from. We're to boast in the Lord. God the New Testament was when you look at the authors was actually written originally to slaves and other members of the lower classes.

[15:27] Slaves made up the majority portion of the Roman workforce. Many slaves couldn't read and they needed help in understanding what had been written down.

And they made up a large part maybe even I would say a majority part of the Gentile church in the first century.

Well this raised some really interesting issues for that day. Many slaves believed that as a new convert to the Lord and now members of his church they were no longer subject to remaining as slaves.

Since they're now free in Christ they believed that means we're free in society. We can act any way we want to act. And then they extrapolated that outwards and that must mean that we're free from our masters.

We've been freed. Well it didn't work that way. And the Lord Jesus sometimes is criticized particularly in our day with the woke people and I wish they'd go back to sleep they woke up and they said he never once condemned slavery.

[17:00] You know what would have happened if Jesus condemned slavery? There would have been a slave uprising. You know how many millions of slaves would have been murdered?

We can't count that high. Millions. What Jesus taught was be obedient to your master?

Since they are now free in Christ they thought well I'm free in society and slaves made up this significant portion of the Gentile church but that meant there were issues that had to be addressed and there were issues that had to be solved.

here's one of the problems you could have a slave that was a respected member of the local church because of his service to the Lord that slave might one day be elevated to the position of elder in the church his master might be a member of his flock you see the rub there but all people wanted to avoid was a slave rebellion no one wanted that if one occurred thousands could die one of the great inspired resources for the relationship of slave and master was the brief one chapter book of philemon i love philemon i read that a lot if a master was a true believer after reading philemon probably a hundred times he came to realize something a christian can't own another christian well that created a problem because a lot of christians owned other christians in the roman empire and it would take centuries or even millennia but eventually slavery largely disappeared from the landscape we had something similar to that in slavery in the united states and it took john brown said it'll take the shedding of blood to cleanse this land of slavery and it did and 600,000 americans died of both sides

Peter and Paul both preached a message to slaves and masters that revolutionized their relationship this is Paul's words in the book of Ephesians slaves obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart as you would Christ not by the way of high service as people pleasers but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the heart rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man knowing that whatever good anyone does this he will receive back from the Lord whether he is a slave or free man masters do the same to them stop your threatening knowing that he who is both their master and yours in heaven and that is there's no partiality with him the master and the slave both had a master in heaven as followers of

[21:32] Christ and there's no partiality with God in the workplace Christian employees are to submit to their employers and these are the words of John MacArthur as if their boss was the Lord Jesus Christ himself that pretty well eliminates us from participating in strikes blocking entrances to

a workplace protests that disrupt the work day what if the employer of the company is unreasonable there's a lot of them what if they're unreasonable for the Christian employee his marching orders don't change in the workplace you're representing Christ Jesus that doesn't change I bet

Mike never struck against the plumbing company since you were the part owner this brings us to a final point tonight and that's the motive for submission consider these words 1st Peter chapter 2 verses 19 to first part of 21 for this is a gracious thing when mindful of God one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly what credit is it when you sin and are beaten for it it's when you do good and suffer that's a gracious thing in the sight of God and that's what you've been called for that's exactly what happened to

Jesus that's exactly what happened to the Lord he didn't do anything wrong your position in the workforce and the circumstances you find yourself in are not the concern you might be the president of the company or maybe you're the newest hired janitor!

you might be making millions of dollars in salary and stock options or you may be working at the lowest wage as a believer you are constantly give a testimony that you belong to God through Jesus Christ remember you are trying to maintain your testimony before a watching world and you could bet they're watching consider this passage in Philippians chapter 2 do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world and holding fast to the word of life so that in the day of

Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain our motivation should always be in is what I'm doing bringing glory to the Lord and I would say if it's not don't do it one of the greatest quotes concerning this study was made in a book written by A.W.

[25 : 55] Pink he's an interesting guy he's got all kinds of books on the market nowadays he died early early early 50s and thought he was a complete failure he'd written all these books and no one was interested in them and now people can't get enough of him but he wrote a book many years ago called The Sovereignty of God and I read it again Reverend Pink said this as one sees the apparent defeat of the right 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 is our confidence he's going to reveal to you what your confidence should be in

God is on the throne it all begins right there and ends right there the Lord's on the throne what should be our motivation to be submissive in the workplace because by such we experience a gracious thing God is pleased when we bear up under sorrows when suffering unjustly Peter points out that when we sin we receive no credit in fact the opposite is true we receive a form of punishment that we deserve but when we do good and suffer we find favor with God and then Peter closes out this portion of scripture with these inspired words for to this you have been called to that lifestyle that's your calling when you are called out of darkness into the light of

Christ and are saved mark it down brothers you become an enemy of the world they don't like you you have a target on your back but there's a great verse that we use often at Voice of the Martyrs all that's a lot isn't it all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted now like a lot of people myself included you may be thinking well I really haven't suffered not persecution there's a trick to that be more godly and persecution will come it'll come eventually when we experience trials we should view them in the light of opportunity it's an opportunity one personal opportunity for spiritual growth there are also opportunities of winning a lost person through evangelism why doesn't god take us home when we get saved well we're here to witness about christ to share the good news we still remain in this world as a witness to win the loss and by doing so we bring honor to the name of the lord if you suffer for christ in this life you will be blessed blessing may not come until the next life you know that's up to god but that blessing will be forever i'm always impressed with richard warmbrand founder of vom whom i knew personally suffered greatly suffered greatly couldn't even couldn't even walk straight line they beat him on the soles of his feet he couldn't wear shoes he had to wear house shoes socks or go barefoot great man of god well next time we're going to have a real interesting topic because we're going to talk about how christ suffered we're going to talk about our suffering savior when you think you have it bad just remember he was god in human flesh and i think i'm like a lot of people i may not have truly appreciated at any great depth his suffering until i saw the passion of christ wow i still remember that that was impressive that was impressive