

Suffering Solutions, part 3

1 Peter 2:18-25

(preached Pine Grove 10/20/19 Sun PM)

Introduction

If you were allowed to give Satan advice on how to best to oppose God, what would that advice be?

In others words, what do you think is the best way to oppose what God is doing?

Would you tell the enemy to infest the world with more opportunist and temptations to sin?

Would you tell the enemy to draw people away through more false teaching and preaching?

Well, one thing that seems to do the most harm to the church is not external.

It's not more sinful form of entertainment.

It's not more false teachers rising in popularity.

It's much more a simple and effective strategy than that.

One of the most destructive forces of Satan is to find the failure of Christian to act as Christians and then expose that sinful behavior to the world.

Look, you can find 10 people who steal money from an organization and none will make the headlines, except the one who works for the church and steals from it.

You can find 10 people who commit adultery but not a single one will make the news except the one who calls himself a Christian and commits adultery in the church.

You can find 10 drunkards who no one talks about except the one who goes to the church down the road.

You see, Satan is a master and turning failures of self professed believers into fuel for unbelief.

Most of the damage done to reputation of the church is not from outside hostility but from inward hypocrisy..

As my former preacher said, the world loves to take that speck of dirt in the Christian's eye and make a mud pie out of it.

This is why it is so critical how believers live their lives.

Look, I don't get up here and explain Scripture to you and encourage to apply it for my sake.

I preach and teach and instruct so that our lives will be changed in order that our behavior in the world is excellent for the Lord's sake.

There are people who feel that they have to act a certain way in the preacher's presence.

Look, your behavior and actions are not for my sake, they are for the Lord's sake in upholding His reputation among people in the world.

If anything, I understand your failures and would sympathize with you because I know the same struggles.

However the world is looking for your failures so that they can justify remaining in their unbelief.

And this is really the point of this section in Peter 2 that we have been looking at for a few weeks..

Look at 1 Peter 2:11-12..

11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may [n]because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of [o]visitation.

You see, the call to holiness and excellent behavior is not for the preacher, it is for the Lord's sake in using that behavior to draw the world into a right relationship with Him.

The point of excellent behavior is not to make sure you act right in the church.

The point of excellent behavior is to make sure you act right in the world.

We in the church know who you are.

We know that you are fallen.

We know that you struggle with sin.

We understand the battle and we bear your burdens.

But the world doesn't.

The world expects you to live perfect lives before them.

They see you as the people who say they love God and they expect you to live like God in the world.

And when you don't, they pounce.

And Satan uses that pouncing to hold them in their sin and in the misery of his yoke of slavery to sin.

So how do we demonstrate excellent behavior in the world?

Well God uses Peter to break up excellent behavior into 4 categories that pretty define us as people.

Last week, we look at excellent behavior as citizens in the world.

And the command of God was to submit ourselves to every human institution of government.

Whether that is the king or the local government official, believers are to willingly put themselves under the government that God has put over them.

But tonight, we find the second area of life where the Christian is called to excellent behavior.

So let me read the verses that we will begin to examine tonight..

1 Peter 2:18-25..

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 [t]unreasonable. 19 For this finds [u]favor, if for the sake of conscience

toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 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 [v]favor with God.

21 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, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 [w]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; 24 and He Himself [x]bore our sins in His body on the [y]cross, so that we might die to [z]sin and live to righteousness; for by His [aa]wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and [ab]Guardian of your souls.

Now we may not get through all this tonight, but let's begin to examine what excellent behavior looks like in terms of servants and masters.

To remind you, Peter is writing in 64 AD.

The Roman Empire is the government that the readers of his letter find themselves under, and that government is hostile to believers.

Yet we have already learned that God commanded those 1st century Christians to submit to that government.

They weren't called to overthrow it.

They weren't called to protest against it.

They were called to submit to it and live as believers in it.

And that excellent behavior within a hostile environment would make an incredible impression everyone.

Not only was the government over these believers evil, the social structure within Rome was also evil as well.

The work force was brutal.

Slavery was common and even paid servants were abused and mistreated by employers.

Then add to fact that most Christians were also despised by the Romans, and what you ended up with an economic system that took advantage of believers.

Those in slavery were abused.

Even those who weren't slaves found working conditions extra difficult.

Yet with that brutal background, God inspires Peter to write this in verse 18..

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 [t]unreasonable.

And though that one verse was written to 1st century believers, it is a verse that defines the worker boss relationship for every Christian who came after.

In short, Christian slaves/servants/employees are to submit themselves to their masters and bosses with all respect.

Again, the language here is crystal clear.

Christian workers are to submit themselves to their masters and bosses with all respect.

There are no if, ands, and buts about it.

IF you are a believer, you are to line yourself up under your superior with all respect.

And before you think that no one knows how bad your boss is, the end of verse 18 causes you to close your mouth.

not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are [t]unreasonable.

Now remember the historical context of this is slaves and masters.

So if God commands a Christian slave to submit to His master, He certainly expects you to submit in context where you aren't doing forced labor.

Yet, Christians routinely violate this command and have throughout the years.

Ever heard of labor strikes where employees stay out of work until their demands are met?

Ever heard of employees staying out of work in the form of other protests?

Sure you have, and sadly Christians have found themselves involved in all of these things at times.

Yet, this verse would stand in direct opposition to those activities.

In short, Christians are to be submissive to their employers even when they are unreasonable.

Now again, let me stress, submission would not be required when an employer causes you to sin as part of your duties.

But other than that, servants are to be submissive to their masters with all respect.

Now, the common attitude among workers today is that they have rights.

In fact, our whole world is filled with people claiming their rights.

There are children's rights and women's rights and homosexual rights and student's rights and criminals rights.

Everybody loves to proclaim their rights in the world, and that has infected the work place.

There are workers rights and privileges, and if employees have their rights violated, it is time to resist and march and gather together and picket.

Now look if you are an employee, and the state provides certain rights to you or your employer provides certain rights to you, fine.

Act within those rights with gentleness and kindness and do what you can.

But the moment you refuse to submit to an employer outside those parameters of the employer or the state, you are in violation of 1 Peter 2:18.

There is no loophole or wiggle room here.

And in the long run, your so-called rights are less important than your witness to the world.

And when you show yourself to be an unsubmitive and angry Christian in the workplace, you only make the voices of unbelief louder.

Remember our aim is to silence the ignorance of unbelief, but a bunch of fired up Christians workers demanding more from their employer only makes unbelievers talk louder about us and our God.

And consider this.

What are you fighting for in your strike or refusal to work?

You are fighting for things that aren't eternal.

More money will be gone one day.

More time off will be gone one day.

Better working conditions will be gone one day.

But how you obeyed the Lord will not be forgotten.

Why not endure wrong treatment at work with respect and gentleness and make a lasting impression of your unbelieving coworkers...

Rather than being loud and critical and insubordinate and acting like the unbelievers around you.

Look, when you feel slighted at work and everyone knows it, simply voice your trust in the Lord and be an example of submission to those around you.

That makes a lasting testimony.

That makes a believable testimony.

Everyone complains about work, but believers shouldn't.

Everyone complains about the boss, but believers shouldn't.

And when you don't, people notice.

Now why should servants submit to their masters?

First reason is found in verses 19 and 20..

19 For this finds [u]favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 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 [v]favor with God

What is the motivation for submission to masters?

That excellent behavior finds favor with God.

In other words, it pleases God when you submit to those over you in your work.

Look, the world expects you to rebel and resist the master over you.

But God expects you to submit, and when you submit out of a conscience toward God, God is pleased.

Now what does a conscience toward God mean?

It means that you submit because you know what He has commanded.

And you have a healthy fear of him, so you obey Him for conscience sake.

This is what all God-pleasing obedience looks like.

WE obey because we have a conscience informed by the Word of God and we have a healthy fear of God.

And when we do that, it finds favor with God.

Now note what it says here.

It finds favor with God when a believer bears up under sorrows while suffering unjustly.

In other words, when you submit to a good boss, God is pleased.

He wants you to submit to good and bad bosses..

But when you submit to an unreasonable boss, you find the favor of God in a unique way.

Long story short, unjust suffering is hard and difficult.

And it is especially difficult for believers since we know what justice looks like.

But when Christian employees endure harsh treatment at work with kindness and gentleness and don't rebel, God blesses them in a special way.

This is an outstanding motivation to obey this passage.

Look, every believer wants to be pleasing to the Lord.

Well, here's a way to be very pleasing to Him.

When you are treated unjustly by a superior, submit to them with all respect and you will find the favor of God.

Let me show you a parallel passage to this in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:5-8.

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your [a]masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not [b]by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the [c]heart. 7 With good will [d]render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Do you know what verses 7 and 8 promise to the submissive employee?

They promise that God will repay you when you submit to an employee.

One thing that tempts us to rebel against our bosses is our own greedy flesh.

We want what we think we deserve..

This gets back to the idea of rights.

But the reality is that slaves and servants and workers are often treated unfairly and they don't always get what they deserve.

But the promise of God is that they will get their reward in time.

They will receive back from the Lord what they are due.

And the reverse is true as well.

Unreasonable bosses don't need to suffer at your hands.

They will suffer from the Lord's hands in time.

So believers are called to submit to submit to their masters, knowing that God will be pleased and they will eventually get their due reward.

But there is an additional motivation to submit to masters, and it is found in verses 21-25..

Verse 21..

21 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, 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 [w]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; 24 and He Himself [x]bore our sins in His body on the [y]cross, so that we might die to [z]sin and live to righteousness; for by His [aa]wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and [ab]Guardian of your souls.

Most importantly, believers are motivated to submit to masters because they model Christ when they do.

When are we most like Christ?

Some would say when we love others.

Some would say we we forgive others.

I wouldn't disagree.

But I can assure that you also most resemble Christ when you suffer unjustly and submit to it with kindness and patience and love.

Notice how Jesus responded to unjust suffering..

Verse 23..

while being reviled, He did not revile in return

When you are raked over the coals at work despite your innocence, you don't insult or return evil for evil..

You don't review your boss, you bless him and pray for him and patiently endure him.

Then notice this response of Christ..

while suffering, He uttered no threats,

Boy, that would go a long way to ending the notion of Christian workers going on strikes, which are essentially threats to employers.

Threats that their business will not be able to run without workers..

Look, your job is not the threaten your employer but to be thankful for them.

To see them as a blessing from the Lord in your life that provides for your family.

Look, Jesus could have issued threats and followed through with every one of them as he suffered unjustly in his life and ministry.

But he didn't.

He showed compassion and offered mercy to his enemies.

Maybe if you prayed for your boss and were quick to forgive your boss, you would find the temptation to threaten your boss would go away.

And so if we can't revile those over us and we can't threaten those over us, how do we cope with unjust suffering?

End of verse 23..

(Jesus) kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously

In the end, Jesus trusted the Lord's plan for his life.

He knew that His life was not about being treated fairly.

His life was about being treated unfairly so that he could secure our salvation on the cross.

That's verse 24..

24 and He Himself [x]bore our sins in His body on the [y]cross,

And look your life is not about your rights or demanding fair treatment.

It is not.

Your life is about demonstrating the change that God has brought about in it through the gospel.

You will be treated unfairly at work.

You will be slighted at work.

That is not a question.

It will happen.

The question is how will you reposed to it.

Well, Christ responded by entrusting Himself to His father and you would wise to do the same.

And notice the middle of verse 24..

so that we might die to [z]sin and live to righteousness;

Jesus suffered unjustly to save you so that when you suffer unjustly, you can live righteously.

This is a repeat of what this whole section of 2 Peter is about.

Living righteously while suffering unjustly.

Christ suffering and won your salvation so that when you suffer you can demonstrate that salvation to the world.

And you do that best by refusing to revile your boss and refusing to threaten your boss..

While simultaneously trusting fully in the Lord to handle your situation in his time and in his plan.

Our mission is to handle injustice in the workplace according to the world's standards, our mission is to handle injustice in the workplace by God's standards.

And the way to handle injustice in the workplace is to submit ourselves to our bosses and entrust ourselves to God.

It is only when we think we deserve something or have a right to something, that we are tempted to disobey.

It has often been said that the Christian is not entitled to anything in life expect unjust mistreatment by the world.

That is true and has been true and will be true until we exit this world for heaven.

In the meantime, may God give us grace to endure unjustly as we set our eyes on what is to come.

Conclusion

Bill Gothard tells the story of a Christian boy who had a hostile, unbelieving father.

The boy asked if he could attend the church prayer meeting one evening and the father reluctantly gave permission.

As the boy walked home after the prayer meeting, a friend saw him and offered him a lift in his car.

The father saw his son get out of the friend's car and said, "You lied to me about going to the prayer meeting! You really went out with your friends. I'm going to whip you for that!"

The boy replied, "No, I went to the prayer meeting."

The father exploded, "I'm going to give you a double whipping for lying about it."

The boy quietly endured the beating and didn't grow bitter toward his father.

He loved his dad and wanted to see him trust in Christ.

A few days later the father was in the hardware store and ran into the pastor of the church where his son attended.

Not knowing about the whipping, the pastor said, “You sure have a fine son. Last week in prayer meeting, he blessed us all with a fine word of testimony.”

The father asked, “Was my boy in prayer meeting last week? I thought he went out with his friends.”

The father was broken and soon came to Christ.

Look, sometime a quiet submission results is a fantastic salvation.

May God give us grace to do that at work and in life.

Let us pray.

III. The Directive to Servants (2:18-25)

IV. The Order to Families (3:1-7)

V. The Expectations for the Church (3:8-12)