

September 21, 2025

1 Peter 2:18-25

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.

Scriptures for further study:

Genesis 1:27

1 Corinthians 7:21

Galatians 3:28



Grace and Submission Part II

1 Peter 2:18-25

BIG IDEA: Since God delights in those who do good while suffering unjustly, let's look to Christ while we submit to superiors, good or bad.

OUTLINE

1. The Servant's Call

2. The Servant's Grace

3. The Servant's Motive

"If all men are made in the image of God, then none are fit to be beasts of burden to others. The gospel sets men free not merely from sin, but from the structures that sin creates."

Herman Bavinck

"Though the New Testament never commands outright abolition, its doctrine of the image of God and our union in Christ strikes a mortal wound to the institution of slavery."

-J. Gresham Machen

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. How have you responded when a boss, supervisor, teacher, or coach unjustly criticized your work?
2. How should a Christian respond when a non-Christian uses 1 Peter 2:18-25 to accuse Christians of supporting slavery? As you consider your response, refer to the first point of the sermon, “The Servant’s Call,” and Genesis 1:27, 1 Corinthians 7:21, and Galatians 3:28. Considering the biblical perspective on humanity, what is Peter asking of Christians in 1 Peter 2:18?
3. Refer to 1 Peter 2:19 & 20. Is Peter commending suffering, injustice, or abuse? How is Peter asking Christians to respond if they find themselves suffering unjustly in their current circumstance? .
4. Refer to 1 Peter 2:21-25; from this passage, what is a Servant’s Motive? In what specific ways can we look to Christ and our community for the help we need to suffer without sinning?

Please note: If you are in an abusive marriage or you’re in an abusive employment situation or you’re being abused as a student, by a coach, teacher, or even spiritual leader:

- You need to get to safety immediately.
- You need to contact civil authorities where the law requires.
- You need to contact your pastors and elders so they can pray for you and intervene where church law requires.

If you know of someone being abused, you need to report it immediately...it is not gossip to report abuse, rather it is obedience to God’s design for justice in the world.

“It is crucial to note that the New Testament nowhere commends slavery as a social structure...yet it is also important to realize that New Testament writers were not social revolutionaries. They did not believe that overhauling social structures would transform culture. Their concern was the relationship of individuals to God...they concentrated on what the godly response should be given the situation.”

-Thomas Schreiner

“We are bound to obey our superiors in all things lawful, but if they command anything contrary to God’s law, our duty is to obey God rather than man.”

— Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 127–128; cf. Acts 5:29

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Peter does not by these words establish tyranny, nor does he wish servants to approve of unjust severity, but only to endure it when they cannot escape, until God delivers them.”

-John Calvin

In the first part of chapter 2, Peter calls the church to embrace her identity as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. And then last week, Peter began to move into exhorting the church as to how we are to interact in relationships. And the first relationship addressed was that between believers and governing authorities. How is the church to interact with those authorities? They are to wisely submit. It is wise to submit 1) because God sovereignly establishes those in authority. We ultimately serve Him in that submission. 2) Yet through that submission, we witness to the world goodness and freedom in Christ. Today, Peter continues the theme of our interaction in relationships and the sub-theme of submission.

Praise to Jesus – We praise God for Christ’s willing endurance and saving work. For His example, His substitution, and for His shepherding. For the strengthening grace to look to God’s sovereignty when we suffer unjustly at the hands of our superiors.

Repentance through Jesus – We repent where we have failed to live like Christ in the face of wrong. For retaliating with words or actions instead of entrusting ourselves to God. For resisting God’s call to endure hardship faithfully when it’s for doing good. For forgetting or undervaluing the cost of our redemption, we live as if our sins were small. For straying from Christ’s shepherding voice, going our own way.

Consecration for Jesus – We commit ourselves afresh to follow Christ’s example and live under His shepherding care. To entrust ourselves daily to God’s justice rather than our own vindication. To endure suffering with grace when it comes to doing good. To die to sin and live to righteousness in light of His cross. To stay close to the Shepherd—listening to His voice in Scripture, following His lead, and finding security in His oversight.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. Do you find it easy or difficult to obey the different leaders in your life, such as your parents and your teachers? (This passage continues discussing how Christians are to submit to those whom God has placed in various roles of authority. This week's passage deals with servants and masters. The closest parallel in our society is to think of an employer or boss and an employee. It is not exactly the same, but it is similar.)

2. What kind of master does Peter command us to obey? Who does Peter tell us that we are really serving? (We are told in this passage that we are to obey good and bad masters. This is a very difficult thing to live out. We read in this passage that we are to "be mindful of God" and to remind ourselves of all that we are "in the sight of God." This is an important reminder that we ultimately serve and obey Christ when we obey our earthly leaders.)

3. In verses 21-25, Peter brings up the example of Jesus when He dealt with the injustice of His death. How is Jesus an example for Christians in dealing with unjust suffering? What part of Jesus' suffering is different from our suffering? (He is an example of how He did not seek to behave like those who punished Him and did not return evil for evil. But His suffering is different from our suffering since His death was taking on our sin and paying the righteous penalty for our sins. The death of Jesus is ultimately what gives us the power to live like Jesus. If we try to live like Christ in our own power, then we will fail.)

4. In verse 24, what two things are given to us when we trust Jesus? (We are forgiven our sin, and sin's power no longer controls us. Peter says that we have "died to sin". He also says that believing in Jesus means that we will "live to righteousness". This second part is crucial for us to understand since we often leave it out when we discuss the meaning of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension. This is a repeated theme in his book. Peter wrote that we are called to be holy as God is holy.)

Scriptures for further study:

Colossians 3:23-24

Romans 6:14

Matthew 5:10-12

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Colossians 3:23-24

John 10:11-18

Isaiah 53

1. In verse 18, Peter calls Christians to submit even to unjust superiors. What kind of authority figures are hardest for you to respect or follow (e.g., teachers, coaches, bosses)? What does it look like to “be respectful” even when someone in charge isn’t acting fairly?
2. Does Peter’s teaching support injustice or abuse? Read verses 19–20. Is Peter saying we should suffer without ever speaking up or seeking help? What’s the difference between enduring hardship in faith and enabling harm? When is it right to speak up, and who can help when you feel mistreated?
3. What makes suffering for doing good “a gracious thing in the sight of God” (v.19)? Have you ever been treated unfairly for doing the right thing? How might God use that kind of situation for good?
4. Verses 21–23 say that Christ left us an example to follow when we suffer. How did Jesus respond to injustice and cruelty? What surprises you about His response? How does Jesus’ example challenge or encourage you in hard relationships?
5. In verse 24, Peter shifts from Christ’s example to His substitution. What does it mean that Jesus “bore our sins in his body on the tree”? How is this different from just saying He was a good moral teacher?
6. According to verse 24, what are the two results of Christ’s sacrifice? What does it mean to “die to sin and live to righteousness”? How does trusting Jesus give us both forgiveness and the power to live differently?
7. Peter ends with a beautiful image in verse 25: “you were straying like sheep, but now have returned to the Shepherd.” What does it mean that Jesus is your Shepherd? When have you felt like you were straying? How does it feel to know that Christ never stops pursuing and guiding His people?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. In verse 24, Peter explains the very heart of the gospel: that Jesus bore our sins for us, and that He went to the cross/“tree” as our substitute, dying in our place. Our sin was transferred to Him, and He was willing to bear the penalty of death for our sin! And now by His “wounds” we are “healed” (i.e., saved).

Question: Do you understand this good news? Will you now believe this good news and so be saved?

2. Jesus not only died for our sins, He also died so we could “live for righteousness” (v.24).

Question: Do you understand that salvation is not just about what we have been saved *from* but also what good purposes we have been saved *for*?

3. When Peter says “to this you were called” (v.21), he is saying that God has called us into a life of suffering that is patterned after Jesus.

Question: Only Jesus can save anyone, but how might our own lives and our own suffering be used by God to help lead someone to salvation?

4. Many theologians have said that Christ is not only our model for right living, but He is also the means by which we are enabled to live it out. In the context of our passage, this would mean that not only is Jesus our model of suffering, but He also provides us the strength and grace to bear it.

Question: In what particular ways are you facing unjust or unsolicited suffering right now? Are you trusting Christ and looking to Him to provide you the necessary strength to endure and give Him glory through it?

5. With Christ’s model presented for us and Christ’s strength given to us, how might you handle a difficult employer or work situation that you are facing right now?

Living Hope: How God's Glorious Grace in Jesus Shapes and Empowers Us by the Spirit to Live with Gospel Grit in a Foreign Land.



Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere, 1872

About the Artist: Briton Rivière, a British painter known for his animal paintings, particularly those featuring dogs and wild animals with deep emotion and dramatic flair, came from an artistic family. His father, William Rivière, was a drawing master and art teacher. Rivière initially studied at the University of Oxford, drawn to literary and historical themes, but later developed a fascination with animals and became renowned for his ability to imbue them with emotional depth and narrative presence.

About the Artwork

"Daniel in the Lion's Den" (1872) depicts the biblical story with lifelike lions, a popular and symbolic theme in Victorian England. It explores faith under trial, divine protection, and moral strength against tyranny, themes that resonated with Victorian audiences during a time when Christian values and moral courage were emphasized.

In Riviere's painting, Daniel's calm, unarmed demeanor symbolizes absolute trust in God. His gaze suggests prayer, hope, or spiritual communion, not fear. He represents the righteous man steady in the face of evil. The lions, though fierce, are subdued, a miracle of restraint. Riviere doesn't show angels or supernatural intervention; the restraint is invisible, spiritual. Some lions are relaxed, others alert, suggesting the tension between nature and divine command. Each lion has a distinct personality, reflecting the mystery of creation. The focused light on Daniel recalls God's presence in darkness. The murky den symbolizes the unknown, death, or temptation, yet Daniel remains untouched. Unlike dramatic biblical scenes, there's no movement or violence. The silence emphasizes Daniel's victory through trust, countering 19th-century action-heavy storytelling with a meditation on spiritual endurance.

1 Peter and Daniel in the Lion's Den

This painting, based on a biblical scene, helps us understand the overall theme of the New Testament letter. 1 Peter teaches Christians that as God's elect, they are called to live holy lives of faithful witness, enduring suffering with hope rooted in God's grace, while embracing their Gospel identity as a holy, royal priesthood in a hostile world. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, we are strangers in a distant place. Jesus told his disciples and us in the Gospel of John that we are "not of this world." Hebrews reminds the church that "this world is not their permanent home." Even within 1 Peter, God's people are called "sojourners and exiles."

Like Daniel, the darkness of this broken, sinful, and fallen world is always present. While we may never face a physical lion, Peter's first letter tells us that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and the spiritual forces of evil are ever present. Yet, like Daniel, we must face the opposition with a Gospel poise, knowing that which is unseen is more powerful than what is seen and against us. Peter uses the language of "standing firm" in God's grace as we encounter all forms of darkness.

Church, may we see the beauty of 1 Peter in its overall message: God's glorious grace leading us to Gospel grit as sojourners in a dark world. But may we not just perceive its beauty but also embrace God's unique calling in these words: stand firm!