

Submission in the Workplace, Part 1

1 Peter 2:18-19a

60-26

Let's open our Bibles tonight as we come together for the study of God's Word to 1 Peter chapter 2; 1 Peter chapter 2. We are so blessed to be sitting at the feet of Peter, that beloved apostle of Christ. We don't have the opportunity to do that very often. Peter, although he is a central figure in the gospels, did not write that much, just these two very brief epistles. And so it is a very special joy for us to spend a few months in these great letters that the Spirit of God drew out of the heart out of this wonderful man. There is none of us who have walked with the Lord for any length of time and studied the Bible at all who don't have a special affection for Peter. I don't want us to forget who it is that is our teacher, as we look together to this text.

First Peter chapter 2 and verses 18 through 21 constitute the text that we'll be looking at tonight. Let me read it to you. "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. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly, 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."

Now as we introduce this particular portion of Scripture, we come to very practical insights into the society in which we live. In general, as I have tried to assess the culture that is ours today and we do that all the time, I have come to the conclusion that the only real sacred value in our society, the only real pervasive moral obligation is equal rights. That's basically our only morality. We don't have any sexual morality. We don't really have any ethical morality. We certainly don't have any spiritual standards. We know very little today of family values, of true friendship values. We don't understand the meaning of love. We really don't understand relationships and we don't feed into those relationships a carefully thought out sense of values and morals. All we have left in this culture would be the pervasive sort of moral, ethical statement of equal rights. That's the biggie in our society. That is, I suppose, the new morality, the morality of equal rights. Everybody has rights in our society. Nobody talks about sacrifice, nobody talks about privileges; everybody talks about rights. Everybody is into rights. We have women's rights, we have children's rights, we have homosexuals' rights. We even have the rights of those who have AIDS, the first disease with rights. We have ethnic rights. We have illegal immigrants' rights. We have students' rights. We have criminals' rights. And then we have employees' rights. We even have the rights of the homeless and the rights of the unemployed, abortion rights, and on, and on, and on. Everybody is into rights.

And if you don't get what you think is due, then you take it out on the society or whatever authority is over you. Strikes, protests, insurrections, rebellions against governments, against companies, walk outs, all kinds of common occurrences when people rebel against those over them who aren't giving

them what they think they have a right to. And the underlying mentality is this: Everybody is equal, I have a right to everything and if you don't give me what I have a right to, I will rebel, I will fight back, I will lead a mutiny against you, and I will harass you every way possible to get my rights. I will protest. I will strike. I'll do whatever it takes.

Now this is the world's way to fight back. There's even a television program called "Fight Back," which feeds this same mentality. Everybody wants to get what they think they're due. And so, in the workplace we have the potential of protests, sit-ins, walk-outs and strikes.

Sometimes those kinds of things do effect an increase in income or benefits or whatever it is that employees are seeking. Sometimes they lead to a compromise which can benefit, I suppose in the long run, both sides. Sometimes they utterly fail and all the protesters lose their jobs, such as in the PATCO Air Controllers strike. Some win. Some compromise and gain a little ground on both sides, and some lose. But rebellion, mutiny, protests and strike is simply a part of our society. It is a means for gaining gratification for those who demand their rights in the social structure. We are thus a society conditioned to rebellion, to selfishness, whether passive or active.

Now the question that comes up for a Christian is, what should be my response to this? What should be my response to a protest? A protest rally against a company, against society in one form or another, a strike, a sit-in, a protest march, etc., etc.? What should we do? And I believe Peter gives us the answer here. For some of you this may be very practical because you may be employed by the Los Angeles Unified School District and they are about to strike. Some of you may also be employed by Eastern Airlines who are presently in a strike. And if you're not currently in a company where that's a possibility, it's very possible that you will be in such a company or that the company you're in will someday be struck by those who manage the employee force. Certainly we are all to one degree or another impacted by this in our society.

The instruction that comes to us in this portion of Scripture then is very practical, more practical to us maybe than in many other cultures where these kinds of things do not happen as frequently. Now what Peter basically says is summed up in verse 18, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect." Again, isn't it amazing how God authoritatively can take an immensely complex social system and reduce the proper conduct to one simple sentence, which is exactly what he does. Certainly the issue of insurrection, of rebellion, of protest, of sit-ins and walk-outs and strikes has been debated ad infinitum, ad nauseum. There have been panels, discussions, books and yet it can all be reduced to one statement: "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect."

Now that runs frankly cross-grain opposite to the world. But it is consistent with what we have already learned in the text. Back in verse 13 Peter said, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether the king as one in authority, or governor sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right, for such is the will of God." We are called, you'll remember, to submit to the government. Here we are called to submit to those who are over us, those who are our bosses, those for whom we work.

Now you'll remember that back in verses 11 and 12 Peter identified Christians as aliens, aliens. We are strangers, he says, and we are aliens in this culture. We are different, we really don't belong, we live at another level, we are in the heavenlies. But even though we are aliens and we belong to another society and another world and are citizens of a heavenly kingdom, we still must function, as long as we're in the flesh, as citizens. So in to verse 13 he discusses this matter of citizens. You

remember what he said, we are to submit to every human institution. And now he takes it a step further and moves from citizens to employees. The word "servants" has to do with employees. As citizens we are to submit to the government that is over us, designed by God for man's safety and protection. We are to submit for the Lord's sake.

Notice verse 15, this is the key verse to the whole passage, "For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men." When we live the way we ought to live in a society we silence those who criticize Christianity. We silence those who criticize the Lord. We silence those who criticize our faith, because we live such good, noble, quality kind of lives in the society that they have nothing which to criticize us for. So to silence the critics of the faith so that the gospel may go forth, and to even be convincing to the critics, we are to live a very particular kind of life. And in that life there is no place for rebellion against the government or against our employer, no place for asserting our rights. OK? That's what he's saying. It's not our concern to have rights in this world, it is our concern to be obedient and be submissive in this world. We will inherit all of our privileges in the world to come; no place for rebellion in the life of a Christian.

Now I want to illustrate this to you in perhaps a special way by having you turn in the Old Testament to 1 Samuel chapter 16, and I want to talk a little bit about David, because David provides for us a fairly graphic illustration of the right kind of attitude. And I think you'll find this fascinating as we examine David's life.

Now in 1 Samuel chapter 16 we read this in verse 1, "The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul since I have rejected him from being king over Israel?'" God says to Samuel, look, I have rejected Saul, he will no longer be king, that, of course, because of his disobedience to God and his false kind of worship. He actually tried to function as a priest and invaded the priestly office and there would never come out of his loins another ruler again, God said. And Saul himself was rejected. Samuel was acting pretty stupid about the whole thing. And God says to him, "How long will you grieve over Saul?" The rejection of Saul from being king was very painful to Samuel because he had become personally attached to Saul and because he knew a change of dynasties could bring a civil war, which would even further the weakness of the nation of Israel. But, God wasn't pleased with Samuel's pining grief. It was excessive and God says, how long you going to do that? By the way, as a footnote, grief I suppose to most of us seems sacred, and when we see someone grieve, we are somewhat reluctant to say anything about it because it almost a sacred thing. But grief, though we think of it as an almost holy emotion, can be excessive. It can take on the dark color of sin. It can be so excessive that God will chasten it because, you see, excessive grief is evidence of a lack of trust in God. It shuts out God and it questions God's sovereignty and it questions God's wisdom, and it questions God's love. And that's where Samuel was. By his excessive sorrow he was questioning the wisdom of what God was doing, he was questioning the sovereign choice of God. And so He says, in effect, stop this grief, fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons. Who selected the last king? Who selected Saul? The people. And what was their criteria? He was taller and handsomer than everybody else, typical popularity contest. God says I'll choose one for Myself.

That begins a marvelous period of history in God's plan of redemption. The one whom God selected was none other than a man named David. David, least likely of all of the children of Jesse, David is the one. Go over in the 16th chapter to verse 11, "Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are these all your children?'" He had gone to Jesse's house. "And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest and behold, he is tending the sheep.'" And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him for we will not sit

down until he comes here.' So he sent and brought him in," not thinking, of course, that Samuel would be interested in his youngest son, Jesse had left him with his flocks. And then we find this, "He was ruddy with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance." This was the man. He was handsome. He was ruddy, that is manly, masculine, tanned, if you will, and had beautiful eyes. "And the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him, for this is he.'"

You say, "Well, didn't God choose on the same criteria that the people did?" Well, yes and no. He chose the handsomest of all but it just so happened that He chose one who had the potential to have the greatest character of all, as evidenced by the tremendous legacy which David left us in the Psalms. "Samuel took the horn of oil, anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." He had the Spirit of God upon him. "And Samuel arose and went to Rama. Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him." God let him be terrorized by a demon. It isn't that the Lord sent the demon. It is that the Lord permitted and actually in a sense I suppose dispatched that demon to terrorize that wicked man. And verse 15, everybody recognized it, "Saul's servant said to him, 'Behold, now an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.'"

Now what has happened is David is anointed, David has a right to reign, David is the new king and Saul has been set aside. This doesn't set too well with Saul, obviously. He is angry over this. Look at verse 55 of chapter 17, follow the story a little bit, chapter 17 verse 55, "When Saul saw David going out against the Philistines he said to Abner, the commander of the army, 'Abner, whose son is this young man?' And Abner said, 'By your life, oh king, I do not know.' And the king said, 'You inquire whose son the youth is.' So when David returned from killing the Philistine — and that was an incredible victory as you well know, the Philistine's name was Goliath — when David returned, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand." Here he comes in there holding his head. "And Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant, Jesse the Bethlehemite.'"

"Now it came about," verse 1 of chapter 18, "when he had finished speaking to Saul that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself, and Saul took him that day and didn't let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself." This is very important. David is a powerful warrior, Saul is beginning to resent and hate David. Jonathan becomes the tool of God to protect David from the murderous intentions of Saul.

Look at verse 6, "It happened as they were coming when David returned from killing the Philistine that the women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, with joy, with musical instruments and the women sang as they played and said, 'Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands.'" Now that didn't go over real big with Saul. "And Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousand but to me they have ascribed thousands.'" Now the paranoia sets in. "Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" He has all the looks, he has all the power, he has all the ability as a warrior, he has defeated Goliath, he has defeated the Philistines, and now all the women are singing his songs, what more can he have but the kingdom? "And Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on. Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul and he raved in the midst of the house while David was playing the harp with his hand as usual, and a spear was in Saul's hand and Saul hurled the spear for he thought, 'I'll pin David to the wall.' But David escaped from his presence twice. Now Saul was afraid of David for the

Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul."

And thus we are introduced to the first attempt of Saul to murder David. It wasn't just once. It wasn't just twice as indicated here, it was three times. To make matters worse, down in verse 28, it says Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him. Then Saul was even more afraid of David. Now not only is David in a deep friendship with Jonathan, the son of Saul, but he is now loved by Michal, the daughter of Saul. What opportunity will Saul have now with both of his children warning David of his evil intents? And as you perhaps are aware, David even married Michal.

Go to chapter 19. "Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David, so Jonathan told David saying, 'Saul, my father, is seeking to put you to death, now therefore please be on guard in the morning and stay in a secret place and hide yourself.'" And you'll remember there's a wonderful story about how Jonathan warned David. There is even a wonderful occasion that Michal allowed David to escape, you remember, and put a...a false body in the bed to spare David. So the children of Saul did all they could to save David.

Again in verse 9, "There was an evil spirit from the Lord on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, David was playing the harp with his hand and Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear but he slipped away out of Saul's presence." He must have been an acrobat. "So that he struck the spear into the wall and David fled and escaped that night."

Now keep in mind something, will you? David has been anointed king. David has the right to rule the nation. Saul, this wicked, dispossessed man who has been given an evil spirit is trying to take his life. Now you would assume that at some point in time David would start to cry for his rights. From this point on, chapter 19, where he has to escape the third time, David becomes a fugitive. We pick up the story in chapter 23, most interesting. David is a fugitive. How long? A year and a half, a year and a half he's wandering. Verse 15, "David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the Wilderness of Ziph at Horesh, and Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh and encouraged him in God. Thus he said to him, 'Do not be afraid because the hand of Saul my father shall not find you and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you and Saul my father knows that also.' So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house." Saul is after him, Saul wants to kill him, but he is hiding.

Go down to chapter 24. Now Saul comes after him. "It came about when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines he was told saying, 'Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.'" Down by the Dead Sea. "Then Saul took 3,000 chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rock of the Wild Goats. And he came to the sheepfolds on the way where there was a cave and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave." Now Saul is running around the wilderness of En-gedi trying to find David, he decides to go relieve himself, and so he walks into a cave to do that, and he walks into the cave where David and all his men are hiding. Talk about vulnerable. "And the men of David said to him, 'Behold, this is the day of which the Lord said to you, "Behold I am about to give your enemy into your hand and you shall do to him as it seems good to you."' David's men are saying: Can you believe this? Here is the man trying to kill you, here is the man whose throne you are to take and the whole idea was let's kill him. Here he is in a very compromising situation. "Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly. And it came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's robe." Now that is a conscience, folks. It bothered him that he had done that.

"So he said to his men, 'Far be from me because of the Lord that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him since he is the Lord's anointed.'" Oh my goodness, he is that conscientious? How could I ever cut a piece off the robe of the Lord's anointed? "And David persuaded his men with these words and didn't allow them to rise up against Saul and Saul — this is all going on while Saul is still there — and Saul arose, left the cave and went on his way," never knew what happened. And David felt bad that he had even cut his robe. That's how close he could get to him.

Afterward, verse 8, "David arose, went out of the cave and called after Saul saying, 'My lord, the king.' And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself." He gave honor to the king. "And David said to Saul, 'Why do you listen to the words of men saying, "Behold, David seeks to harm you?" Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord has given you today into my hand in the cave and some said to kill you but my eye had pity on you and I said I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Now my father see, indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand, for in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands. I have not sinned against you though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.'" I won't exercise my right.

Verse 12, "May the Lord judge between you and me and may the Lord avenge me on you, but my hand shall not be against you." Do you understand? Chapter 26 verse 6, unbelievable, "David answered and said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, saying, 'Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?' And Abishai said, 'I'll go down with you.' So David and Abishai came to the people by night and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp." They were up on the top and they looked down and saw Saul and his army there. "Saul was sleeping inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head and Abner and the people were lying around him and Abishai said to David, 'Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand, now therefore please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke and I will not strike him the second time.'" Just let me hit him once, just once. "But David said to Abishai, 'Do not destroy him for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?' David also said, 'As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he will go down into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed, but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water and let's go.' So David took the spear and the jug of water from beside Saul's head, they went away but no one saw or knew it, nor did any awake for they were all asleep because a sound sleep from the Lord had fallen on them." Isn't that amazing?

Now with that in mind you can go back to 1 Peter. What's the point of all of that ten-minute excursion? This: Here is a man who is mistreated, David, here is a man whose life was continually threatened, here is a man not because of any crime he committed in complete injustice, inequity, and unfairness who is being pursued by a wicked man who occupies a throne which he does not deserve and a throne which that man does deserve, here is a man for a year and a half a fugitive in the wilderness who has the right to be king of the nation, but here is a man who will not rebel, who will not take things into his own hands, but who waits patiently for the Lord to work, who says the Lord will avenge me, the Lord will take care of Saul, I will not take that into my own hands, I will respect his position, I will respect his authority, I will bow my knee to him, I will not rebel. What a model. Talk about rights. He had the greatest right of all, to be king. Our fallenness makes us want to fight back, want to demand our rights, to strike against authorities, to protest, to complain, to be insubordinate,

to be unsubmitive, but that is sin. And the proper response would be the response of David, the response of simply committing oneself to the Lord for the care of the Lord.

In Romans 12:16 Paul writes, "Be of the same mind one toward another, do not be haughty in mind but associate with the lowly, do not be wise in your own estimation, never pay back evil for evil to anyone, respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible so far as it depends on you be at peace with all men," listen to this, "never take your own revenge," never. Never take your own revenge. The Lord will do that.

Listen, if you're the Lord's child and you're the Lord's anointed, believe me, no one will get away with any abuse of you. Jesus said, "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you for even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount? But love your enemies and do good and lend to them." It's nothing to be kind to those who are kind to you — that's Luke 6:32 to 35 — it's everything to be kind to those who are not.

In 1 Corinthians there is a very important statement made, by Paul again, 1 Corinthians 7:20, "Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called" to salvation, when you were saved, stay where you are. "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it. But if you are able also to become free, rather do that." If you get your freedom fine, if you don't, fine. That's not important. Verse 24, "Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called. If you were called a slave, stay a slave. If you were called as a free man, stay free." That's not important. Your Christianity doesn't give you a right to protest anything in the social structure.

Now remember, Peter is telling his readers that they are aliens who live above and beyond the world. And yet at the same time we have to be citizens who live in the world, submitting to every human institution. And we also have to be employees fitting into the social structure and submitting to those who are over us. And the reason is to silence the critics and to have access to evangelize them for the cause of Christ.

Now, all that is just background, let's look specifically at our text. And I'll give you just a few points, very simple and direct, you can see them yourself. The mandate for submission, point one, the mandate for submission. "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." The mandate is very simple, be submissive.

Now, let me give you the social background. I'm going to give it to you quickly so follow my thought. The dominant social structure in the Roman Empire at the time of the New Testament was slavery. In very early times there had been few slaves in Rome and slavery began with the Roman conquest. As the Romans began to conquer the world they used their prisoners of war as slaves. Many slaves were loved. Many slaves were trusted members of the family. But in spite of the fact that some were treated well, some were not. A slave was not a person. A slave was considered a thing. He had no legal rights. OK? There was no recourse, there was no suit possible, there was no civil appeal, there was nothing a slave could do. He was not a person. He or she was a thing with no legal rights. There was nothing in the world they could call their own. They owned little or nothing. There was no justice for them because they had no court of appeal. Aristotle writes, "There can be no friendship nor justice toward inanimate things. Indeed, not even toward a horse or an ox or a slave. For master and slave have nothing in common," he said, "A slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave."

Varro, another writer, divides the instruments of agriculture into three classes: The articulate, the inarticulate and the mute. The articulate are the slaves, the inarticulate comprise the cattle and the mute are the vehicles.

Another writer says, "Whatever a master does to a slave undeservedly in anger, willingly, unwillingly, in forgetfulness after cruel thought, knowingly, unknowingly is judgment, justice and law." Do whatever you want to them. So there was the dominant factor of life, slavery. In fact, it's safe to say most Christians were slaves. You say, "How do you know that?" Because when the gospel went into the Roman world, Paul writes, "Not many" 1 Corinthians 1:26, "not many noble," right? "Not many mighty, God has chosen the poor and the base and the nothings." That's the slaves." That is why in the Bible there is so much teaching, particularly the New Testament, addressed at slaves because they were the dominant force in the church. And the issues were very clear, the potential issue in the church would go something like this. OK, you're a slave and you become converted to Christ. Your first thought is, well if I'm free in Christ I ought to be free of this master that I'm serving, so I'm going to bolt this situation. You feel that you need to run from your master. The assumption is that you have a right to freedom.

There was a second problem. Let's say you become a Christian and your master becomes a Christian. He's your master you're his slave but when you go to church you teach the Bible study and he listens. Now you've got a difficult situation. Because now in the social structure he's master, you're slave. In the church you're an elder and he's not because spiritual gifts have nothing to do with social structure. So the church was facing some very difficult things. People were spiritually equal but not humanly equal. Note that please. Not everybody does have equal rights in a society, not if that society is going to function. Somebody has got to lead, somebody has got to follow, somebody has got to be in charge, somebody has got to submit. That's the way it goes, that's the way it has to be.

So the issues would be very clear. Some people coming to Christ in slavery would say, I have every right to be free, and want to bolt that institution, or rebel against it. Others would think, well because I'm over him in the church, I ought to be over him here in the estate or the home. Since there's spiritual equality, there must be equal rights. Not so, listen carefully. Not Jesus, not Peter and not Paul ever advocated equal rights, never. And the early church wasn't concerned about that. They weren't concerned about that. If you're a slave when you're saved, stay a slave. Masters and slaves in the church get along fine. You're one in Christ. "In Christ there is neither bond nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female," spiritually equal. But when you go back to the social structure, you submit.

You say, "That didn't bother them?" No, it didn't bother them. Why? Listen carefully. It was the strong conviction of the early Christians that though their fellowship in Christ had brought them into a relationship of equality on the spiritual level it didn't matter to them what the ordinary social distinctions were. That was immaterial. In fact, the New Testament writers and the early church were content with any natural, ethical, social structure, as long as the spiritual dimension was right. So Peter is not a social philosopher. Peter is not a social reformer. He is not saying, all right, you slaves, now you're all free in Christ, bolt, revolt, sit in, protest, strike. No. He says to them what in verse 18? Do what? "Be submissive to your masters."

The word "servants" here, *oiketeia*, basically is the word for household slaves. Most of the slaves were household slaves, that is, they served some home owner, some estate owner in some way. Whether they were out plowing fields or doing medicine as doctors or whatever they did, they did it for some house owner, land owner, estate owner. So they're called *oiketeia*. The word *oikeios* means

house. Masters is the Greek word *despotēs*, from which we get despot. It's a strong word. It means absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. So he's really talking about controlling people and submitting people. And he says to these household slaves, be submissive. That's a present participle, continually be submissive.

And do it with the right attitude, look at verse 18, "With all respect," with all respect. The word is *phobos*, from which we get phobias. It means fear, do it with fear. What are they fearing? I believe it's the fear of God here, not the fear of man. Peter is really concerned about that. Look at verse 17, he says, "Fear God." Back in chapter 1 verse 17, "Conduct yourselves in fear," and there, too, he means the fear of God. Chapter 3 verse 2 he says, "As they observe your chaste and fearful behavior," and again it's fearing God. Verse 15 also says that you are to make a defense with gentleness and fear, the end of verse 15. And in each time he uses the word "fear," he does it about five times, he has in mind the fear of God. So we are to be submissive to our masters with all due fear of God.

Now why does he say that? Listen to me, because God has set up social order, social structure. The employee-employer relationship is designed by God. And so they were to submit to that social order, for safety, for productivity, for the carrying on of the enterprise of human life.

You say, "Yeah, but you don't know who I have as a master. He's brutal, cruel. You don't know what they do to me on my job." Well keep reading. "Be submissive to your masters with all respect," not only respect for God who instituted this system, "not only to those who are good and gentle but also to those who are unreasonable." You didn't want that to be there, did you? You wanted out of that one. "Good and gentle" means "virtuous and mild." The Greek term for "gentle" means reasonable, fair, yielding, ready to forgo rights. It even means content to take less than due. This is a magnanimous, generous, kind, gracious person. It's easy to submit to that kind of person. But also he says in verse 18, to those who are unreasonable, *skolios*. You've heard of scoliosis of the spine, curvature. That's the word. It means bent, crooked, curved, metaphorically perverse, unfair. Unreasonable is a good translation, harsh, hard to deal with, unbending, unkind, ungracious. But in either case, what are you to do? What? Submit.

Now in our situation you can always get another job. In that culture you didn't have that option. Right? Because you were owned. And if you walked away and said, I think I'm going down the road, get another job, you couldn't do that. The master could take your life because you'd be a runaway slave. You remember in the case of Onesimus, who ran away from Philemon, he ran to the city of Rome, ran right into Paul, Paul led him to Christ, sent him right back. Read Philemon. Sent Onesimus right back to Philemon. He said, "Onesimus, you're a Christian, go back to the man who owned you and serve him with all your heart." And then he wrote that marvelous little epistle to Philemon, says, "Accept Onesimus back, he's become a Christian, I send him back with love. If he owes you anything, put it on my account." And Paul upheld that the slave was to submit to his owner, even though the owner and the slave were both brothers in Christ. The system stands.

The system stands. So in any case, whatever kind of boss you have, you are to submit. You say, "Well now what if my boss is cruel?" Look, God will take care of your boss, right? Just like David said. By the way, Scripture condemns the oppression of slaves. Exodus 21:26 and 27, Deuteronomy 23:15 and 16, Leviticus 25:39 to 43, very clearly, God condemns the oppression of slaves. God even instituted a...a seven-year release of the slaves and then the 50-year Jubilee release of the slaves. But God did not condemn people working for other people. And He did call us to submission.

In Ephesians 6 and verse 5, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling," again fear of God because God has established this social order, "in the sincerity of your heart as to Christ." Oh my goodness what a statement! What he is saying is you should serve your master as if you were serving whom? Christ. Christ. Look at verse 7, "With goodwill render service as to the Lord." He says it again because they probably wouldn't have believed it the first time, "and not to men and knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. And masters, do the same thing to them and give up threatening knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven and there's no partiality with Him." And he warns the masters that God's going to deal with them if they're unfair.

So Paul there is reinforcing what Peter says. We're to do it in the right attitude, sincerity of heart, as if we were serving Christ. The mandate then: No walk-outs, no strikes, no hold-outs, no protests, no mutiny, submission. Why? Why? "In order that" verse 15 "you may silence the ignorance of foolish men" and give a godly testimony, a testimony that says patiently and humbly, I take whatever you give and I serve you with all my heart and not only that, I commit myself to God, who will properly reward me and you for how you treat me.

That takes us secondly to the motive for submission, the motive for submission. And he simply says it in verse 19, "For this finds favor," for this finds favor. I wish I had time to develop it but our time is gone. If nothing else tonight to establish the principle is enough and we'll leave it there.

What does God expect out of us in the workplace? This is it, this is it! He expects us to submit, and not with a grudging, cantankerous, ugly, sullen spirit. But back to Ephesians 6, "With fear and trembling," that is, fearing God's chastening on you if you don't do it right.

Can I introduce a thought into your life and your thinking? You're having problems you can't figure out why. It may not have anything to do with quote-unquote your spiritual activity, it could be the chastening of God because you're such a griping, complaining employee. Ephesians says that you are to do it with fear and trembling. That is, you have a healthy fear of God who will chasten those who do not have a right attitude. You are to do it, your obedient service as a slave of your master, whatever kind of master they might be or he might be or she might be, in the sincerity of your heart as if you were serving Christ. And he says, not by way of eye service. What does that mean? Doing good when they're watching. Busy, busy, busy, happy, happy, happy; as long as they're looking. As soon as they turn their back, [growl], you know. Doing it as slaves of Christ. And then this statement, Ephesians 6:6, "Doing the will of God from the heart." Did you know this is the will of God? This is the will of God, do it from the heart as if you're doing it for the Lord. And know that the Lord will pay you back. That's Ephesians 6:5 to 9, what a great passage. Be submissive.

You say, "Well, the end result of this is what?" Well, the Lord will pay you back for all your effort. Number two, that kind of life particularly under an unreasonable, unfair boss, will act as a constant rebuke to his wickedness and a constant testimony to the grace of Christ in your life. It will silence the critics and perhaps even lead them to the knowledge of the Savior.

We can respond properly. I remember as a little boy my father telling the story about a young soldier who was weak and for some reason didn't fare well soldiering. He found a certain sergeant who was his boss who abused him greatly. He was unable to fulfill a particular performance in the training and

when he'd lie on the ground prone and unable to continue, the sergeant who had been so hard on him came up and with his boots pummeled his body, kicked him. He was in so much pain he had to be carried back to his bunk. The next morning when that reveille blew and the soldiers got up, the sergeant awakened, reached down to put his boots on and found them shined to a glister. And when he asked who shined his boots, he was told the man he had kicked the night before. And he went to him and he said, "How can you do that?" And he said, "Because Christ has given me a love for you." And he went on to give his testimony. And as my father told the story, the sergeant became a Christian.

It's a profound thing we do when we respond in a godly way to ungodly treatment. That's the mandate, we need to live it. Some of you are going to have to take a stand very soon. You should do it with joy and the Lord will honor you and the Lord will take care of those who are treating you unfairly. I'm not saying that sometimes the employees' concerns are not justified, sometimes they might be. But I am saying that God requires that our attitude be right and that we simply commit it to God and don't take vengeance ourselves and don't demand our rights and God will take care of it.

There's one other pervasive reason, folks, we don't want for one minute anybody in this world to think that we really care about stuff in this life. Who cares? Let's live at a level which communicates that we will endure anything in this life for the joy of the life to come and we will never send out a message that we're going to get all exercised and upset the system and lose our testimony to get something here which will perish anyway, right? And if we live that heavenly life, we'll have the right perspective. Well, we'll try to finish next time through the rest of the text, let's bow in prayer.

Father, as we think about David, who had rights and yet was a fugitive, mistreated, threatened, wandering, alone, in danger, who had every opportunity to grab his rights, to kill his enemy and take the throne which had been rightfully given to him, and yet he would never do it, but instead he bowed before the king and honored him and respected his office, for God had placed him there. Help us, Lord, to be like David, realizing that we are where we are under some authority that You have ordained in the social structure. There are some who follow and some who lead and that's the way it is in human society. Some are kind and gentle and some are unreasonable. Help us to be submissive to all, to maintain a purity of testimony, a high performance of work that is in the category of excellence. Help us to serve our earthly employers as if we were serving Christ the Lord, not only with duty that is proper but with attitude that is proper. And when we are abused and mistreated and maligned, may we commit the resolution of those things to you and never take them into our own hands and stoop to rebellion, which has no part in the life of a Christian. Use us, Lord, with those who oppress us to show the love of Christ, the great faith we have in God, who will make all things right, and our detachment from the world around us. May the world know that we are most concerned to live a Christ-like life in humility and love that we might reach even those who treat us unkindly. Use us, Lord, in that way, in Christ's name.

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