

Christian Conduct as Good Servant

1 Peter 2:18-21

Introduction

God's people are called to emulate the virtues and excellencies of Christ, that they might radiate the glory of God's character:

"everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (Isaiah 43:7)

As civil discourse evaporates, reason gives way to rancor.

"submit...with all respect" (v18).

"Servants" Gk word, *oiketai*,

"Slave" Gk word *doulos*.

"living as servants of God" (v16) is Gk *douloi* –

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:32-36).

"Mercy" moves with compassion to alleviate a wretched condition.

One of the strongest NT passages on Christian ethics:

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:16-21).

"Remain as you are"

"Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity. For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God" (1 Corinthians 7:20-24).

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect"

"respect" Gk *phobos*, which means "fear."

As Christians, we are the bondslaves of the Lord.

God condemns the oppression of slaves in the OT.

People were spiritually equal, but not socially equal.

Fighting and rebelling against those who treat us badly is taking over the agenda of our sovereign God.

"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants [*douloi*] of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free" (Ephesians 6:5-8).

"Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him" (Ephesians 6:9).

What's at stake if you grumble, resist, or rebel? Your witness, and it is not "a gracious thing" (vv19, 20).

"For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly" (v19).

"mindful of God"

"sorrows while suffering unjustly."

"No temptation [or trial] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation [or trial] he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The unjust offenses against you are the trials that shape and perfect you.

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Our confidence and sense of well-being is shaken to the core when we lose sight of God.

1. The Consolation of Job: *God's good purpose in his suffering.*

"Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold" (Job 23:8-10).

"but he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me I shall come out as gold"

2. The Consternation of Job: *God's sovereign right to do as He pleases.*

"But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does. For he will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind. Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; yet I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face" (Job 23:13-17).

"In attempting to build his trust in God, he must fight hard against the terror roused by his suffering" (Hartley).

"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Psalm 115:3).

"Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps" (Psalm 135:6).

"Job's struggle for faith reaches its severest test when his confidence in God collides with his fear of God" (Hartley).

So, Job searches for God, and yet he is terrified of His presence.