

## Women's Bible Study

### 1 Peter 2:18

1Peter 2:18 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.

#### What do you read in the above verse?

Peter now moves to the duty of servants to their masters. The words in this verse are straight forward, meaning when you read them, they say what they mean. You may have heard this often-used phrase, 'If the plain literal words make sense, seek no other sense'. Sometimes a problem arises because we do not like the plain literal sense of the message we are given. Think how often you have told your child to do something and the answer you get is 'but what about ...'. Most of us are guilty of this same response to direction. We think of a way out or a way around or simply a way to change the instruction.

In our culture today, we would not necessarily describe relationships using the terms servant and master. The word servant in this verse refers mainly to household servants or domestic servants which lived in the same house. This was common at that time. According to *Barnes NT Commentary*, these persons might have been slaves or not. However this command would apply whether they were hired or whether they were owned as slaves. In our culture and practices today, we would apply this command to anyone in a paid position or under the service of one in authority. This could be a worker you have hired to do a specific job. For instance, we have in the past had someone who was paid to clean the inside of our home. The expectation was that this person would receive a certain amount of money for a specific amount of work. At times, I requested that more attention be given to one area of the house over another. Fulfilling my request did not matter if the worker agreed with me. It is quite possible they had a better way of doing something – what mattered was for the time she was at my house, she did what was expected.

Under most circumstances, when we find ourselves under the obligation to act in obedience, it will be toward those who are good and gentle, and reasonable and kind. For instance, going back to the woman who cleaned my house, we developed a friendship, and our families became involved with one another. She eventually accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior in my kitchen!

Yet, what do we do when we are asked to submit to those who are unreasonable? Well, as long as we are not asked to sin, then it is not important whether we think something is unnecessary or a waste of time, or foolish. If my employer requests that I draw a red line exactly down the center of each piece of paper that filters across my desk, then however ridiculous I think it might be, I can choose to do it because they are in charge. I might think their request is unreasonable and they are crazy, however their position requires my respect and submission. Not only might I get fired if I don't submit, but I will also lose the opportunity to build relationships with the hope of sharing Christ.

The question that pops in my mind is, **“Am I willing to deny myself for my Savior”?** Read the words of Paul in *Philippians 2:5-8*, *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* If anyone ever had the right to stand His ground it was Jesus! But He chose not to do so in order to please His Father and redeem your soul.

It is difficult to choose to give up what we deem our 'rights'. We do not like others pressing in upon our space or crowding our 'freedoms'. We are quick to draw lines in the sand. In other words, our thinking becomes, 'you can only go so far until I will become insistent on my views'. However we need to be certain our views and where we choose to be immovable is according to the truth and example we have in God's word. If I choose to take a stand for my convenience or my opinion or because it fits what I think, **without proof for my action from Truth**, then I am serving myself under the pretense of serving God. I cannot form my opinion and then find the scriptures that will support my thinking; rather, I must go to the scriptures and ask God to give me understanding of His word. Then with that understanding of His truth, I am led what to think. We need to be careful! Words can sound compelling, and we are easily led by what sounds righteous rather than what is truth and fact in scripture.

In any relationship we find ourselves, we must remember we are Christians, ultimately representing God and serving Him. To those who are our masters (rulers, employers, teachers, and all those in authority over us), we are to submit. Obedience is a choice we are able to make because Christ has changed our heart and our desire is to please Him and follow His example.

1Timothy 6:1 Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor **so that the name of God and [our] doctrine may not be spoken against.**

Titus 2:9-10 [Urge] bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith **that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.**

Go back for a moment to the reason this letter was written. The Apostle Peter wrote this to believers who were being persecuted for their faith. Peter reminded them of God's protection and their inheritance in heaven. They were suffering through difficulties, yet these trials were a means for the proof and strengthening of their faith in Jesus. Peter reminded them to fix their hope on the future and to act in obedience to God's calling. They were to follow Jesus' example of holiness. They were valuable and were to love one another remembering that their time here on earth was short. Therefore, they were to seek God's truths so that they would mature as Christians and regard their difficulties as opportunities to glorify God. God was their secure foundation, and their purpose was to proclaim Him. So they were to honor Him by keeping their behavior excellent, willingly submitting to those in authority. They had been freed from the control of sin, and now had the freedom to choose righteousness. What did this look like? By all means they were to promote peace, setting their sights on furthering the Gospel. Their freedom was not to be used to usurp authority but rather to honor God. Even when it was difficult.

Our text says, **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect.** Seriously?! In our selfish and prideful thinking we can easily think that this is asking a bit too much! We are to not only submit, but we are to submit with all respect. Respect does mean we agree. It means we understand the position someone holds. This is difficult. However, we need to have the right attitude towards those in charge of us because it is what scripture teaches. In our own human weakness, this is quite impossible. Let's remember, God is the one who has placed people exactly where He wants them for His purpose. God is the one we are honoring when we willingly yield to His perfect plan just as Christ did when He was crucified.

*When we bow ourselves before God and are reminded of the sacrifice of His only Son, willingly assuming the pain of suffering and separation as our sin was atoned, we are equipped by grace to act in humility and righteousness towards others.*

This gets even more difficult when we read the rest of 1 Peter 2:18. We are to be submissive to those in authority with all respect **regardless if they are good and gentle or unreasonable**. The overriding imperative to everyone is to act with good conduct (1Peter 2:11, 12, 13, and 16); a direct application is servants to masters. Submit with respect, if at all possible, under all circumstances. Respect is translated 'fear'. Not necessarily because of a fear of the person themselves although in many cases they would have the authority to exercise disciplinary action, but *ultimately because we fear God* – see 1 Peter 2:13.

Colossians 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**.

Ephesians 6:5-8 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, **in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ**; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Jesus was fully God and fully man while on this earth. Yet, He placed Himself in subjection to His earthly parents. Luke 2:48-51

1 Peter 3:1 says wives are to be subject to their husbands.

According to one commentary, the Jews were unwilling “to submit to any Gentile masters; and those of them who believed in Christ were by their Judaizing teachers persuaded to think that they owed no obedience to unbelieving masters”, *Thomas Haweis*. From the same commentary we are reminded of Jesus’ example – “*leaving us an example of patience and long-suffering under all the most cruel and unjust treatment which he met with, that ye should follow his steps, and be conformed to his blessed pattern; who, grievously as he suffered, yet did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; his bitterest enemies could not so much as fix upon him the shadow of a crime: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; but observed an admirable silence, as the sheep before her shearers is dumb: when he suffered, he threatened not, nor discovered the least anger at his tormentors; but committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously, and to whom vengeance belongeth*”.

Note these applications from the above,

- 1) We look to Christ for pardon and righteousness, should we not also follow His example of patience and meekness?
- 2) Am I desiring to receive His forgiveness and gift of eternal life but not willing to accept that in receiving His grace I must act in accordance to His commands?

Since we have been saved to righteousness, we are deceived if we choose to live in sin and flatter ourselves with the certain hope of eternal life in Christ. We should be encouraged to willingly accept every burden which He places in our lives.

- 3) Our sufferings or mistreatment are not an excuse for impatience or anger, however unreasonable our authorities may be.
- 4) Christ’s example not only teaches us to not lash out for ill treatment or demand the rights we wrongly claim title to – His example also teaches us to pray for the very ones who are unreasonable – He prayed for those who crucified Him.
- 5) We gain nothing from strife; contentment is found in godliness – following Christ’s example.

I fear, as a people, we have claimed 'rights' to things which were never given to us by God. *Think! What did you bring into this world?*

*In all things we are to glorify God. In all relationships we are to glorify God, looking to Jesus' example of humility and righteousness.*

1 Peter 2:20-24 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. For you have been called for this purpose, since 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; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.