

*Eph 6:5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;*

*Eph 6:6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*

*Eph 6:7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,*

*Eph 6:8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*

*Eph 6:9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.*

A parallel passage can be found in 1 Peter chapter two:

*(1 Pet 2:18 NKJV) Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*

*(1 Pet 2:19 NKJV) For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

*(1 Pet 2:20 NKJV) For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*

*(1 Pet 2:21 NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

*(1 Pet 2:22 NKJV) "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";*

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*(1 Pet 2:24 NKJV) who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.*

*(1 Pet 2:25 NKJV) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

During this message we will be alternating between both of these passages of Scripture.

In Ephesians 5:21, Paul exhorts the church to be submissive to one another in the fear of Christ. The submissive spirit that God requires of His children is to be seen in several kinds of relationships.

- It is to be seen in how a wife relates to her husband. She is to submit to her husband by being respectful of him.
- It is to be seen in how a husband relates to his wife. He is to submit to his wife by loving her sacrificially.

Last time Pastor Ken taught us that the Christian's submissive spirit is to be seen in how children relate to their parents. Children are to submit to their parents by obeying them. Fathers are to submit to the Lord by not being overbearing in their discipline of their kids.

Today we are going to look at another aspect of biblical submission. The Bible teaches that the Christian ought to demonstrate a submissive spirit in the *workplace*.

*(1 Pet 2:18 NKJV) Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*

When Peter uses the word "servants" - *oiketes*, oy-ket'-ace, he is referring to a fellow resident, i.e. menial domestic, household servant.

In Ephesians 6:5, Paul uses the word, *doulos*, a bond-servant or a slave.

The word, "subject" in 1 Peter is *hupotasso*, to subordinate, to obey and to be under obedience.

The word "masters" is *despotes* which means "absolute ruler, Lord and master." It is used in the New Testament to refer to both God, the Lord of Creation and human rulers.

The word "fear" in Ephesians 6:5 is *phobos*, fob'-os. We get our English word "phobia" from it. In 1st Peter 2, verse 18 it means (to be put in fear); alarm or fright.

Both Peter and Paul are letting Christians who are subordinate to a *master*, that is, to someone who is in charge of them, to submit to them with all fear. We will talk more about the concept of fear used here but not until we've defined some more words.

In his letter, Peter writes, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the *good* and *gentle*, but also to the *harsh*."

The word, "good" speaks of an inner intrinsic goodness; it speaks of a master that might be considered, "good at heart." This surely included masters who knew the Lord but it also included pagan masters who had what a poet of that time calls, "*the milk of human kindness*."

"Gentle" in the Greek refers to "the disposition which is mild and yielding..." This is the person who is "not being unduly rigorous." In other words, he or she is "reasonable--not strict but considerate.

The last word we need to look at in verse 18 of Peter's epistle is the word, "harsh" or "froward (KJV)." I believe that Peter had in his mind the master who had his face dead set against his slaves just because they were Christians.

The reason a master would treat his Christian slave harsh because a Christian slave had a powerful testimony for the Gospel. They could say, "*I once was lost but now I found*." They could also testify that while they were in slavery, they were actually free in Christ.

During my preparation for this sermon I did some reading about slavery in the United States. I read about how historians were somewhat perplexed that the white slave master used Bible verses like the ones we are looking at to ensure the slave know his or her place. The master would quote to his slaves, "*Slaves be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ*."

Historians noted that while the Bible was used to keep the slave in bondage, the slave still embraced the Bible and worshiped the God of the Scriptures. The Bible was having the opposite effect on the slave—rather than enslaving them, it was liberating them!

Thus many of what were called, Negro Spirituals, were written as an expression of the slaves new found liberty in Christ:

*There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole.  
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.  
One of these mornings bright and fair, I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.  
Gonna kick my wings and cleave the air, I'm gonna lay down my heavy load.*

Here's another...

*Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus,  
Steal away, steal away home.  
I ain't got long to stay here.  
Oh freedom, oh freedom,  
Oh Freedom over me.  
And before I'll be a slave,  
I'll be buried in my grave,  
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

This kind of testimony in first century Rome brought slave masters under the conviction of sin. This sentiment among their slaves irritated them, and they treated their slaves harshly and oftentimes would punish without provocation.

But on the other hand, since the Christian slaves served their masters better, it was not good business sense to get rid of them and replace them with pagan slaves.

*Application:*

The *servant* in Peter and Paul's day would parallel the *employee* of our day. The *master* of that time is the employer or "boss" of our time. And just like in the first century slave-master relationship there will be friction between the employee and employer of our day.

On the mild side, there will be differences of opinion concerning pay, hours, job assignments and benefits. But then we've also seen or perhaps some of us have even experienced situations where there was blatant discrimination or abuse.

Peter writes, "*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh...*" Both Peter and Paul in Ephesians are writing to Christians who for the most part were experiencing some *mild* persecution.

However, the floodgates of intense persecution were soon to be unleashed when the Great Fire of Rome erupts on the night of 18 July to 19 July, AD 64 and the Emperor Nero casts the blame on Christians.

Though things would get uncomfortable for these Christian slaves, Peter didn't tell them to "run the first chance they got" like the slave Kunta-Kinte who kept trying to escape in the *Roots* saga and evidentially would have his toes cut off. They were encouraged to do just the opposite. He commanded them to "submit."

Peter let them know that while it was easy to submit to those who were "good and gentle" they were also to submit to those masters who were harsh.

Here we are being taught one of the most important lessons of the Christian life: *Christian character is grown and perfected through trials and tribulations.*

In the New Testament letter of James, we find the following words: "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:1-4 NKJV)*

There are many Christians who never "grow up" because every time they enter into a trial, they "Abandon ship!" God uses trials to take us to the "next level" of our Christian maturity and experience.

Whether it is leaving a job or a resigning from a church--when the pressure increases you will never become like Jesus Christ if you always "fly the coup."

James says in 1:4, "*let patience have her perfect work...*" He uses the word, *hupomone*, hoop-om-on-ay' which means, "cheerful and hopeful endurance." Patience means to "stay put under the pressure."

You may be working at a job where the pay is low, the hours are long and the benefits are short. You need to make up your mind whether this is something that *God* wants you to hold on to or to let loose.

Some of us are working jobs that are detrimental to marriage, family and ministry. The Bible teaches that marriage, family and ministry are important. If your job causes you to compromise your commitment to your spouse, your children and your church, you need to ask God for something else.

But if you are thinking about leaving just because you don't like your boss...if you are thinking about "taking that job and shoving it" because a coworker has rubbed you the wrong way or the work is too challenging, you need to pray for grace to endure.

*(1 Pet 2:18 NKJV) Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*

*(1 Pet 2:19 NKJV) For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*

Peter says in verse 19, "*For this is commendable...*"

When I first discovered the Greek word for commendable or thankworthy(KJV), I was astonished.

"Commendable" is the Greek word, *charis*, and means graciousness. *Charis* is that divine influence upon the heart that is reflected in the attitude of thanksgiving. It is our English word "grace."

Peter writes, "*For this is commendable...*" In this verse he is pinpointing *what is "grace."* Peter is letting us know that when "*servants submit to masters who are harsh---*THIS IS GRACE!"

The expected response to persecution would be rebellion and vindication.

The expected response to persecution would be defiance and revolution.

The expected response to when people mess with you and pick on you is to get even, but *grace* is "an action that goes beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected." "THIS IS GRACE!" Peter says.

Peter goes on to say, "*For this is commendable, if because of **conscience** toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.*"

The word, "conscience" used in verse 19 relates to the slave's sense of his relationship to God--He wants to maintain the testimony of Christ in his life.

In other words, as an employee who is treated harshly, you don't try to get even with your employer by slowing down. You don't sabotage the inventory. You don't trash the company's reputation. As a Christian you don't linger long during your break—not because you are commanded in Scripture to be a good employee but because of conscience toward God! In other words, *you are trying to please God.*

Peter elaborates on this in verse 20:

*(1 Pet 2:20 NKJV) For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*

"Credit (NKJV/NIV)" or "Glory (KJV)" is the word *kleos* and means fame, praise and good report.

"Buffeted" or "beaten" is the act of striking with the fist. It is in the present tense, which stresses a continuing action. It is used in Matthew 26:67 and Isaiah 52:14 to describe the beating our Lord Jesus Christ took by the Jewish mob in the high priest's courtyard (vs 58).

Perhaps verse 20 of our text is Peter's memories of seeing Jesus suffer in this way. Remember when Jesus was taken captive in the Garden of Gethsemane all the disciples including Peter fled the scene but Peter followed the mob from a distance and saw them beat Jesus.

When Peter writes in verse 20, "*For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?*" he is saying "what kind of good report is it for you if when you are struck with the fist for doing something wrong, you put up with it."

I've talked with people who seem to be under constant scrutiny by their boss. They are constantly reprimanded and docked for pay.

Peter goes on to say, "*But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, when you endure (NIV), this is commendable before God.*"

Again the word "patiently" or "endure" is *hupomeno* and means "to stay under," "bear up" or to "put up with"

In other words, if you do wrong and get punished—you get what you deserve. But when you do right, and get disciplined and then endure it, this is *commendable before God*.

The word "commendable" is the same word used in verse 19 - *charis* or GRACE. Peter is saying that enduring when wrongly persecuted is "*an action that is beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected.*" It is grace!

Now we need to recognize that there are some Christians who think they are being persecuted when they are actually being justly disciplined for doing something wrong.

"My boss didn't give me a raise because I'm a Christian." No, he didn't give you that raise because you were consistently late for the last two months.

This person isn't being persecuted for doing well; they are being disciplined for doing wrong.

Persecution is "suffering because you are a Christian who does exemplary work." This kind of "doing good and suffering for it" is what the Christian is called to.

*(1 Pet 2:21 NKJV) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:*

Let me clarify something here. Peter isn't saying that the "act of suffering" is the calling on the Christian's life. He says "*to this*" you were called. In other words the "doing good and suffering" kind

of suffering is what the Christian is called to. Or even more exact, the "doing good and suffering and enduring" kind of suffering is what the Christian is called to.

Everybody experiences suffering.

It is common for people lose loved ones to sickness and death.

It is common for people to go through the pain of divorce.

It is common for people to get fired from their jobs when they haven't done anything wrong.

It is common for one to even to get a ticket when they weren't speeding or to be accused of cheating when they weren't.

But the kind of suffering that Peter is speaking of is the kind of suffering that comes from doing the right thing, more specifically, from doing the righteous thing.

Bible Commentator Kenneth Wuest says that "suffering for righteousness sake is the natural result of the Christian's contact with the people of the world and their reaction to the Lord Jesus who is seen in the life of the saint."

Like our Lord Jesus, Christians are called to suffer for righteousness sake. Peter writes, "*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...*"

Peter is saying that as Christ suffered at the hands of unjust people of His day for being faithful to the will of the Father, we have the same opportunity receive to follow in His steps.

Peter tells us that Jesus "left us an example." In the original it say he literally "left behind" an example. The word "example" is a wonderful image the Peter uses to make his point. It literally means "writing under" and is used of words given to children to copy, both as a writing exercise and as a means of impressing a moral truth.

You might remember when as a child your mother or teacher would write "A B C" on some paper and then encourage you to trace over the written letters. Your untrained hand would try to trace your letter over the pattern left by your teacher. Peter is saying in verse 21 that Christians are to pattern their lives after Jesus Christ.

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Christians are to look at what Christ has done and then make attempts, even so feeble, to trace their lives over the pattern left by Him. Christians are to place their feet into the footprints left by our Lord--His are the footprints of suffering.

Just as a child slowly, with painstaking effort follows the shape of the letters of his teacher and thus learns to write, so Christians should with the same kind of effort should endeavor to be like the Lord Jesus in their own personal lives.

Some children have had the experience of walking in the footprints made by his father in the snow, so we are to follow in the path which our Lord took---the path of suffering.

Peter summarizes this path in the next few verses. Try to imagine our Lord Jesus in His suffering as I read these verses because not only do we get to hear of His suffering but we also get to see how He responded to it.

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*(1 Pet 2:22 NKJV) "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";*

*(1 Pet 2:23 NKJV) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*

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Notice these verses in the context of the entirety of chapter two. In verses 11-12, Peter encourages Christians as they lived among a group of people who were different than them. He says, "Have your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."

In verses 13-17 he shares principals that would help his readers to endure as they lived in a land with an abusive government. He moves from this thought to dealing with slaves who in verses 18-20 were being mistreated by their masters--we can equate that to the employee-employer relationship.

In chapter 3, verses 1-6 he will move from exhorting suffering wives who have husbands who are unloving to encouraging suffering husbands (in verse 7) who have wives who disrespect them.

Finally in 3:8-12 Peter teaches Christians how to get along with fellow Christians who "get on their nerves."

The context of all these exhortations all point forward or back to chapter 2, verses 21-25 where Peter puts the spotlight on Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of suffering and the ultimate example of the proper response to suffering for righteousness sake.

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The story is told of billions of people who were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly -- not with cowering shame, but with hostility.

"How can God judge us?" said one.

"What does he know about suffering?" snapped a brunette. She jerked back a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured terror, beatings, torture, death!"

In another group a black man lowered his collar. "What about this?" he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no crime but being black! We have suffocated in slave ships, been wrenched from loved ones, and toiled till death gave release."

Far out across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering He permitted in His world. How lucky (they thought) was God to live in Heaven where there was no weeping no fear, no hunger, no hatred!

Indeed, what did God know about what man had been forced to endure in this world? "After all, God leads a pretty sheltered life," they said.

So each group sent out a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. There was a Jew, a black, an untouchable from India, an illegitimate person, a victim of Hiroshima, and one from a Siberian slave camp.

In the center of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather simple:

Before God would be qualified to be their judge, He must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God "should be sentenced to live on earth -- as a man!"

But because He was God, they set certain safeguards to be sure He could not use His divine powers to help Himself:

- Let Him be born as part of one of the most despised races on the planet
- Let the legitimacy of His birth be doubted, so that none would know who is really His father.
- Let Him champion a cause so just, but so radical, that it brings down upon Him the hate, condemnation, and efforts of every major traditional and established religious authority to eliminate Him.
- Let Him try to describe what no man has ever seen, tasted, heard, or smelled -- let Him try to communicate God to men.
- Let Him be betrayed by His dearest friends.
- Let Him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge.
- Let Him see what it is to be terribly alone and completely abandoned by every living thing.
- Let Him be charged for the crimes of others.
- Let Him be tortured and let Him die!
- Let Him die the most humiliating and painful death -- with common criminals

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the great throngs of people. But when the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence.

No one uttered another word. No one moved. For suddenly all knew: God had already served His sentence.

*(Isa 53:3 NKJV) He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*(Isa 53:4 NKJV) Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*(Isa 53:5 NKJV) But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*

Many of us have experienced suffering in our lives. Some of us have experienced sufferings for doing what was right.

Some of us are suffering on our jobs.

Some of us are suffering with the pains of illness.

Some of us our suffering in our homes with rebellious children.

Some of us are suffering with unloving or even unfaithful mates.

As much as most of us have suffered in one way or another or in one degree or another, no one has ever suffered to the degree of suffering our Savior endured.

Though this message wasn't meant to be a discourse on suffering but a message designed to help us get along in the workplace. However, God doesn't allow us to enter into suffering for nothing. God has a purpose for the Christian in his or her suffering.

In closing, let me share with you 15 reasons for suffering in the life of the Christian:

1. Produces character and hope
2. Shows the power of Christ
3. Shows the glory of God
4. Shows what faith can do
5. Teaches dependence on God
6. Enables us to comfort those in trouble
7. Shows the proof of faith
8. Allows us to suffer for the cause of Christ
9. Keeps down pride
10. Suffering can come because of another's sin
11. Suffering can come because we are part of a fallen race
12. For discipline
13. Because of the sovereignty of God
14. Because our enemy wants us to suffer
15. For reasons known only to God

How does one get along with an unfair employer? Do you “take your job and shove it” or do you take you job and love it?

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Let us pray.