

## **1 Peter 2:18-25**

### **“Enduring Mistreatment as Christians”**

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[18] Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. [19] For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. [20] For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. [21] For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. [22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. [23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. [24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. [25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is one of the most challenging passages we'll come to in our study (and there are a lot of challenging passages!). Two Reasons:

1. What it calls us to (endure mistreatment)
2. The context (slavery)

**What does this call us to?** The main idea in this text is that **our new identity in Christ calls us to trust and revere God as we endure mistreatment.**

We will, in this life, be mistreated. You are probably being mistreated in some way right now—or you at least feel like you are! You are also probably doing the mistreating in some way.

It’s one of the most common experiences in our lives. (Go ahead, think of an example now).

And in this text, Peter writes to give us instructions, not OUT OF our mistreatment, but THROUGH it.

In other words, this is not primarily about relational *reconciliation*, but about relational *endurance*. He doesn’t tell us how to heal the relationship. He tells us how to wade through it in a way that is appropriate for Christ’s people. (“endure”)

**Context:** Peter is specifically addressing slaves (ESV = servants). This text could easily be seen as a defense of slavery in general and American slavery in particular. In fact, this very text was used by Whites in pre-Civil War America to argue that Scripture sanctioned and even provided guidelines for slavery. And it’s no coincidence

that it was used, because the instructions in this passage do not instruct the masters, but rather seem to bring the slaves into subservience.

The damage to the church's witness through the abuse of texts like this has been incalculable. For hundreds of years White Christians simultaneously preached the gospel of God's love for all his image-bearers while also looking at black slaves and telling them they were less than human, and they should simply submit. That was God's will.

And if the last few months have revealed anything, it's that the hurt and the pain caused by this selfish twisting of the Scriptures has not gone away. (No, it's not the only factor. But we're kidding ourselves if we think it's not a significant factor.)

And while we rightly marvel at how these professed Christians could simultaneously claim Christ and ignore the clear teaching of Scripture that affirms the value and equal worth of every human life no matter their race, many white Christians (myself included) have found it conveniently easy to ignore passages ourselves.

Passages that call us to bear one another’s burdens; to weep with those who are weeping. I so easily ignore that love “does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful...[7] Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Furthermore, we can easily drift into thinking that because we don’t hold overt prejudice towards our black brothers and sisters that we are somehow above favoritism, judgmentalism, pride, selfishness, and lack of love or empathy.

Let the history of this passage be a warning to us all—we have an *unfathomable* ability to sinfully twist our understanding of the Scriptures and of ourselves to justify and protect our sin.

And in particular to my white brothers and sisters let me make this plea—may we seize this opportunity to examine our own hearts and see if the Lord might want to expose any blindness to the sins of pride, favoritism, and yes, the sin of racism that might reside in our hearts. We have *nothing* to lose except the sin that we are blind to, and everything to lose by

presuming our own innocence, much like our predecessors have done.

Now, to the question at hand: **Does this passage justify and reinforce slavery?**

In a word: no. But it doesn't tear it down either. In essence, it *assumes* slavery.

(Other passages DO speak to Christians who owned slaves and command them to treat slaves fairly [Col. 4:1] and believing slaves as brothers [Phlm]. These don't exactly tear down the institution of slavery either, but they do lay the groundwork for its dismantling.)

In 1 Peter, we need to keep in mind where we've been. Earlier in chapter 2, Peter says that the scattered Christians "[9] ... are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." And because of this new identity, Tony showed us last week that they should **live honorably** among unbelievers so that their lives testify to the gospel.

In this text, Peter knows that some of his readers ARE SLAVES, and he wants to encourage them that even in their state as slaves they have the choice to live *as Christians*. In other words, Peter is not encouraging the slaves to choose between submission to slavery and revolt, but between living their lives as Christians or living in their sinful flesh.

I'm going to show it to you in just a second, but I think that's what's going on here.

So...speaking to these who find themselves in slavery, Peter writes that **their (or our) new identity in Christ calls them (or us) to trust and revere God as they endure mistreatment.**

(APP) Our work, our marriages, our friendships, our society.

Endure mistreatment as Christians...two questions:

**WHY?**

**(2:18-21)**

[18] Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. [19] For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. [20] For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

## 1. TO PLEASE THE LORD (18-20)

“with all respect” = “in all fear” — fear of God (and NOT man)

**1 Peter 1:17** — [17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves **with fear** throughout the time of your exile, (ESV)

**1 Peter 3:2** — (husbands may be won to the Lord) [2] when they see your **respectful** and pure conduct. (ESV)

**1 Peter 3:6** — [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and **do not fear** anything that is frightening. (ESV)

**1 Peter 3:14** — [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. **Have no fear** of them, nor be troubled, (ESV)

So the thrust of this passage shifts from what kind of slave are they going to be to what kind of Christian are they going to be. And his main concern is that they live **unto the Lord**.

**And he anticipates the objection**—what if the master over me is wicked. Am I absolved? Surely in such extreme circumstances all the rules go out the window, right?

No. Even **"to the unjust"** we live in fear of the Lord.

And that sets the stage for the rest of our text. Even as we endure mistreatment, reverence for God and trust of God control us.

(APP) He's giving us a different reference point

(ILL) Planets

vv. 19-20 continue this same concern.

[19] For this is **a gracious thing**, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

Gracious thing (also in v.20)

"mindful of God"

[20] For what **credit** is it if, when you sin and are **beaten for it, you endure?** — NOT talking about when we endure the consequences of our sin.

That's, in a sense, how it's supposed to work. (reap what you sow; cf. Gal. 6:7; Prov 1:31; 5:22; 22:8; Job 4:8-9)



But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a **gracious thing in the sight of God**. — This is when things are NOT working how they're supposed to.

This is when you don't reap what you do sow, and you do reap what you don't sow.

(ILL) Re-seeding my yard

This is not saying that God is glad we are suffering, but that he sees us in our suffering, and our endurance with faith pleases him.

The suffering saint does not suffer outside of God's view, but directly in his sight and to his pleasure.

There's a hint of reward here.

## **2. TO FOLLOW JESUS (21)**

[21] For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

We are intended to walk in the way of Jesus.

There are aspects of Christ's redeeming work that we cannot replicate.

But those who claim Christ are called to "follow him" in the way that he walked, and his is a way of suffering, and suffering unjustly.

Friends, we are never closer to the life of Christ than when we suffer for doing good. (This is not what people typically had in mind with WWJD)

(APP) If you are suffering unjustly, especially for doing good, take heart! Jesus knows!

How?

(2:22-25)

## 1. LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY. (22)

[22] He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

## 2. DO NOT RESPOND SINFULLY. (23A)

[23] **When he was reviled, he did not revile in return**; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

### 3. DO NOT SEEK REVENGE. (23B)

[23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; **when he suffered, he did not threaten**, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

### 4. TRUST GOD FOR HIS JUDGMENT (23C)

[23] When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, **but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.**

### 5. REMEMBER YOUR OWN MISTREATMENT OF CHRIST (24)

[24] **He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree**, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

### 6. REMEMBER CHRIST'S FORGIVENESS (24)

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. **By his wounds you have been healed.**

## **7. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DEAD TO SIN (24)**

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, **that we might die to sin** and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

## **8. REMEMBER CHRIST'S ENABLING POWER (24)**

[24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin **and live to righteousness**. By his wounds you have been healed.

## **9. REMEMBER YOUR TRUE MASTER (25)**

[25] For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.