

Intro:

Observation: We don't fight the "real" battle of the Christian life on Sunday. Don't get me wrong. Sunday is important. Church attendance is commanded (Heb 10:25). But church is really a training ground. We gather on Sunday and Wednesday for worship, for edification. Monday is when we hit the trenches. You don't need me to tell you that! The real battle begins when you punch the clock. When you get on the school bus. The bullets start flying on Monday, and keep on flying Tuesday, Wednesday, through Saturday.

Q: How can we live for Christ on the Job?

God's Word has practical instruction on this, and every facet of life.

Illust: Story of Rob Cutshaw who found a sapphire but...

Proposition: According to I Peter 2:18-25, God has given us 2 things we must have a handle on if we're going to be successful living for Christ on the job.

I. We have a God-given Exhortation (18-20).

A. The Responsibility (18)

B. The Reasons

1. The job is a great place to Model Grace (19).

2. The job is a great place to Magnify God (20).

II. We have a God-given Example (21-25).

A. Christ Suffered (21).

B. Christ was Sinless (22).

C. Christ was Selfless (23).

D. Christ became our Substitute (24).

E. Christ is Sufficient (25).

I. We have a God-given Exhortation (18-20).

God gave an exhortation through Peter. What is it? It has to do with our job performance. Notice the responsibility in v 18...

A. The Responsibility (18)

V 18 "Servants, be subject to your masters..."

You say, "Wait a minute. I don't get it. Peter's talking to slaves. I'm not a slave. This verse isn't relevant to me, is it?" You might be surprised.

The word "subject" in v 18 is from the same greek word translated "submit" in v 13. Last week we looked at I Peter 2:11-17. We learned if we are going to live as model citizens in this world, 2 things are required of us. Being a Model Citizen involves Separation (11-12). We must avoid sin (11). We must advertise the Savior (12). Secondly, being a Model Citizen involves Submission (13-17).

V 13 is a key verse. With it Peter moves to a new major theme in his letter.

V 13 "Submit yourselves to every ordinance FOR THE LORD'S SAKE"

This may shock you, but we are to submit. That goes for every Christian. The word "submit" simply means "to place or rank under." When I submit, I willingly place myself under the authority of someone else.

Q: To whom am I to submit?

A: That's what Peter spends parts of 2 chapters addressing. Submission applies to several groups of people in the church: Christian Citizens (2:13-17), Christian Slaves (2:18-25), Christian Wives (3:1-7), Christian Husbands (3:8), and All Church members (3:9).

Again notice our responsibility--v 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters."

You say, "I still don't get it. We don't have slaves today. How could this responsibility apply to us?"

The word "servants" in v 18 is not the common word for slave (doulos). It's a term that depicts a "house servant." In Peter's day, it would describe those people who were financially dependent on a Master.

Q: Let me ask you a question, "Are you financially dependent on anyone?"

Are you? Are you financially dependent on a bank or credit institution? Do you have a car or house payment? Do you depend on someone to give you a weekly paycheck in order to make your livelihood?

Our problem when we come to verses like v 18 is that when we think of slavery, what's the first picture that comes to our mind? The cruel subjection and oppression of Afro-Americans in our country in the past century. Slavery in Peter's day was much different.

In the Roman Empire there were as many as 60 million slaves. The early churches were full of slaves. In fact it would not be uncommon to have slaves and masters worshipping side by side.

And listen. Slaves did a lot more than menial tasks in Peter's day. Teachers were slaves. Secretaries were slaves. Doctors were slaves. Musicians were slaves. Actors were slaves. In fact, all the work of Rome was done by slaves. The Roman attitude was that there was no point in being the master of the world and doing your own work.

Generally speaking, if we would have lived in the Roman Empire, we'd probably have been slaves. Most of us are middle class Americans. Most of us are financially dependent on someone else in life.

What's the point? Just this. God's exhortation in v 18 is very relevant to us. The principles of God's Word are not limited to any one economic system. What Peter said to slaves about their attitude on the job has much to say to us.

V 18 "Servants, be subject to your master..."

I find it interesting what Peter didn't say. Peter didn't tell the slaves, "Hey servants, you're free in Christ. Hit the road, and tell your Master to find someone else to do your job!" Did Peter say that? No.

When a slave became a Christian, he didn't stop being a slave. But one thing did change. Now he was responsible to be a GOOD slave. He was to be "subject."
What did that mean? It meant he was to give his boss 100% on the job.

Q: But what if his boss was crooked? What if he took advantage of him?

V 18 "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse."

Not all masters were oppressive. Some were kind and generous. Some treated their slaves just like family. But others didn't.

In Roman law, a slave was not a person, but a thing. A slave had absolutely no legal rights. Many years before Peter, Aristotle wrote, "There can be no friendship nor justice towards inanimate things; indeed not even towards a horse or an ox, nor yet towards a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common. A slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave." (Barclay)

Application: It's easy to have a good attitude towards a boss that's nice to you. When the bonuses are gracious, and the promotions frequent. But it's pretty tough to respect a boss who takes advantage of you, isn't it?

"perverse" = greek word "scoliosis" from which we get the word "scoliosis" (a disease causing a curvature of the spine). The word means curved, bent, not straight, hence crooked.

Q: What were you supposed to do if you had a crooked master?

Q: What are we supposed to do if we have a crooked boss?

V 13 "Servants, be subject..."

You say, "Wait a minute. You don't know my boss! He doesn't treat me fairly. Why should I treat him any differently?"

B. The Reasons

God's Word is so practical. Did you ever notice how often when God gives us a command, He gives us a reason for the command. Notice how many times the word "for" appears here (19, 20, 21, 25).

Q: Why should we take our Christianity seriously on the job?

A: I see 2 reasons.

1. The job is a great place to Model Grace (19).

V 19 "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God..."

I find it interesting that the word translated "thankworthy" is the same greek word translated dozens of times by another English word.

see: 1:1, 10, 13

It's the word "grace." Literally, 2:19 reads, "For this is grace."

Q: What is it that models grace, according to Peter?

A: V 19 "When a servant for conscience toward God endures grief"

It's easy to do good on the job when you get the "warm fuzzies" in return. It's easy to praise your boss when he's a nice guy. But listen. When we're treated wrongly, and respond rightly, that models grace.

How's that? What is grace? Grace is unmerited favor. Grace is doing good to those who don't deserve it. Grace is what God demonstrated to us. Grace is what God wants us to model, even on the job.

Illust: Do you know the story of Fanny Crosby? She wrote thousands of hymns. But in 1820, when she was an infant, something tragic happened. A well-meaning Dr. made a blunder. He used the wrong medicine and destroyed Fanny's eyes. She would live her life in a dark, sightless world. But do you know what? Fanny made a choice. She could have been bitter. But she chose to be gracious.

Hymn: (345) "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a fortaste..."

Q: Do you model grace on your job?

2. *The job is a great place to Magnify God (20).*

V 20 "For what glory is it if, when you are buffeted..."

Look at the last phrase of v 20, "this is acceptable with God." Guess which greek word Peter used translated "acceptable"? Charis. Grace. Literally, the phrase says, "For this is grace with God." That's the second time Peter said, "For this is grace." Your job is a great place to model grace. And to glorify God.

Follow the logic of Peter's question.

V 21 "For what glory is it if, when you are buffeted (strike with fist) for faults...?"

Let me modernize the verse. If you call in sick and skip work, and if you are lazy on the job, and if you violate company policy, and if you get docked for it, don't pass yourself on the back! Don't think of yourself as a hero or a martyr. You're not. There's no glory in doing wrong and paying the penalty for it.

But. "If you do well and suffer for it..." That pleases God.

Application: What do you do when your paycheck is late? When the other guy gets the promotion you deserved?

Key: Right there's the test of whether your Christianity is real.

Listen. Your job is a great place to model grace, and to magnify God.

Illust:

Tran: How can we be successful Christians on the job? We need to get a handle on our God-given exhortation in v 18. You may be thinking, "I still don't see why God cares about what I do on the job."

Look at the first word of v 21, "for."

II. We have a God-given Example (21-25).

Q: Who is our example?

V 21 "For...Christ...leaving us an example"

Christ is our example. Our identity is linked with Jesus Christ.

Q: Have you been called by God?

You might think, "I haven't been called. Only pastors and missionaries are called, right?" Wrong.

If you are a Christian, God has called you. He has called each of us. To what?

"Hereunto"--We were called to follow Christ's example. We were called to follow in Christ's steps. Where should Christ be seen in us? Remember the context: In our attitude towards civil authorities (13), on the job (18), in the home (3:1-7).

"example"--only time in NT; In ancient times this word referred to the way children were taught to write. A child was given a writing exercise book. At the top of the page was a copyhead of handwriting. Below it were blank lines. The child was to copy the copyhead at the top. It was the "example" he was to reproduce.

That's Peter's word. Christ is our example.

Now, if Christ is our example, we'd better find out what He did.

Q: What did Christ do? Peter rehearses 5 marks which are true of Christ.

A. Christ Suffered (21).

V 21 "Christ suffered for us"

Hymn: "Man of sorrows what a name, for the Son of God who came."

Christ suffered. Peter saw Him suffer firsthand. He watched the angry mob drag Him away. He listened to the sounds of gruff soldiers mocking Him and striking Him with their fists. He knew full well the agony the Lord endured when spikes were driven through His hands and feet. Peter knew all about Christ's suffering. He never got over it.

In fact, Christ's suffering is one of the key themes in this letter.

See: 1:11; 3:18; 4:1, 13

Q: Why did Christ suffer?

A: V 21 "for us" = In our place.

Illust:

B. Christ was Sinless (22).

V 22 "Who did no sin..."

Here's what makes the suffering of Christ so amazing. The Lord Jesus was completely innocent. He was spotless, in both word and deed. Yet He suffered. Though totally and absolutely without guilt, He paid a great penalty.

In v 22, Peter is quoting from Isa 53:9. Isaiah 53 is a Messianic prophecy. Isaiah foretold more than 700 years in advance that God's anointed servant would suffer for the sins of His people.

In fact, some scholars feel that v 22 is part of a hymn that was used in the early church (as is the case for instance with Ph 2:5ff). What a grand song to sing in church! A song which exalts the Sinless Person of Christ!

Observation: Church music ought to communicate accurate theology. Let me say this to our musicians. I challenge you to make a personal study of the Scriptures to develop a biblical philosophy of music. One thing you'll find in the NT is that the purpose of music is to promote the worship of Jesus Christ by retelling the events of the gospel. One suggestion. Preach Christ in your songs. Don't preach yourself. We're living in a very "me-centered" age. And "me-centeredness" has crept into much contemporary Christian music.

Christ is our example. He suffered. He was sinless.

C. Christ was Selfless (23).

V 23 "Who when He was reviled..."

The word "revile" means "to abuse." Listen. Our Lord was abused more severely than we can fathom. His rights were violated. His honor was ripped from Him. He was reviled. He suffered. Yet notice what He did not do. He did not retaliate. He could have called 10,000 angels...but He didn't.

Now remember Peter's point. Jesus is what? He's our example. When mistreated, how did Jesus respond? He was selfless.

Q: How should we respond when people take advantage of us on the job?

You say, "Wow! Jesus' example is too high and too hard for me. I can't be like Jesus!" To which we must say 2 things:

1. The Christian life is not hard. It's impossible.
2. Before Christ can be our Example, He must be our Savior.

Listen carefully. There are many people in churches this morning who know Jesus as Example, but not as Savior. And if you know Jesus only as your example, but not your Savior, do you know what is true of your condition. You are LOST.

How do I know? Because of v 24...

D. Christ became our Substitute (24).

V 24 "Who His own self bore our sins..."

We're not saved by following Christ's example. Sinners need a Savior, not an Example.

Q: Why did Jesus endure unjust treatment on the tree?

A: "bore" = to carry as a sacrifice

He died in our place. While on the cross, He took the burden and weight of our sin. He gave His life to set us free.

Illust:

Q: What potential do we have when we acknowledge Christ as our Savior?

A: V 24 "should live unto righteousness."

The purpose of Christ's death was to produce new life in us.

II Cor 5:17 "If any man is in Christ, He is a new creation..."

Gal 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live..."

Christ is our example. He suffered, was sinless and selfless. He became our substitute. And finally...

E. Christ is Sufficient (25).

V 25 "For ye were as sheep..."

Q: What is Christ to us? He is...

1. Our Shepherd
2. Our Bishop = Superintendent, Overseer

I wish we had more time to delve into this verse. But suffice it to say this. To those of us who were as sheep going astray, and to those who have turned from sin to the Savior, Christ is sufficient. He is sufficient.

He is sufficient to save us from our sins. He is sufficient to give us the strength to live for Him on the job.

Q: What's your need today? Christ is sufficient. Trust Him.

Illust: