

EXCELLING AT WORK

1 Peter 2:18-25

Intro: One of key words we need to remember every day is “excellence”. As Christians we should strive for excellence in everything we do! Someone defined excellence as “doing common things in an uncommon way”. A good definition.

There is nothing more common to all Christians than the daily time we spend at work in the service of others on our jobs. Peter in 1 Peter 2 shows us that one of the ways we bring glory to God is by striving for excellence in our work.

In the first century there were over 6 million of slaves. Often a third of the city populations were made up of slaves. It is probable that a great number of those who made up the NT church were slaves. Slaves were an integral part of the ancient Roman economy. Like workers today, they supplied the labor for production in the ancient world. Albert Bell comments in “Exploring the NT World” that advocating the abolition of slavery in the NT world would be the equivalent of someone today campaigning for the prohibition of automobiles.”

Christians were not encouraged to rebel or destroy the fabric of society; but to respect its institutions to the glory of God. Thus, slaves were told:

SUBMIT TO YOUR MASTERS

Submit continues the thought of the earlier section.

The word is not the common word for “slave” (doulos) but a word meaning “household servant” what we might call “domestics”.

The word “submit” ties together these sections of 1 Peter 2-3.

A Christian is not a rebel against authority! Just as he submits to the governing authorities, so he submits to the authority of his master.

“In all fear”(with all respect). The NT has many similar exhortations that fill out the meaning of this text.

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (Colossians 3:22-25)

Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against. And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are

believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles. (1 Timothy 6:1-2)

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. (Titus 2:9-10)

In just the same way, acknowledging that our bosses or managers do not have the absolute authority over our lives as the masters of slaves, the principles of respect for authority in the ways described still exists for the Christian.

But what if the boss is hard to get along with?

OBEY THE DIFFICULT AS WELL AS THE KIND

Peter urged the house-servant to be submissive to either kind of master.

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. (1 Peter 2:18)

Agathos (benevolent, kind, generous)

Epieikes (equitable, fair, or mild)

Skolios (crooked, from which we get the disease called "scoliosis").

Here it is used figuratively for the master who is "perverse, wicked, unfair, or surly.)

His question is a pragmatic or practical one.

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. (1 Peter 2:19-20)

What "fame" or reputation (credit) would one have if one endures mistreatment (the word conveys the idea of being "cuffed") for doing wrong?! And what if one endures that patiently? No credit in that!

But if one does right and suffers, then this finds favor with God.

This is "thankworthy", that is, it is commendable, beyond the ordinary.

Maybe the hardest thing we have to do is work for an unappreciative boss or to be subject to rules and regulations made by those who do not understand what it is like to do what you do or understand the problems you are facing! In our case, we can get another job or choose to bear up under it. In the case of the slaves they were trapped and had to live with it.

But someone says, "That's not fair". Yes, that right. Life's not always fair; and the sooner we learn to live with that the better off we'll be.

But why should I allow someone to mistreat me when I've not done anything wrong? Peter's answer is, "We have been called to follow the example of Jesus".

FOLLOW JESUS' PATTERN OF SUFFERING

Jesus is our example:

An example--underwriting, template.

Follow in his steps=tracks. The idea would be to follow closely after in another's tracks

Look at what he experienced!

Jesus knew no sin and no guile was in his mouth--Is. 53:9

Yet he suffered

When reviled, reviled not in return

While suffering, uttered no threats

Kept entrusting himself to the Lord

He endured all that He did because He trusted God to deliver Him. Enduring difficulty is a great expression of trust in God that in spite of how others may treat us we will do right and look to Him for our reward.

We can find power in that because he endured all of that for us.

Carried up our sins—"Carried up" a ritual term (cf. Lev. 14:20; Jas. 2:21)

Took a curse upon Himself--this is the significance of the tree (Cf. Deut. 21:23)

By His wound you were healed--Imagine the impact on a slave who was often whipped by his master to hear, by his stripes you were healed. How well they knew the pain! Yet, for them!

That while we were sinners:

Wander is from planeo, the word from which we get planet!

But now we have returns to Jesus, our shepherd and overseer!

He suffered...unjustly....without sinning in kind...and for the good of others. This is what we are also called upon to do.

Conclusion: Peter's exhortations contain a timely message for today's workers. And they give us direction when life is painful for us. Let it be a reminded of all that the Lord endured for us and follow in His footsteps.