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## A BETTER RESISTANCE | CHRISTIANITY ISN'T FOR WIMPS (9)

March 14, 2021

1 Peter 2:18-3:7

*<sup>18</sup> Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. <sup>19</sup> For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

*<sup>1</sup> Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see your respectful and pure conduct. <sup>3</sup> Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— <sup>4</sup> but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. <sup>5</sup> For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

*<sup>7</sup> Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

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### BACKGROUND

“[In Peter’s day], quite a few Christians were slaves, as you might expect granted that the gospel of Jesus gives dignity and self-worth to all those who believe it. Peter addresses these Christian slaves. Instead of telling them (as we might prefer) that they should rise up in revolt against their masters, he tells them to obey, and to show respect. And he stresses this, not only when the masters in question are kindly and fair-minded, but also when they are unjust..

The key to it all, of course, is that the crucifixion of the Messiah was the most unjust and wicked act the world had ever seen. Here was the one man who deserved nothing but praise and gratitude, and they rejected him, beat him up, and killed him. To understand this, Peter goes back, as many early Christians did, to Isaiah, this time to the famous chapter 53, where the royal figure of the ‘servant,’ called to carry out God’s worldwide saving purpose, does so precisely by being unjustly treated, being insulted but not replying in kind, suffering without throwing back curses at his torturers.... This is one of the clearest statements in the whole New Testament of the fact that Jesus, the Messiah, took upon himself the punishment that his people deserved.” (*The Early Christian Letters* by N.T. Wright)

“It is important to note that the Roman institution of being a “bond-servant” was very different from the institution of slavery in North America during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Slaves generally were permitted to work for pay and to save enough to buy their freedom. The NT assumes that trafficking in human beings is a sin (1 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 18:11-13), and Paul urges Christian slaves who can gain freedom to do so. The released slave was officially designated as a “freedman.” and frequently continued to work for his former master. Many inscriptions from freedmen indicate the tendency to adopt the family name of their former master (now their “patron”) and to continue honoring them.” (*ESV Study Bible Notes*)

In the second half of the passage, Peter addresses some of the stereotypes which men and women easily fell into in the ancient world. His basic point is that both husbands and wives should live in a surprisingly different way. For wives, he emphasizes the beauty that comes from a heart of humility and respect. For husbands, he emphasizes showing honor to their wives (who are generally physically weaker, and therefore, more vulnerable to abuse), and reminding them to regard their wives as equal heirs of the grace of life. In every relationship, Christians are to follow Jesus’ example and his willingness to show respect and humility even in the face of injustice, trusting that God himself will judge all things justly.

**PURPOSE** To understand how the Christ’s suffering both shows us the example of godly endurance and gives us the strength to endure all things

**DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

1. Looking at verses 21-25, how does Peter say Christ faced suffering and injustice?
2. In light of verses 21-25, how do you respond to Peter’s directives for slaves in verses 18-20 and husbands and wives in verses 1-7? How does the example of Christ affect your outlook on the unjust suffering you have faced (or presently face)?
3. How can living in this way (i.e. enduring sorrows while suffering unjustly with God’s grace in mind) be honoring to God?

**LEADER’S NOTES**

**Question 1:** The purpose of this question is to see that Christ’s suffering on your behalf enables you to endure our own suffering. Verse 23 is a key verse. “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.” Jesus possessed all the power of God, yet he never used it to punish others when he was mistreated. He is the ultimate example of gentleness, humility and restraint.

Jesus entrusted himself to God because he judges with absolute perfect justice. In other words, God as The Ultimate Judge will respond to all wrongdoing in one of two ways. He will either repay the wrongdoer with perfect justice, or God will forgive because of the punishment Jesus himself already took upon himself on their behalf. Either way, God’s justice ultimately prevails. The good news for Christians is that God can show mercy to those who trust in Jesus because he himself has borne the full and complete punishment for their sins. Furthermore, verses 19-20 indicate that God’s people will receive a reward from him if they endure suffering righteously.

Patient endurance of suffering is also evidence of God's grace at work.

**Question 2:** The purpose of this question is to connect the sufferings of Jesus with the call for Christians to endure suffering righteously in their own circumstances. In verse 18, Peter calls on slaves to be subject even to evil masters, with all respect. In doing so, they are following in the footsteps of their Lord and Savior, who for their sake, endured unjust suffering for them. When such suffering is endured with God's grace in mind, it can bring about God's good purposes (such as Christian witness and a change of heart of others). God also assures the one who suffers for the sake of the gospel that their suffering is never pointless and in vain. When Christ returns as the reigning and ruling King, he will right all wrongs and reward all those who were faithful.

For Husbands, they are to be godly leaders in their homes. If a wife has an unbelieving husband who is disobedient to the word, she should not try to pressure him into converting. Rather, her godly conduct will testify without a word to the truth of the gospel. It's important to note that the Scriptures never say that women in general are to be subject to men in general, but it does affirm male leadership in the home (See Titus 2:5; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:2). The Scriptures also affirm the equality of man and woman as being made in the image of God. Submission is a quality that is associated with Jesus in his relationship to God the Father though he is equal with Him in power and glory.

**Question 3:** The purpose of this question is to see how God's purposes can come through patient endurance. Many Christians throughout history have faithfully endured suffering in a way that testifies to the beauty of grace and the transforming power of Christ. Such sacrificial love is often used by God to show others the example of Christ—not only through words, but—through the actions of Christians.