

# Ministry of Grace Church

## 1 Peter 2:18-25 - Speaker Notes

### Introduction

As Christians, we know that our God is all powerful and loves us as His dear children. Because of this, we sometimes think that living the Christian life should be not only be easy, but comfortable as well. However – none of us got very far in our Christian walk before we realized that such ideas are nothing more than wishful thinking. If we knew before we got saved how difficult it would be to live the way God wants us to, I wonder how many Christians would still have made a confession of faith.

Our God expects us to always do the best we can at whatever we do. We should live as if everything we do is for God, Himself. Afterall, He is the Creator God, He is the Lord of all, He has forgiven us all our sins, past, present, and future and He has chosen us to be His children. Therefore, we should heed Paul's command:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, (Colossians 3:23)

Our actions should reflect our position as His children and we should fulfill our responsibility to be witnesses of His goodness and grace. We should be like the Christians in Philippi that Paul described in his letter to them.

... live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel, (Philippians 1:27)

In today's section of Peter's first letter, he puts some flesh on the bones of Paul's admonitions. In just eight verses that we will look at today, Peter tells us:

- As Christians, submission to others is necessary, but not always easy.
- We should rejoice when we suffer for doing what is good and right.
- When we patiently endure unjust punishment for good deeds that we have done, God is pleased.
- We have been called by God to follow Christ's example. He is the perfect example of patient suffering.
- Instead of attacking our accusers, we should surrender to God.
- Christ took our sins to the cross to pay the price for them. He wasn't forced to, He did it because He wanted to.
- Not only is God our Shepherd, He is also the guardian of our souls.

Wow, that's a lot to cover in just eight verses. Let's see how Peter said it.

### 1 Peter 2:18-20

**Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are crooked. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unrighteously. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this finds favor with God.**

We have to start off here by finding out what Peter means by “servants.” This is translated from the Greek word *oiketēs*, which means “a member of the household, but not necessarily a member of the family.” So, as Peter talks about servants, is he referring to slaves? No, because the Greek word that refers to a slave owned by his or her master is *doulos*. The word *oiketēs* is a reference to a household worker who does so by choice and gets paid for it. The fact that Peter uses this word indicates that this message is to all of us who work for pay and have a boss. It means that we cannot conveniently sidestep this command, claiming that it doesn’t apply to us.

Next, we need to look at the word “crooked.” It is translated from the Greek word *skolios* which does, in fact, mean “crooked.” You may be aware that the medical term for a crooked spine is scoliosis. When used in reference to a person, however, *skolios* means “unjust” or “wicked.”

Finally, the word translated “be subject to” is the Greek word *hupotassō*, which we looked at last week. It means, “to place something in an orderly manner under something else.” It is frequently translated as “submit.” We get a good picture of what it means when we see how it is used in the New Testament. Here are a couple examples, beginning with the one we looked at last time:

Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution, ... (1 Peter 2:17a)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22)

Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

As we learned last time, we are to place ourselves in rank under the authority of human government. In Ephesians, Paul tells us that wives are to place themselves in rank under their husbands’ authority. And, in James’ letter we are all commanded to place ourselves in rank under God’s authority. So, here in 1 Peter we are told to place ourselves in rank under the authority of our boss and, therefore, do as he or she directs us.

According to the Apostle Paul, God has established order in the world for the purpose of peace:

for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, ... (1Corinthians 14:33a)

For the sake of peace, He has established that we should all voluntarily place ourselves under the authority of others. And, we are commanded to do so, not only to those bosses who are good and gentle, but even to those who are unreasonable or unjust. This is a difficult task for anyone who has an unreasonable boss, but it is what God instructs us to do.

He tells us that when we submit to our boss, even if he or she is unreasonable or unjust, then this “finds favor.” So, what does that mean? This is translated from the Greek word *charis*, which refers to the joy or gratification one feels for a kindness or a favor done to them. It is often used to refer to the kindness or favor itself, especially when it is undeserved (like the grace which God showed to us in forgiving our sins). In the current verse, however, it refers to the joy that is felt for doing the proper thing when our sin nature wants us do otherwise.

Peter is telling us in this verse that if we do what is right because it is what God has told us to do and we end up suffering for it patiently, then it is a joyful thing. If you recall, James told us a similar thing in his letter:

Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, (James 1:2)

However, God does not promise us that obeying Him will always result in blessing and happiness; quite the contrary, in fact. Listen to what Christ told the disciples:

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you have tribulation, ... (John 16:33)**

We are not told that we **may** have tribulation but that we **do** have tribulation. But Peter is telling us that if we endure it, even though we may be suffering unjustly, we can be glad.

He is making a very profound statement that should be taken to heart by all who call themselves Christian. If you do wrong, are punished for it, and take it with patience, there is no glory or recognition given to you except that you got what you deserved. If, on the other hand, when we suffer wrongfully, our Heavenly Father is aware of it. And, if our attitude is right, **He is pleased with us**. Consider this, Peter says nothing about God's attitude toward us when we complain and raise a ruckus because we have been falsely accused or punished unjustly. But he says that God is pleased when we endure it patiently.

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. (**1 Peter 2:20**)

Do you see that? Peter used the same word (translated "finds favor") for God's response to our patient suffering. In other words, God feels joy when we suffer for doing good.

Peter is clearly thinking back on the unjust beating and suffering endured by Jesus Christ when he paid for our sins. In the following verses Peter will refer to Christ's wrongful suffering as a perfect example of how we should act. He was innocent and was supremely punished by men but He accepted it patiently.

### **1 Peter 2:21-25**

**For to this you have been called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps, Who did no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; who being reviled, was not reviling in return; while suffering, He was uttering no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. Who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that having died to sin, we might live to righteousness; by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

Continuing on from the previous verse, Peter says that the reason we are to be patiently enduring when we suffer wrongfully is because we were called to this very thing.

So, what does it mean that we were called? There are many Scripture passages that deal with our calling. Let's look at just two of them:

For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, (**1 Corinthians 1:26-27**)

... who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, (**2 Timothy 1:9**)

From these verses we see that our calling from God is associated with God's choosing us and saving us. The other thing we see is that the choosing, the saving, and the calling are based completely on God's work and not any of our own. God chose us to be saved, doing all the work of salvation for us. He purchased us as His own possession with His blood, and He adopted us as his children. He also called us to serve Him as his servants.

We were not called to be Christians so we could be rich, famous, or even comfortable while enjoying all the blessings of this world. Instead, we were called to be Christ-like. This should be our constant overriding desire, as Paul confessed:

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death, (**Philippians 3:10**)

Christ didn't just die for us, He suffered! Let me say that again, "Christ didn't just die for us, He suffered!" Not only did he suffer physically, but He suffered emotionally in the worst way. He felt alone. He felt deserted! When he was arrested in the garden, all of His disciples ran away. He was even deserted by the Father with whom He had enjoyed constant fellowship from eternity past. For three hours on the cross, He suffered the agony of complete isolation. Let me say it again. He was deserted by everyone, including His Father! And He did it patiently for you and me.

Jesus Christ lived His entire life without sinning! He didn't even "shade the truth," as we sometimes do. He was completely open and honest without trickery of any kind.

And yet He was tortured unmercifully, treated like the commonest of criminals, condemned at three illegal Jewish trials without proper testimony against him, and declared innocent at two civil trials. In spite of being declared innocent, He was stripped of his dignity as well as his clothing; beaten with the dreaded scourge until his back was shredded and bleeding; He was kept overnight without sleep, food, or water; forced to carry the heavy instrument of his own torture; then hung in the hot sun under the agonizing torture of crucifixion. And, as if that wasn't enough, the sins of all mankind were thrust upon him, and he was deserted by the Father for three hours while he hung alone under the weight of our sins, having already prayed, "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

Also, remember that at His trial under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor marveled at His lack of self defense:

And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor marveled greatly. (Matthew 27:12-14)

He could have proclaimed His innocence, for He truly was. He could have struck out in fury with the very power of creation against those who were wrongfully torturing Him. He could have simply stepped down from the cross, proving the innocence that was His alone. Those who were present while He suffered for us even mocked Him, challenging Him to prove His being the Christ by coming down from the cross:

And those passing by were blaspheming Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matthew 27:39-40)

Instead, He suffered patiently! And – He did it for you and for me. Before Christ's crucifixion, His accusers used harsh words in assaulting and accusing Him. "Yes, but they're only words," you say. When was the last time you were assaulted with words? Did it cause you to strike back or at least want to? Did you have to think about it before you did? Probably not.

We've all experienced it, haven't we? I can remember a time a number of years ago, when someone used harsh words to attack me and my actions. And I am ashamed to say, I didn't even hesitate in my parrying response, using just as much vitriolic language and emotion as my attacker.

When Christ was attacked with words of accusations which were untrue and undeserved, He "did not revile in return." When Christ suffered, both physically and emotionally, He did not threaten. Talk about power under control! Listen to what He said to Peter in the garden as He was being arrested:

Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:53)

One angel would probably have been enough to take care of the crowd that was there. Twelve would certainly have been an overwhelming force, enough to effortlessly destroy all of those who came to the garden to arrest Jesus. But twelve legions?! That would have been upwards of 60,000 angels!

Jesus had the power, authority - and opportunity - to strike back at his accusers and those who caused Him to suffer. Instead of fighting back, however, He surrendered! Not to his attackers, but to the Righteous Judge, His Heavenly Father.

When we consider that Peter's letter was written by a simple fisherman, it becomes even more remarkable that he should quote and/or allude to the writings of the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. The 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah is an obvious reference to the coming Messiah who would suffer intensely. The Jews, who were looking for a coming conqueror, did not understand His suffering. Isaiah 53 starts out like this:

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our peace fell upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:1-5)

The lesson Peter is teaching is that we should suffer patiently, even when we are punished for something of which we are innocent. Christ left us this example which we should follow. He was innocent. When He was attacked with words, He did not respond in kind, and when He suffered physically and emotionally, He did not threaten. Instead, he **surrendered** Himself to the Righteous Judge.

Since He was innocent, it logically follows that the Righteous Judge should declare Him innocent and acquit Him of all charges. Instead, the civil authorities declared Him innocent, then punished Him in the worst way! Why? Because, Peter says, "He bore our sins." This sinless Lamb of God took to Himself on the cross all the sins of mankind from the beginning of time until the end of time.

Think about it! Not only was he innocent, and silent, but He voluntarily took upon Himself your sins and mine so that the punishment handed out to Him, though not deserved by Him, would be received by Him on our behalf.

By His death, Peter says, we have the ability to live, having been declared righteous. Peter then finishes off this verse with a quote from **Isaiah 53:5**, "by whose wounds you were healed." The word "wounds," both in the Old Testament Hebrew and in the New Testament Greek, means "bruises," like those ugly swollen black and blue marks that result from a severe beating.

Peter closes this section by pointing out that we, like sheep, were continually "straying." This is translated from a form of *planaō*, meaning "to wander" or "to go astray." This verb is expressed as a participle, implying continuous action.

One of the characteristics of sheep is that without a shepherd they tend to wander aimlessly in an attempt to satisfy their most base desire (for food) with total disregard for their own present or future safety. Sometimes they will blindly follow the rest of the flock and at other times they are oblivious to the rest of the flock. What an apt description of our condition without our shepherd. We were lost and going astray, but when we got saved, we ceased straying and returned to our Shepherd.

To this metaphor of the sheep and the shepherd, Peter adds a subtle but significant descriptor. Not only is Christ our shepherd, but He is our **overseer** as well. In this verse, however, He is not just the overseer of the church, but of our very souls. With him now responsible for the safety of our souls, even to the prevention of our going astray, how could one possibly believe that we who are now saved could ever lose that salvation and become lost. In order to believe that, we would have to believe that Christ is not a Good Shepherd nor is he overseeing our souls.

## So What?

Placing ourselves under the authority of someone who doesn't deserve it is a difficult task at best. Anyone who has had a corrupt or incompetent boss knows how difficult it can be. Nonetheless, that's exactly what God instructs us to do – without complaining!

The ruler of this world (Satan) is the enemy of God. When we are ambassadors of our Heavenly Father in this world, obeying Him and representing him by our conduct and actions, His enemy (and ours) does not like it. Let us not be surprised, therefore, when we suffer for doing good. And – if you are suffering for your testimony and obedience to Christ, be glad! Rejoice! And give God the praise!

All Christians have experienced situations where we did what was good and ended up suffering for it in one way or another. Can you remember such a time? How did you handle it? Did you endure it quietly and patiently, or did you fuss and complain to God about how unfair it was? How will you react the next time this happens to you? Quietly and patiently, I hope!

Are you saved? If so, then you have been called by God to be Christ-like in every way. Are you willing to suffer the same way for Him as He did for you? Are you desirous of following His example? Remember what Paul said in Philippians?

... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (Philippians 3:10)

Do you, like Paul, want to really know Him and the power of His resurrection **and the fellowship of His suffering**?! Let us all examine how committed we are to God today. Is our Christianity simply a free ticket into heaven? Are we only looking for the blessings of being Christ-like? Or do we want to really be like Him... even to the point of suffering for Him and enduring it patiently like He did for us?

The next time you suffer at the hands of others for something you did not do, turn your thoughts to God, the Righteous Judge, and thank Him for allowing you to “know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings.” Then praise Him that through the sufferings of Christ you are righteous in His eyes.

Finally, let's look at another common fear among Christians. Do you sometimes feel like you have committed such a terrible sin, or so many sins, that God could never forgive you? Do you feel like you have completely strayed from God? Peter tells us that not only has Christ paid for all our sins (past, present, and future), but He is constantly guarding our souls so that we can't be lost ever again. Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul! And - thank you, Lord, for guarding my soul!

Let's pray.