

**CHRIST, A SERVANT'S EXAMPLE**

1 Peter 2:18-25

**Intro:** The NT has much to say about masters and servants. We find them in many of the parables which our Lord told. But they enter also into much of the teaching of the epistles of the NT. Even in the OT there were references to servants, and how they were to be treated. The Mosaic Law even made provision for their freedom. So it is apparent that masters and slaves were a part of society in most of the countries referred to in Scripture. It was common for one nation in conquering another nation to make servants out of the nation that had been conquered. And often the situation which servants faced was very, very difficult. It often meant severe suffering for the servants, and, in many instances, it meant death. And yet, on the other hand, servants were often treated with great kindness, and became like members of their master's family.

And these situations are what we think of when in the epistles of Paul, or here in Peter's epistle, we find the apostles addressing themselves to "servants." But I want to suggest a wider application of the passage before us today. If you will stop to think about those who are servants, you can see that in one sense or another all of us are servants.

Probably the closest way in which a passage like this can find its application today is when a person, whether a man or a woman, works for another person. In other words, this passage would apply to employees who work for an employer. In our society where person freedom seems to be the hue and cry on every side, we sometimes forget that the employer is the master, the one who is in charge, and the employee is the one who is responsible to do what his employer has hired him to do.

But there is another sense in which the employer himself is a servant. He is serving the public. He seeks to have a product, or products, which the public will buy, and so he is providing a service for people in general. A farmer might be considered to be self-employed, but if he cannot sell the crops which he grows, he can't continue long to farm on a scale that goes beyond the needs of his own family.

Public school teachers, in fact, all public employees are public servants. A doctor is serving his patients. And pastors are servants also. In this very epistle we are currently studying the Apostle Peter said this about elders, and pastors, being elders, are included. Look at 1 Peter 5:2-4:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Notice: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage."

And remember the words of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the church in Corinth:

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Cor. 4:5).

But the crowning example of a servant is given to us in our text for today, and that example is our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord even said as much about Himself. Cf. Mark 10:45:

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

That which led our Lord to make that statement was the request that James and John made of Him, that they be given the seats on His right hand and His left hand in His glory. The other disciples were very unhappy with James and John when they heard what they had asked the Lord to do for them. This is how the Lord answered them all:

42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.

43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

44 And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all (Mark 10:42-44).

So, in one way or another, we all are servants, and the principles which Peter declared in this passage, have a message for each one of us today.

I believe that you will see that these eight verses, from verse 18 to verse 25 here in 1 Peter 2, are divided into three parts: verse 18 gives us the command for servants; verses 19 and 20 give us the reason for the command; and verses 21 through 25 tell us about the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ. (Repeat.)

Now let us look first, at

## **I. THE COMMAND FOR SERVANTS (1 Peter 2:18).**

The word which Peter used here for "servants" is not the word meaning *a*

*bondservant*, but it is the Greek word for *a household servant*. Joseph working for Potiphar, would be an example of this kind of a servant. It speaks of one we would call *a domestic*, one who does the duties that are required in a family. Often these servants had their living quarters in the home of their masters.

Peter used the word for them that I discussed with you the last time I spoke on 1 Peter before our Bible Conference. It is the word ὑποτάσσω, the word which the Apostle Peter used several times in this epistle for various groups among the believers to whom he was writing. Although it was a word used for soldiers in an army, yet it was also used by the Greeks to describe, I hope you remember, “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden” (from Thayer’s Lexicon).

What Peter meant by this was that the servants were to do what their masters wanted them to do, to do it promptly, accurately, and not only willingly, but happily. We could go to other passages where the writers of Scripture have addressed themselves to servants, but I won’t take the time for that this morning.

And Peter indicated here that this was to be the servants responsibility regardless of how his master may have treated him, or her. It would have naturally been a pleasure to work for a master who was “good and gentle,” but the servant who had a “froward” master was to receive the same kind of service. And that would not have been as happy a situation. “Froward” can mean several things. It can mean *wicked*. It can mean *perverse*. It can mean *unfair*. It can mean *harsh and hard to get along with*.

So regardless of what kind of a master a servant might have, he was always to render to him the same kind of faithful, honest, thorough, cheerful, obedience as if he were “good and gentle.”

Being a servant was never easy, but it would be especially difficult if the master were difficult and unfair and unreasonable.

Now let us make the application to whatever situation we may be in where we are rendering a service to someone else. The circumstances we face, and the people we deal with, do not determine what our service should be, or what our attitude should be. We get our instructions from the Word of God. *And this leads me to my second point.*

## **II. THE REASON THAT THE APOSTLE PETER GAVE FOR SUCH A COMMAND FOR SERVANTS (1 Pet. 2:19-20).**

The word “thankworthy” is the Greek word for *grace*. It is interesting to me, and I am sure that it will be to you, that one of the translations that Thayer gave to this word was that it speaks of “the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace.” Don’t you like that? How different our behavior would be in difficult circumstances if we would only remember that God’s grace is always sufficient for us whatever our circumstances might be. So if a servant has a difficult master, it provides him with a unique opportunity to demonstrate in his behavior the grace of God.

But this word “thankworthy” also carries with it the idea that it is *worthy of thanks*, or *worthy of a reward*. It does not necessarily mean that the master will change and give his servant a special reward, but it does mean that God Who sees what is going on, and who knows not only the outward performance of the servant, but the condition of the servant’s heart, will without doubt reward the servant for his obedience and for his attitude in his obedience.

But why would a believing servant want to please a hard-to-please master? Verse 19 tells us. It is because this servant has a “conscience toward God.” What does this mean? It means that this servant seeks to please his master because he knows that this is what is pleasing to God. This is what God wants him to do, and so he sweetly, promptly, and thoroughly seeks to please his master. What a difference it would make in the work place if all of us who know the Lord would respond so well under difficult circumstances.

Notice the same emphasis in verse 20.

If you and I do the wrong thing, and get punished for it, that is not thankworthy even though we “take it patiently.” But if we get into trouble even when we do the right thing, and “take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” “Acceptable” is the Greek word for *grace* again. Here it means that which is pleasing to God. The only way anyone can sincerely behave as the Apostle Peter was exhorting servants to behave under difficult circumstances was by the grace of God. This brings the blessing of God, and God rewards such behavior. And He does it both here and hereafter!

So why was it that Peter said what he said to servants in verse 18? It is because that is the will of God for all of His people who are in positions where they are serving other people – whether those people are believers or not, it make no difference.

Now you can imagine the arguments that Peter could have heard from the believers to whom he was writing. There is always someone who says that such obedience is impossible when you have a tough boss, or when people are hard to deal with. However, when we do what the Lord wants us to do, trusting Him for the grace to do it, and to do it in a cheerful spirit, we seek how right God is, and how wrong we are to consider any other kind of behavior.

But all objections are silenced when Peter did what he did in verses 21 through 25 because in these verses he showed that

### **III. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE SERVANT'S EXAMPLE (1 Peter 2:21-25).**

How amazing it is to think of our Lord Jesus Christ as making Himself our Servant! We can say on the basis of Peter's words here in these verses that the Lord Jesus is not only the servant's Example, but He is the servant's Servant! However lowly our place may be, the Lord Jesus placed Himself below us in order to serve us in meeting needs which we did not even know that we had.

There are many lessons for us to learn in the humiliation of our Lord not only in becoming a Man, but in what He suffered for us when He went to the Cross. It is in the Cross that we learn one of the greatest secrets of a life that is pleasing to God, and a life that brings us happiness that can not be experienced in any other way. Liberal theologians would make the Lord only an Example for us to follow. He has to become our Savior first, but then He is our Example. So let us not overlook this great truth.

In what ways is He our Example? Look at verse 22 for the starting place. "Who did no sin." Not only was our Lord sinless throughout His life, but as He faced the most difficult situation at the end of His life that anyone has ever face, it was still true that He "did no sin."

Nor was there any guile in His mouth? What is "guile"? "Guile" is *deceit*. His enemies were full of guile, full of deceit, but our Lord told the truth right to the very last breath that He breathed. He did not use trickery on them just because that is what they were doing with Him.

When you read verse 23, think of the Cross. Think of all of the accusations that were hurled at Him as He was dying on the Cross. He could have spoken the word, and destroyed that whole God-less crowd, and He could have done it in perfect righteousness, but He didn't. He did not threaten them with retaliation. Instead, what did He do? He "committed

Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” He exercised the grace of God. He said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). He also said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). If you and I want to see the sufficiency of the grace of God, look at our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. He was being totally submissive to the will of His Father. He died on the Cross primarily because He knew that was why the Father had sent Him into the world. Not even the death of the Cross could turn Him aside.

In verse 24 we see that while our Lord was serving the Father’s will, He was also serving us, voluntarily bearing “our sins in His own body on the tree.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man will lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). But when the Lord died for us, we were not His friends, but His enemies. Listen again to those wonderful words written by the Apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit in Romans 5:

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (Rom. 5:6-11).

Regardless of how difficult a servant’s situation might be, and regardless of how unreasonable and unworthy his master might be, nothing could have been worse than we were our best when the Lord Jesus undertook to serve us as our Savior, not because we were worthy, but because He knew that was the Father’s will for Him. And He loved us and died to deliver us from our sins, that “we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness,” and He did it in such a loving and gracious and self-sacrificing way that many of us in our ignorance used to feel that we deserved it. We were like “sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” And why did we return? Because He brought us back!

**Concl:** Have you learned something new about the Lord Jesus Christ to-

day? I will have to say I have in preparing this message. I am not surprised to read in the Scriptures that Christ is the Servant of Jehovah God, but I am startled to see in this passage today that the Lord Jesus became my Servant, to deliver me from my sins, and to enable me to be able to live so as to please Him.

When we get into difficult situations because of what people do to us, or say about us, let us remember that whatever they might do or say, it is nothing compared to what we have done to the Lord by our sins, making it necessary for Him to suffer like He did to deliver us from our sins, and to make us His very own.

Oh, what a marvelous example we have in our Lord Jesus Christ! How we should love Him and serve Him as His servants, serving willingly, and joyfully, and obediently, and promptly, and thoroughly – and all of this from our hearts.

If anyone here today is without Christ, if you have never trusted the Lord Jesus as your Savior, I beseech you on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be reconciled to God by trusting in Christ and the work that He did on the Cross, serving sinners, that they might be forgiven of their sins, and be able henceforth to live lives that are pleasing to God. If any of you are concerned about your relationship to God, I will be happy to speak to you at the close of the service today.