

Studies in 1 Peter-09 1 Peter 2:18-25

by Dwight Pentecost

As Christians in the business world, we must recognize the authority of our employers and submit to them with all fear, not just because of their actions, but because of their position, and pleasing Christ should be our highest goal.

Duration: 34:25

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:18

Topics: "Submission To Authority", "Living For God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of submission to authority, specifically in the context of the business world. The speaker emphasizes that believers who work in the business world are living in a hostile environment that is often opposed to the values and goals of Jesus Christ. The speaker highlights the need for believers to be subject to their employers and to live with a clear conscience before God. The sermon also emphasizes that such submission is pleasing to God and will result in rewards from Him.

Transcript

Second chapter, verses 18 through 25. 1 Peter, chapter 2, 18 through 25. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse.

For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endureth grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leading us an example that ye should follow his steps.

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were a sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherds and bishops of your souls." Our Lord, before thrusting the disciples out into the world to which they would minister, warned them of the reception which they would receive. In the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel, in verse 18 and following, our Lord spoke of the world's hatred of those who know the Lord Jesus Christ.

May I read these verses with a slight paraphrase to prepare us for what Peter has to say about a Christian in the business world. If the business world hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the business world, the business world would love his own.

But because you are not of the business world, but I have chosen you out of the business world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember these words that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If businessmen have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. The business world is no friend to Christ, because all the goals that the business world set before itself go counter to the goals that Jesus Christ set before his children.

Christ said, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. The business executive says, Seek ye first the business world and its life, and things shall be added unto you. God demands implicit obedience to his words.

The business world sets up its own goals, its own ethics, its own plan, its own methods, demands conformity to those whether they conform to the truth of the word of God or not. Jesus Christ said through the Apostle Paul, Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think, and the business world says promote yourself. Jesus Christ sets no store by material things, and reveals the inadequacy of material things to satisfy a man who by nature is a spiritual being.

The word of God sets material remuneration as the ultimate goal in life. Jesus Christ judges a man by what he is, and the business world judges a man by what he accomplishes in the things. And when a believer lives in the business world, he is living in a hostile environment.

Hostile to Jesus Christ, hostile to all the goals that Jesus Christ puts before a man, hostile to all the tests by which Jesus Christ evaluates a man, and the world therefore must hate the believer. You who have to live day by day in the business world little realize how much you're on your pastor's heart. I count myself highly privileged of God to spend so much of my life in an entirely different atmosphere, and an entirely different sphere.

Yet from the little bit that I have observed, and that which I've gained from talking to businessmen whose desire it is to live for Jesus Christ, I can understand some of the battles that you face, and the problems that are yours day after day. God has laid you on my heart. You're on the Apostle Peter's heart, and the Apostle Paul's heart too, for these men of God who wrote to men who find themselves in that situation had a word for them.

In that portion of Peter's epistle to which we come this morning, Peter speaks to you who are engaged in the business world. He says in 1 Peter 2.18, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, to the good and gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endured grief, suffering wrongfully.

For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." I imagine that you ladies who don't work for a living, who just stay at home, will settle back this morning, take your ease, and see what we have to say to your husbands. The word that the Apostle used in introducing this teaching is an interesting word.

He did not use the word translated servant here that occurs so frequently, the word for a bond slave, a purchased possession.

He used the word for one who hires himself out to do the works of the house. These were employees, if you please, employees of any category or kind. Therefore, what he has to say to these hired servants, as opposed to the bond slave, the purchased possession of the master, really applies to all of us.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear. Peter, in this portion of his epistle, has been emphasizing the necessity of submission, the submission to constituted authority. He has pointed out in verse 13 that we are to be in submission to government because government was ordained by God to be God's agency to maintain law and order, to punish lawless and riotous men, and provide the atmosphere in which righteousness can grow and flourish.

And every child of God is required by the word of God to be in submission to the government, in so far and in as much as it performs that primary function of government maintaining law and order. Peter will go on to speak of submission in the home, and we will come in due time to Peter's instruction concerning submission in the area of the home in chapter 3. As important as the home is in Peter's thinking, it seems as though submission in the business world took precedence over his instruction concerning submission in the home. For as soon as he has completed his word concerning submission in the political sphere, or submission to government, he moves on concerning the command concerning submission in the business world.

He recognizes here authority exists in an employer, and therefore the employee has certain responsibilities to the employer, and the employer is to be in subjection to his master with all fear. The master here is the word despot, one who has absolute rights and absolute authority over the employer. The apostle did not argue that the employer had these rights, he assumes it.

It is one of those things that the apostle feels goes without saying, and so he commands the employee or the servant to be in subjection to your master. The first principle we observe in this phrase is that the Christian man in business, or the Christian woman in business, must recognize the authority of the employer. This is brought out to us in the phrase, with all fear.

Fear does not mean dread or trepidation in our normal sense of the word. It has to do with respect for one's position, or respect for authority. This does not have to do with the person of the employer, for he may be a despicable rat, and you may agree with that conclusion readily, but you still have a responsibility because of his position, and rebellion against the authority of the position of the employer is no more right for the child of God than disrespect for the authority of the king or the governor in the political realm.

This right to submission is inherent in his position because of his authority, and the Christian in business must begin by recognizing not the rights of the employee, but first of all the rights of the employer. The second thing we notice in verse 18 is that this subjection is enjoined upon the believer because of the authority of the employer, not because of the actions of the employer. Peter says, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward, or the ornery, or the hard to get along with.

Now, it is not difficult to submit to an employer when the employer is kind and considerate, hands out frequent bonuses, lets you off an hour early on Friday afternoons, provides tickets for the football games for your relaxation, etc., etc. No, the apostle did not say, you submit as a believer to the good and gentle, but he said not only to those, but also to those who are hard to get along with. Once again, you will notice

the apostle is emphasizing that subjection is because of position, not because of the actions of the employer.

The next thing we notice in verse 19 is that this subjection is placed upon a child of God because of conscience sake. This is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endured grief, suffering wrongfully, and I believe the key to Peter's thought here is in the phrase for conscience sake. Now, a child of God does have a conscience.

The conscience in an individual is the voice of God, the voice of the Holy Spirit that convicts him of what is wrong and approves that which is right. It condemns unholiness and commends holiness. The child of God was condemned by a conscience before he came to know Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior.

When he trusted Christ for salvation, that guilty conscience was quieted because the sin question had been settled. If the child of God involves himself in some sin, the Spirit of God works through conscience to convict him, to bring him to confession, 1 John 1.9, that we might receive the forgiveness of that sin. The child of God, then, still has it as a goal to live with a conscience that is not grief, to live with a Spirit of God that is not grief.

Now, Peter says, if God places us in a relationship in the business world where we have a responsibility to be in subjection to the authority of an employer, and we step outside of the bounds of subjection to that authority, we will suffer from a grief conscience, and the Spirit of God will be grieved by our rebellion against that constituted authority. And sin, to violate the principle of subordination to any constituted authority, will bring grief to the conscience of the child of God. Peter says we must be in subjection for conscience toward God, for the sake of a clear conscience before God.

The next thing Peter points out in verse 20, in the fourth principle that we notice here that Peter puts before these believers, is that such subjection is pleasing to God. What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. I'm underlining that last phrase in verse 20, this is acceptable with God.

Now, I believe that the this includes within it any conduct of the believer because he is in subjection to the authority of God. It would include subjection to the ornery employer in spite of his orneriness, because God told him to be in subjection. And when an employer begins to make life difficult for the Christian employee, for the Christian employee accepts it as part of his suffering for Christ's sake, and retains it as an evidence of his testimony for Christ, when he accepts that treatment with joy, with a smile, then God is pleased.

Now, there will be times when a Christian employer cannot be in subjection to his employee. A man came to me not too long ago. He was faced with a problem in his office.

He knew the answer, but he simply wanted to share with me the problem he had run up against and get confirmation that that was a course of action that he should take, regardless of the consequences. The boss had the very happy experience of having made more money than he had anticipated on making, and rebelled at the thought of turning over a luscious slice of his profits to the government. He had found a way to maintain a separate set of books that would be available for the income tax people to examine, and another set that were kept in the bottom drawer.

The man was asked to put this plan into operation. The course was obvious that the believer could not be involved in such a scheme as that. He had to deny his employer that which the employer had ordered him to do.

The employer said he'd take full responsibility and involve the individual, but that didn't change the circumstances at all. There may be time when we say when the employee will have to deny the authority of the employer, and if he denies the employer his rights, he must be prepared to suffer for it. Now, in this case, the suffering might be dismissal, but he is prepared to accept that because he has a conscience toward God, and this submission to conscience that is the voice of God will take precedence over the authority of the employer when the conscience directs a course of action contrary to that of the employer.

This submission to suffering to maintain a good conscience, Peter says, is acceptable with God. Now, the Apostle Paul speaks in a similar vein to servants in Ephesians, chapter 6, and verses 5 to 8, and he adds several things there that I would like to call your attention as we think of this important subject. He says in verse 5, "'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.' Now, Paul is speaking to those who had become the purchased possession of a master.

He uses a different word for servants here, but the principles laid down would apply to either one, and are pertinent to us today. Now, will you recognize that Paul distinguishes between your master according to the flesh and Jesus Christ as a master? There is one area in which the employer has rights over the employees, one area alone. That is not authority over every area of the man's life.

There are areas that Jesus Christ is sovereign in, and he reserves to himself those rights and those authorities. There are those who are masters according to the flesh, but those masters are opposed to the authority of the Lord. Those masters receive their authority from the Lord, and are therefore subservient to him.

Now, these servants are commanded to obey their masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling. That is respect for their rightful authority, and when they give obedience to their masters, they give it as unto Christ. That phrase, as unto Christ, recognizes that the right of the employer is a right because of his position.

He is in that position by the appointment of Jesus Christ, and therefore when the employee submits there is authority which comes from Christ, he is submitting to Jesus Christ. I believe this puts a different complexion upon this matter of submission, that God has made your employer his representative in the administration of affairs in the business world, and you are required by Christ to submit to his authority, and submission to his authority is submission to Jesus Christ. And when you refuse rightful authority to your employer, then you are refusing Christ his right to rule in that area of your life.

That's what Paul is emphasizing. We are to be obedient to those who have authority in that sphere, the same as we would be obedient unto Christ. The next thing in verse 6 that Paul points out in verses 6 and 7, is that pleasing Christ is to be the goal of the businessman's life.

Pleasing Christ is to be the highest goal in the businessman's life, not professional advancement, not the position he can attain, not the material remuneration which may come to him because of his successes, but pleasing Christ is the goal of the businessman's life. For Paul writes in verse 6, not with eye service as men's leaders, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart with all good will, doing

service as to the Lord and not to man. Now, believe me, this principle can completely revolutionize the businessman's attitude toward his work.

I take it that you are in your place of business because you are convinced that that is the Lord's place for you. If you're not, get out of it. Don't wait until tomorrow morning.

Write your resignation this afternoon. You may have to wait until tomorrow morning to hand it in. But if you are not convinced that you are where you are in the business world because that is God's place and God's will for you, then you're out of the will of God.

Get out of it. Paul is writing to those whom he assumes are in the will of God. Since that is God's will for the individual, God requires faithfulness to his will in that sphere, just as he requires faithfulness to his will in any other sphere of Christian service.

We know that when God calls a man to be a pastor, God expects that man to be faithful to the pastor. When God calls a man to the mission field, we know that God expects that man to be faithful to the mission field. God calls an individual to teach a Sunday school class, we know that God expects that individual to be faithful to his Sunday school class.

Do you realize, Mr. Businessman, that God requires the same faithfulness of you to that manifestation of his will for you that he requires of me in my relationship to this pulpit? If I let the pulpit deteriorate to the place where we try to please men in the preaching of the gospel and teaching the word of God, we are faithless servants of Jesus Christ. And if you conduct your business solely to please men and receive the plaudits and promotions of men and the rewards and reunions from men, you are faithless to the will of God for you. God says, you serve in that business world not as men please, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart.

When an individual can get up on Monday morning and realize he has to go to the office again, the vision of that ornery boss looms before his eyes, before he's even had his cup of coffee, and he says, How can I go? And the Spirit of God brings to his mind the consciousness that that man is there by Christ's appointment, and he as Christ's servant is responsible to Christ in the business office today. What a different complexion to put on the whole thing. And the last thing that Paul points out in verse 8 of this fifth chapter of Ephesians is that Christ has his own reward for faithful service, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Now, notice the Apostle in verse 8 was not addressing a word to Bob Kilgore, who went to Guatemala to teach the nationals there that they might teach us. He's not saying, Bob, if you're faithful as a missionary of the cross of Christ, I'll have a reward for you. Will you notice this is a promise of reward to those who serve as God's men in business.

Whatsoever good thing any businessman doeth. Now, what good thing has he been talking about? Submitting to the authority of his employer, serving that employer faithfully as a servant of Jesus Christ, conducting himself in his business office so as to please Christ, not to please men, accepting that appointment in the business office as God's will for him, and doing it as unto the Lord with a whole heart and a pure heart. The Apostle Paul says, when God sees that faithfulness and that submission to authority that in the life of the businessman, that businessman shall receive a reward of the Lord.

And if you are in the business office in the will of God, God is not going to interrogate you at the judgment seat of Christ as to how many sermons you preach, or how many Bible classes you taught. He's going to interrogate you on what kind of an employee you were in that office. He's going to interrogate you on the aims and the goals that you had in the discharge of your stewardship in that office.

He's going to ask you, Mr. Businessman, when you saw the possibility of a promotion coming, did you hedge in your Christian testimony a little bit in order to ingratiate yourself to get that promotion? When you saw the prospect of greater financial remuneration, did you kind of quiet your testimony for Jesus Christ in that business office so as not to offend those who might make that raise possible? When God puts you there in that business office as his light to that office, did you trim the light a little bit so as to stay in good with the office force? Those are the kind of questions the Lord is going to ask the businessman. It may be that the only light of the gospel that your business associates will ever have is the light that you give to them, and God may have put you there as his witness. You mean to tell me that you can be rebellious and faithless as an employee, and then have a testimony to your employer? You think you can cheat your boss a little bit, and then have a testimony before the other members of the office force who know how you cheated? You're there not to advance yourself.

You're not there for promotion or reward. You're there to be a steward of Jesus Christ, a servant of Jesus Christ in that business world. The time is coming when Christ is not going to look at your bank account or your name on the door.

He's going to examine your faithfulness to him in a hostile business world. I, of course, need not remind you that one does not become a Christian by how he conducts himself in business. One becomes a Christian by personally receiving Jesus Christ as his or her own personal savior.

You do not become a Christian by working for it. You become a Christian by accepting the gift that God offers you. And I don't want you to confuse the issue this morning.

I want you to realize that you become a Christian by believing God when he offers salvation to anyone who will accept it. But I do want you to see that when you once become a Christian, you become a servant not of yourself, but not of men. You become a servant of Jesus Christ, and your goal is to please him.

May God make you that kind of a man in the business world, one who has a testimony for Christ before employer and employee, because you are subject to his offering, because you serve God with a good coming, because you accept that stewardship as God's will for you, and faithfully serve as a servant of Jesus Christ. We pray, our fathers, that the Spirit of God, who through the apostles have given us these instructions to guide in daily life, might bring home to our hearts this morning those truths that we need from these scriptures. May our lives be so conformed to Jesus Christ, and may our goal be to please him so that we do have a good witness and a good testimony before those with whom we live in the business world.

May the riches of thy grace and mercy and peace rest upon us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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