

1 Peter 2:18-20

Nowhere does the Bible promise us that we will be vindicated this side of heaven. There's not even a promise that our culture around us will wake up and begin supporting and defending what we know and believe to be the truth.

We're told never to expect anything in return for our godly demeanor or standards of excellence and purity. In fact in **James 1:2** and **1 Peter 4:1** we are notified to expect fiery trials that are our tools to develop us.

Vs. 18 – When Peter wrote this letter there was an estimated 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. *“Roman slaves were simply the non-Roman citizens who were the lower, working class who basically did everything while the Roman citizens lived in pampered idleness.”* [Charles R. Swindoll] Slaves were the ditch diggers, the miners, the field workers and the cooks. But they were also the teachers, the musicians, the actors, the artists, the doctors and the secretaries.

It was through the efforts of Christians, primarily, if not exclusively, in Great Britain and in America that slavery was ended. There are atheists and professors who tell us that the Bible justifies slavery and at least, refuses to condemn slavery and will point to this text in First Peter. The Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament teaches the exact opposite, in **Deuteronomy 24:7** *“If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen . . . and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die, so you shall purge this evil from among you.”* Paul lists sins that are especially corrupt and in his list he includes enslavers (**1 Timothy 1:10**). Slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries existed not because of the Bible, but in spite of the Bible.

In his book entitled *How Christianity Changed the World*, author Alvin Schmidt recorded this in detail, *“... but I will summarize to mention quickly that in the African nation of Ethiopia, slavery was finally outlawed in 1942; in Saudi Arabia, slavery was outlawed in 1962; slavery was finally outlawed in India in 1976.”*

The word for slave used in this passage is found only three other times in the New Testament and it refers to household servants, what we would call domestic servants. This text is easy to apply in the 21st century in the relationship of an employee to an employer.

The point here is that if a servant without any personal rights or benefit package was commanded to show respect to his master, we have no excuse to disrespect and disobey those in authority over us, given all our rights and benefits.

Vs. 18 – The word for “unreasonable” is “*skolios*” which means crooked or difficult to deal with. We tend naturally to show respect to the manager who is easy to work for; we will submit to the supervisor who seems to appreciate our worth; we will submit to a boss who doesn't put on us more than we want.

We don't need a command:

- To love the loving
- To respect the respectful
- To be kind to the kindhearted
- To work diligently out of appreciation for those who appreciate you

What makes a mark for the gospel is:

- Loving the unloving
- Respecting the disrespectful
- Being kind to the unkind
- Working diligently for someone who will never offer a kind word in return

From the 1st century to this 21st century, that kind of work ethic will do more to prove the transformational power of the gospel than a thousand gospel tracts and invitations to church.

We're living in a world that treasures independence, autonomy and personal rights and it loves to criticize the authority, whoever it happens to be. The work force is filled with complainers and demanders; people asserting their rights, avoiding their responsibilities, and arguing about their assignments.

The question Peter would ask here is, are you one of them?

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Application:

Which do I spend more time doing: praying or complaining, about those who have authority over me? If the latter, what will my commitment statement look like to change that?

A similar question would apply as well: what are we teaching our children?

Do we ...?

- Complain when they don't get put at the head of the line academically
- Follow up on all their little complaints
- Call the teacher for not giving your child a better grade
- Get on to the coach for not giving them more playing time
- Fuss because your child didn't get a better role in the school play
- Teach them to grasp for the wrong glory
- Teach them to pursue the wrong person
- Teach them to depend on politics more than the Lord

Peter's point ... Teach them now to demonstrate submission and respect to those in authority whether it's a coach, a teacher, a police officer, or an adult. Teach them this submission even when they might be unkind and unreasonable.

Vs. 20 – Peter is contrasting suffering justly with suffering unjustly. The word for “*credit*” is used only here in the entire New Testament. It is a word that signifies a good report. For the Christian the Scriptures teach, “*Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord.*” And in **1 Corinthians 10:31**, “*Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.*”

Vs. 20 – “*But, if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it this is commendable to God. This finds favor with God.*” This is the ultimate bonus, this is the greatest payoff, the gracious commendation of God.

“*Peter is telling us that there is a thrill of delight in the very heart of God and from the throne, God stoops to say to you, ‘Thank you.’*” [F.B. Meyer]

God saying “thank you”:

- For the way you handle that personal attack
- For the way you respond to that unkind word
- For the way you faithfully work in the face of personal insult
- For the way you treat your supervisor with respect even when abused

We must remember we respond with a submissive demeanor to all because we are doing it for God and the cause of Christ to spread the gospel message.

Application:

Compared to times when a person in authority over you was kind, pleasant and fair, in what ways does submitting to an unreasonable authority give you a better opportunity to reflect Christ? How does that kind of submission prove the transformational power of the gospel?

Make a list of some possible benefits for children who grow up learning how to respond biblically to unjust treatment.

Pray and ask God to give you the fortitude you need to respond in humility when you are treated unjustly.

Seek to reflect God this week by submitting graciously and humbly to the authority in your life, even if that means you are taken advantage of and mistreated.