

It is always a joy of my heart to gather together with the saints and hear us join in song and sing the great songs of redemption. It is also a great joy to humble ourselves before His Word. Take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter 2:18-25. As we return to God's Word, we are reminded that He is speaking to us. This is His Word to us. He has great concern for us with respect to our spiritual life and what it means to walk with Him and to love Him. Now we come to this passage that speaks of submission, that abhorred virtue that often causes such consternation and frustration in the lives of so many. May I remind you again that the Holy Spirit knows that submission to authority is very contrary to our nature. It opposes our pride. It opposes our relentless pursuit of self-gratification and self-determination. In the previous verses that we've studied we've learned that we are to submit to civil authorities for the Lord's sake, because the Lord has asked us to do so. As we do so, we demonstrate our love for Him and our absolute confidence in His sovereign plan for our life. And He uses our humble submission for our good and for His glory.

Now He expands upon this theme by asking us to also submit to our employers, as a slave would to his master. So follow along as I read the text. "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, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

I fear that we might miss this great admonition if we focus exclusively on simply submitting to our employers, to our masters. We must go beyond that and understand that ultimately we're submitting to God. We must also understand the purpose as well as the prototype of our submission, and therefore I've divided this passage into three sections to help you grasp it. We will look first at the purview of submission, that is, the scope of our submission, and it will be to employers both good and bad. Secondly, we will look at the purpose of submission, namely that it finds favor with God. Thirdly, we will look at the prototype of submission, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we have a remarkable opportunity to understand what it means to bear with meekness the many injustices we often experience in life, those that are perpetrated upon us, especially as we endeavor to serve those whom God has placed in authority over us as employers.

Certainly many of Peter's listeners were literal slaves who had been converted to Christ. Some were living in good conditions and some were not. But all believers, whether involuntarily as a slave or voluntarily as a free man, all of us have served a boss. Sometimes it might feel like slavery, but we've all had authority placed over us: a manager, a supervisor, some kind of employer. Frankly, even if you work for yourself, you ultimately must submit to your boss who will be your customer. So we all understand this concept. The early Christians, whether slave or free, were targets of slander, ridicule and abuse, as we have studied. Peter does not come to them and say to them, "We need to gather together in a giant union and we need to picket these people that are being so unkind to us, these masters. You slaves need to gather together and go on strike. You slaves need to come together and

stage protests. You need to come together and file a class-action lawsuit because Christians are being discriminated against.” But rather than that, he understands and we must understand that there is a far greater issue at stake here; something far greater than our personal rights; something exceedingly more important than what is happening to me. The real issue is the privilege of suffering for Christ and all that means. That’s why I’ve entitled my sermon, “Submission and the Privilege of Sacrifice.”

When we submit to those whom God has placed over us, we prove to a watching world that our hope and our joy is not attached to this world, but rather to the world to come. “Yes, I am being mistreated,” we might say. But ultimately we need to say, “God, I thank You for this but I know that in it You are growing me and this is an opportunity for me to give glory to You. I will not demand my rights, I will not seek retaliation. But rather, I will humbly submit. I will watch You prove Yourself powerful on my behalf.” Folks, this is very contrary to our litigious society today. Our society has this idea that somehow we all have personal rights and we need to demand that those rights be fulfilled. And if I don’t have my rights fulfilled completely, then I’m going to file a lawsuit. Go ahead and make my day. That’s the attitude. Many times we as Christians can fall into that trap. The apostle Paul warned of this in Romans 12:17-19. “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. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”

Let’s examine the text and hear what God has to say to us. First of all, what is the purview of submission, the scope and range of operation of this command? He says in verse 18, “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.” In other words, the scope is to any employer, whether they’re good or bad. This would have been very difficult for slaves in that day, as it is for slaves in this day, even though we don’t have them in our country necessarily. There are many in other countries. In fact, I know there are some that listen to the sermons of Calvary Bible Church in that condition in other parts of the world. So for you people in particular, you will understand the gravity of what the Spirit of God is saying here.

Under Roman law, slaves in that day were the sole possession of those that owned them. They could be treated in any way the owner wanted to treat them. They were basically no different than an animal. Some slave owners treated them with great respect and dignity and love. Many did not. Their owners were called, as we see here in this text, *despotai* or masters. The English word despot comes from that Greek term. Later on it grew to have the additional meaning of a tyrant or a dictator or an oppressive ruler. But that was more the exception than the rule, even in that day. In fact, about 50% of the Roman empire, in the time that Peter wrote this, were slaves. In fact, most of the slaves were better educated and better skilled than the rest of the populace. Most of the elite professionals were slaves. They were ones that were taken from other lands: teachers, doctors, accountants, artists, artisans, musicians, etc. Many of them lived a very good life. Many were well respected, and others were not so fortunate. Think how devastating it would have been in that day if Peter had said to them, “Because you’re now free in Christ, you need to rise up against the oppressive rulers here. If we have to, let’s have a violent revolt.” Instead of that, he says, I want you to “be submissive to your masters with all respect.”

Once again, we must understand, the issue is not our well-being, but the cause of Christ. This had tremendous power in that day, as it has throughout redemptive history. “Yes, Master/Employer, you

are unfair. At times you are even cruel. But I am going to serve you with integrity. I am going to serve you with respect. I'm going to show up when I'm supposed to show up. I'm going to do what I'm asked to do, and I'm not going to do it with bitterness, because I want to demonstrate to you the love of Christ, the transforming power of Christ. I ultimately serve Him, not you, but I am going to choose to serve you." That's the power of a Christian testimony.

Some of you, I'm sure, work for tyrants. You must ask yourself, Is this my attitude in the workplace? The apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:5-8, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." It is crucial that we as Christians learn to live in light of eternity and not live in light of the few short years we have on this earth. It's easy to forget that crucial concept as believers.

Some might ask, "If I'm employed by a wicked tyrant am I obligated to stay there?" The answer is no, of course not. But as long as you are there, this is how you are to act. Many in the first century did not have that option. Some of you do not have that option. But their freedom in Christ in that day as well as today did not give them, nor us, the right to rebel against the authority that God has placed over us at that particular time. Certainly, if you have an opportunity for other employment, you can seek that. In fact, the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:20, "Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called," in other words when Christ called you to salvation, stay there. "Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that." So certainly you have that option.

It's interesting to note that in the book of Philemon we read about a slave and a slave owner. There was a man by the name of Philemon who was a "beloved brother and fellow worker" of the apostle Paul. Philemon owned a slave whose name was Onesimus. Onesimus came across the life of the apostle Paul, and Paul led him to Christ while he was in prison. Onesimus had run away from Philemon. He ran away and God caused him to run into a prison. There was Paul and by His grace, God saves him. When we study the book of Philemon and other passages, we find that Paul did not even condemn Philemon for owning a slave. Philemon was a man who had a church that met in his house, it was called the Church of Colossae.

I find it fascinating that what Paul did was to encourage Onesimus to return to his owner, as well as for Philemon to forgive him and lovingly accept him back as a brother in Christ. You might wonder why he didn't condemn him for slavery. The answer is very simple: because there is a bigger issue at stake here. The bigger issue is the spiritual application. It's not the issue of human rights and equality for all, as we are so caught up with in our culture. In fact, he used the whole scenario as an opportunity to encourage obedience to the Lord, and to relish the privilege of sacrifice and submission. That's why we read in Philemon 17-19, where Paul says, "If then you (Philemon) regard me a partner, accept him (Onesimus) as you would me. But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account; I Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ." So there we see Paul modeling restoration and reconciliation in this scenario,

because that's the bigger issue. The issue is never our rights. The issue is never our needs. The issue is always God's glory.

So even if we are employed by an unreasonable, dishonest task master, we are called to be submissive to that person, to treat them with respect. Certainly to pray for them, to consider our difficulty as a privilege before the Lord, a privilege to sacrifice, an opportunity to demonstrate the power and freedom we have in Christ. Often we find that God finds other opportunities for employment for us. Sometimes he removes those wicked people from us and brings relief in His time. In fact, later on in chapter 5:6 Peter writes again to these same people saying, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." By the way, in this time in their life it was the hand of divine testing. He's saying, I want you to submit to that. Humble yourself under it. Why? "...that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your care on Him, because He cares for you." Dear friends, such is the purview of submission.

Secondly we see the purpose of submission in verses 19-21. He begins by saying, "For this finds favor." Literally this means, "this is graceful indeed." This is worthy of praise, this is admirable, this is excellent in God's eyes. "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." The point here is that when servants or employees "bear up," which literally means to endure, to put up with, when you bear up with mistreatment, our submission finds favor with God. He sees that and He blesses that. He finds joy in that. Not to mention our submissive attitude and behavior exonerates us from slander. Frankly our love confuses our employer. Our faith in God mystifies them. Our hope in a future reward troubles them. By God's grace, as they watch us submit to their mistreatment, our overall testimony will convict them of their sin and win them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I might hasten to add one other component. When we obey the Lord and truly suffer for Him with that kind of an attitude, our hearts are filled with great joy. I hope you know what that feels like. When you know that you are being mistreated for His sake; yes, the external part of us and even our bodies might grimace under the pain, but deep within our hearts there is great joy, because we are persevering for the glory of God. And He ministers to us and brings joy to our heart. It's a mystical joy, the joy of a clear conscience and a faithful heart when we do what is right and we patiently suffer in the midst of great adversity. This is an amazing blessing in and of itself.

This was at the heart of the psalmist's prayer in Psalm 26:1-3 where he says, "Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering. Examine me, O Lord, and try me; test my mind and my heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth." A clear conscience is a wonderful blessing. When we walk with the Spirit of God, Galatians 5 tells us that the fruits will include peace and joy. Therefore we would be able to say, "Bring on the adversity, bring on the mistreatment. I will endure it by God's grace and with His power. And as I do so, as I suffer for the cause of Christ, I will in turn experience the great joy of the Lord."

So we must remember, that is where we find spiritual benefit and joy. That is how divine favor is lavished upon us. Certainly there is no spiritual benefit to retaliation. There is no credit, as Peter tells us, in reprisal against those who mistreat us. In verse 20 he says, "For what credit is there if, when you sin," in other words when you have an attitude of revenge and rebellion, anger, pride and so on, there's

no credit there, “if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience.” That’s not what we’re called to. We’re called to humility, to being content with the situation God has placed us in and trusting Him with His sovereign plan for our life. That’s why he says there is great reward here, we “find favor with God.” He sees our afflictions. He sees what we’re going through. He feels our pain. He remembers our suffering. In Psalm 56:8 we read that He puts our tears in a bottle, metaphorically speaking.

I remember when I was in Israel, seeing in a number of places, little bottles of different colors. Ancient bottles, very brittle. You couldn’t touch them, even though there were some that I was actually able to feel. Little glass bottles that looked like test tubes. Those were the bottles the Jews would use as a reminder of that very truth, that God sees their tears and captures them in a bottle. It is said that many times they would cry and allow the tears to go into the bottles as a reminder of God’s mercy. God is well pleased with those who endure for His sake, when we entrust ourselves to His great care and to His sovereign purposes.

We read of a great example of this in 2 Thessalonians 1:4-7. The apostle Paul speaks to the people at Thessalonica and he says, “...we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted.” I ask you, could this be said of you? Could this be said of you in your current condition? We must never forget what Peter has said here in verse 21, that we have been “called for this purpose.”

Again, people often ask about God’s will. What is God’s will for my life? There are so many passages of Scripture that give us some very objective answers to that question, but certainly here is one. He’s saying that I want you to consider it a privilege to suffer for Me by submitting to your employer in the workplace. I know you hear that and you say, “That’s not quite the answer I was hoping for.” Yet, therein is where we find our greatest joy, our greatest blessing. When life gets really hard, it’s easy to allow our flesh to convince us that somehow God has forsaken us. We begin to panic and we despair and compromise and react in anger and get depressed. When that happens, you need to go back to this text and many others like it and say, “Wait a minute. I have been called for this purpose. God is up to something in my life. I can rejoice in this. I can do, as James tells us to do, I can count it all joy. I know that this testing of my faith is producing perseverance, that God is perfecting me, completing me, using this difficult scenario to conform me into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to perhaps manifest Yourself to other people that I might not even know about.”

Beloved, never think that your sufferings are outside the will of God. Never think that somehow what you’re experiencing has caught God by surprise and now He’s running around the throne room of heaven trying to figure out what to do here. What a terrible calamity has happened to My dear person here. We need to collaborate together to do something! No. That is not the God of the Bible. That is a false god. We have been called for this purpose. Paul reminded the Thessalonians that even his own personal trials and personal afflictions were not a sign of divine abandonment but of divine sovereignty. In 1 Thessalonians 3:3 he said, “No one should be disturbed by these afflictions;” referring to the ones he was experiencing, “for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.” That must be our perspective. The purpose of our submission is to honor God. We must count it

a privilege to sacrifice ourselves in this way, to sacrifice our own desire to be treated fairly and kindly, for a higher good, namely the glory of God. Too often we as Christians want relief more than we want blessing. We think that because we are now part of the family of God we should be on easy street. We think that now we deserve better. Or we buy the great American lie that there is supposed to be liberty and justice for all, and I demand it. That is no demand of a Christian. The only liberty we have experienced this side of glory is the freedom from the slavery of sin. Thank God we have not experienced justice—we have experienced mercy.

Ultimately our freedom will be fully realized in glory. But so often we as Christians think we deserve something better, and we need to fight for our rights and all that stuff. There is a place to be obedient to the laws of the land, and there are times when the law can come to your rescue and there's nothing wrong with that. But we must remember that if they persecuted Jesus, they're going to persecute us. In fact, the Lord said in John 15:20, "A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." That's part of what it means to live in a fallen world and to deny yourself and to serve Christ. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." By the way, the key to understanding that text is the whole idea of living godly in Christ Jesus. If you compromise, you're not going to be persecuted nearly to the extent that you will be if you live godly in Christ Jesus.

When applied to the workplace, John MacArthur has summarized this so well. "It is more important to God that those who are citizens of heaven display a faithful testimony, marked by spiritual integrity, than that they strive to attain all their perceived rights in this world. It is more important to God for believers to uphold the credibility of gospel power than to obtain a raise or promotion in their vocation. It is ultimately far more important to God that believers demonstrate their submission to His sovereignty in every area of life than that they protest against problems at their workplace."

Let me ask you to think about your own situation, especially those of you that are experiencing trials in the workplace. As you think about that right now, do you find yourselves having a feeling of resentment and you kind of grit your teeth? Because if you do, I would encourage you to ask God to help you understand His perspective, to help you understand that this trial really is a privilege to suffer on His behalf, and to literally take a moment and thank Him for it. To say, "God, thank You for this opportunity for me to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Thank You for this opportunity to prove the transforming power of the gospel. I pray that my employer and other people will see Christ in me and perhaps by Your grace You will use my testimony to bring them to a saving knowledge of Yourself." This is the kind of attitude that finds favor with God and brings blessing to those who persevere. I would warn you to guard yourself against this obsession that we have of our own personal rights. Many times when you have a preoccupation with civil liberties you will find that will inevitably distract you from being obedient to God's will, from submitting to Him as I've just discussed, from seeing Him as the One who is in charge of your life and lovingly submitting to His plan, and to use your trial as an opportunity to return good for evil and to learn to be content and to live consistent with this fundamental truth of our faith, that our hope is in heaven, it's not here on this earth.

Knowing how hard it is for us to think and live this way, the Holy Spirit now speaks through the inspired apostle and gives us the prototype of submission, the supreme model of submission, the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice in verses 21-25 he reminds us, "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, who committed no

sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

There can be no better example and thus no better argument for Peter to use to call his listeners to submission than that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Talk about a privilege of sacrifice. We must learn to immediately envision our Lord’s submission whenever our flesh rises up and rails against it. Peter had seen the Lord abused in the hall of the high priest. He had witnessed it with his own eyes in the shadows. He had watched the Lord being tortured on the cross. He witnessed these things with his own eyes and ears. Obviously his heart is being drawn back to that time. The thing that stands out is that the Lord Jesus did not retaliate. He submitted to the Father’s will. He submitted to incomprehensible injustice, as a lamb that was led to the slaughter. He was completely silent. With these scenes vivid in his mind, he reminds us that Christ also suffered for you. There’s the example. And to think that all of the torture He endured at the hands of wicked men, all the inconceivable agony of divine wrath that He experienced on the cross of Calvary, all of that should have been ours to bear. And yet He submitted to the will of the Father for our sakes, as well. He was our substitute.

In fact we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that God the Father made the Son, “who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Later Peter stated in verse 24, “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross.” He Himself, denoting the Lord Jesus’ voluntary sacrifice. He Himself did this. I must confess I never tire of this wonderful and amazing story. I find that the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ on my behalf and on your behalf is an endless preoccupation of my heart. Peter remembers the Lord here. Any thought of submission must cause us to go back there, because there is no greater example in all of the world. His willingness to submit was decreed in eternity past. He alone would be the eventual satisfaction of divine wrath, and He alone could die in our stead. Indeed all whom the Father had chosen were represented in Him, the second Adam. The text says that He “bore our sins,” literally to “bear up under an enormous weight,” the weight of our sin, the sins of the elect.

In Isaiah 53 we are reminded that, “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 well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” Oh what a blessed thought. Because He bore our sins in our place, we will never have to bear them ourselves. All of our sins, past, present and future were laid upon Him. Because of His atoning work they were left nailed to that tree. They were forever eradicated. They were cast as far as the East is from the West, buried in the depths of the sea, and He chooses to remember them no more. He put an end to transgression. He said, “It is finished.” He put an end to sin. All of our sins were imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed to us. Absolutely inconceivable. In the terrible agony of His crucifixion He endured what should have been ours to endure. Our just penalty, one that we could never pay, though we suffer for eternity. The glory of our salvation is utterly astonishing. It should cause us all to break forth in a doxology of praise from the very depths of our heart. Oh, hallelujah, what a Savior!

I would like to digress for just a moment and speak to those of you who do not know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and hopefully you know who you are. Only a fool would say, “No, I reject the offer of Christ to bear my sins, I will gladly bear them myself.” If that is you, I would ask you to rehearse in your mind for just a moment a list of some of your sins. Your selfishness. Your refusal to give God the glory in your life. Your outbursts of anger. Your immorality. Your homosexuality. Your fornication. Your murderous thoughts against other people. Your drunkenness. Your idolatry. Your slander. Your filthy speech. Your thefts. Your jealousy. Your envy. The list could go on and on.

I would ask you to think of that for a moment and I would ask you to set aside your pride long enough to feel for just a moment the massive weight of those sins upon your heart. I would also ask you to think of all of the ways that you try to suppress these truths in your life, to suppress the truth of who God really is, by running to alcohol or television or romance novels or movies or entertainment or whatever it might be; all of the ways you love to run to darkness because you hate the light of truth. And then I would also ask you to think of all the ways right now that your conscience is convicting you. You’re experiencing it right now and you know you experience it in the middle of the night when all is quiet and your conscience haunts you. The massive weight of your sin brings conviction to you. Do you still want to bear that sin? Now I would ask you to also consider something far greater. That is the words of the Lord Jesus Christ who says that because of your sins, because of your rebellion, the wrath of God abides upon you. Indeed He has said, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

My friend, if you have never repented of your sins, and you have never confessed the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Lord, the weight of your sin that you are currently feeling is merely a trifle of that which will crush you someday for eternity. I would plead with you to hear the good news of forgiveness, the good news of grace, the good news of the gospel. To hear what the Lord Jesus Christ said to you in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” Indeed I would submit to you as a minister of the gospel of Christ based on His Word that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

Now back to all of us who have by grace placed our faith in Christ, and we know the great joy of having our burden lifted at Calvary. I come back to you and remind you that we are being asked to be submissive to our masters for our Lord’s sake. The supreme example for us to follow is the One who submitted to the Father’s will and bore our sins in His body on the cross. Why did He do this? In verse 24 at the end he says, “so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” In other words, we have the power to submit in the ways we are being asked to submit. It says this right here, “so that we might die to sin.” That’s a curious statement, is it not? The original language helps us here. It is a term that means to get away from something, to be separated from something, to depart, to cease to exist. Literally what the Spirit of God is communicating to us here is that because of Christ’s death, we are dead to sin because sin can no longer condemn us. The curse was laid upon Christ. He bore our sins on the cross. We’re dead to that sin. We have been forever separated from its penalty and its power. Someday we will be separated from its very presence. So therefore we have the capacity to do what we are being asked to do—not only here but all through Scripture.

I was moved by our brother of a century past, Charles Spurgeon, the words he spoke regarding this very issue. He said, “He that is dead...is freed from sin; being dead to sin we are free from all its jurisdiction; we fear not its curse; we defy its power. The true believer in the day when he first came to Christ died to sin as to its power. Sin had been sitting on a high throne in his heart, but faith pulled the tyrant down and rolled him in the dust, and though it still survives to vex us, yet its reigning power is destroyed. From the day of our new birth, if we be indeed true Christians, we have been dead to all sin’s pleasures...we defy sin’s most skillful enchantments; it might warble sweetest music, but the dead ear is not to be moved by melodies. Keep thy bitter sweets, O earth, for those who know no better delicacies; our mouths find no flavour in your dainties. We are dead to sin’s bribes. We curse the gold that would have bought us to be untruthful, and abhor the comforts which might have been the reward of iniquity. We are dead to its threatenings, too. When sin curses us, we are as little moved by its curses as by its promises. A believer is mortified and dead to the world.”

How we can rejoice because we are dead to sin. Since we are dead to it we are now alive to righteousness and we have the power to submit. That’s Peter’s principle here, all throughout. We are not being asked to do something that we are incapable of doing. He even adds at the end of verse 24, “for by His wounds you were healed.” Indeed all of the trauma that sin has perpetrated upon our souls has been cured. Someday even our physical bodies will be cured when we experience perfect healing in our glorified bodies. So Peter concludes this section on submission by reminding us of the contrast of our past and present conditions as he said in verse 25, “For you were continually straying like sheep.” If you’ve ever been around sheep you know they will stray if they don’t have a shepherd. In fact, if they stray just a few hundred yards from where they normally go, they will be lost and they will die. That’s how dumb they are. So it is no compliment for us to be compared to sheep. But the compliment is that the Shepherd loves us and guides us. “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

Indeed, as Christians we can think about this and remember that before we trusted Christ we were wandering aimlessly through life, no understanding of what life was about, ruled by our emotions, not by our minds, slaves to our lusts, the lusts of our flesh. But no more. Praise God, no more. For the non-Christian, when they are treated in ways that are wicked, all they know to do is to react in retaliation. But we as believers know that there is a greater cause here. The greater cause is the glory of God. Indeed we “have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.” The Good Shepherd who leads and protects us, and nurtures us. The One in whom we can entrust ourselves, even in times of suffering, submitting to injustice even as He did, knowing full well that He is in control. Submission: what a privilege of sacrifice, to sacrifice ourselves for His sake, even as He sacrificed Himself for ours.

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