

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Peter 2:18-20 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Highly-valued Enduring Of Unjust Suffering

READ: 1 Peter 2:18-20, with vv.12-17 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - Even though we true believers are essentially foreigners to the non-believers around us, our living in comprehensive goodness, producing good deeds, and submitting to every authority can have an attraction and substantial impact upon them becoming open to hearing about God. (vv.2:11,12,13-14)
 - - God uses our good honoring and 'submitting to authorities', our 'doing good', and our 'showing proper respect to everyone' as means to testify to non-believers that our goodness comes from His intrinsic goodness. (vv.2:13-15,17)
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v.18 - READ

[Lesson Question: Develop the basis and the implications for the concept and its comprising elements in verse 18.]

SECTION POINT: True believers are commanded by God to respectfully submit to their work supervisors, even if being treated harshly.

"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters"

- - In previous verses 13-14, we true believers are instructed to "submit [ourselves] to every authority instituted among men", and then in verse 16 we are instructed to submit ourselves "as servants of God".
- - Now here in verse 18, we are instructed to submit ourselves to our employer and work supervisors, in the same way as household "servants" or "slaves [are to] submit [themselves] to their masters". (Strong's #3610)
- - We are to "be obedient and subordinate" to our work supervisors, making ourselves "quiet, calm, and under their control". (Strong's #5293; AHD - to 'subordinate', to 'subdue')
- - This means that arguing about, opposing, procrastinating, avoiding, ignoring, or rejecting directives from our work supervisors are not acceptable to God.
- - Also implied here is that manipulating to get out of doing an assigned task is likewise not acceptable to God, for example such as trying to coerce a co-worker to do the task you were assigned to do.
- - So obviously, complying to this command from God will involve doing tasks that we do not want to do, whether because we do not like doing them, or we feel that we already have too much work to do, or the task was previously assigned to a co-worker who failed to complete it, or the task is demeaning, or the task exceeds our abilities to complete it suitably, and etcetera.

"with all respect,"

-- The original Greek word, that is translated as "respect", carries an additional meaning ingredient of "to be put in fear; alarm or fright", suggesting that this "respect" is to include a balanced and appropriate element of fear, perhaps meaning:

- - - - respect with balanced fear of the authority of the work supervisor,
- - - - and/or a respect with balanced fear of accountability to the work supervisor,
- - - - and/or a respect with balanced fear that motivates avoiding causing confrontation with the work supervisor. (Strong's #5401; from Zodhiates p.1450 with *AHD* - to 'respect')

- - This respect with balanced fear is to be "all respect", meaning thorough, comprehensive, all encompassing.

- - So we true believers are commanded by God to submit to our work supervisors with attitude, words, and actions that are comprehensively respectful and balanced fearfully, which sufficiently motivate us to forthrightly amicably comply to their directives.

"not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh."

- - We are to submit in this manner to those work supervisors who are "good and considerate", who treat their subordinates "appropriately". (Strong's #1933)

- - This kind of supervisor is easy to work for and work with, essentially making even difficult work situations proceed more smoothly and less stressfully.

- - Therein, obeying God's command in submitting to and respecting "good and considerate" work supervisors is not usually going to be a problem or significant challenge for us true believers.

- - However, submitting to and respecting "harsh", "perverse", "unjust", or "unreasonable" work supervisors frequently **is** going to be very difficult and at times seemingly impossible. (Strong's #4646; Zodhiates p.1296; *New American Standard Bible*)

- - Certainly, their "harsh" treatment of subordinates does and will inflict on us unjust suffering.

- - Nevertheless, we true believers are commanded here to allow, quietly endure, and willingly "submit" to unjust suffering at the hands of "harsh" work supervisors, even to further extend "all respect" in return.

- - Unquestionably, successfully accomplishing this command takes great willpower, rock-solid self-control, divinely-empowered strength of character, inspired dedication, and overwhelming motivation.

- - And to endure this "harsh" treatment repeatedly over a long period of time takes extraordinary love that "keeps no record of wrongs", love that "always hopes", and love that "always perseveres". (1 Corinthians 13:5,7)

v.19 - READ

[Lesson Question: Discuss and analyze each of the three segments of verse 19 and then integrate your findings.]

SECTION POINT: God highly values 'suffering from unjust treatment' when it is endured in the manner that He prescribes.

"For it is commendable"

- - In this next verse 19, God does supply reasoning and motivation for this "bearing up under the pain of unjust suffering".
- - Appropriately suffering from unjust treatment "is commendable" to God; He determines it to be "worthy and deserving" of His "favor" and (by implication) deserving of His "expressing of [His] approval". (*AHD* - 'commendable'; *New American Standard Bible*)
- - God finds this 'suffering from unjust treatment' to be of significant value to Him and very important to Him, otherwise He would not determined it to be "commendable" but instead to be merely mediocre or average in worthiness.
- - Perhaps God's high regard for 'suffering from unjust treatment' is because this kind of suffering and response to suffering was endured to the extreme by Jesus during His execution. (vv.20-24)

"if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering"

- - As might be logically expected, God finds this 'suffering from unjust treatment' to be of significant value to Him contingent upon the believer "bearing up under the pain".
- - The believer needs to "experience" and endure the pain and suffering, solidly maintaining himself/herself acceptably and successfully as the pain is inflicted upon him/her and afterwards as well. (Strong's #3958)
- - This is like a main beam in the attic of a house steadfastly "bearing from underneath" not only the load of the roof itself, but also the extremely heavy load of thick snow and ice on the roof. (Strong's #5297)
- - The believer does not crumble to pieces, becoming mentally, emotionally, or spiritually unstable or destroyed, and unable to healthfully cope with the pain and suffering.
- - Furthermore, due to his/her innocence of any wrongdoing, the believer does not subsequently drop out of doing ministry work and terminate fulfilling the calling that God has placed upon him/her.
- - Therefore, how the believer perceives and processes the unjust suffering is very important in formulating how the believer responds to the unjust suffering, all of which need to be conducted in a manner that God finds "commendable".

- - From God's perspective, this 'enduring of unjust suffering' is a real-life test of a believer's faith, exposing and refining the integrity of his/her faith, testing and strengthening his/her perseverance in the faith.
- - This is a freewill choosing to endure the unjust suffering, including the adverse fallout and lingering aftermath of the unjust suffering, and choosing not to pursue any option to escape the unjust suffering.
- - This suffering victim believer may even be operating by faith with total blindness, trusting in enduring the unjust suffering "for the Lord's sake", even when he/she does not see that any good outcome or any distinct purpose of God will result from his/her staying under and going through the unjust suffering. (v.13)
- - A driving motivation for this suffering victim believer is to be in respect, obedience, and willingness to suffer for God.
- - Successfully enduring unjust suffering propels the suffering victim believer into a higher level of thinking, above basic instinctive reaction or naturalistic revenge-seeking.
- - And it accelerates the believer's progress towards spiritual maturity.

"because he is conscious of God."

- - Another contingent for God having a high regard for 'suffering from unjust treatment' is when the suffering victim believer "is conscious of God".
 - - In the original Greek, the word translated as "conscious" carries a meaning of "a moral awareness that springs from and is conditioned by one's knowledge of God and his/her duties to Him". (Zodhiates #4893, p.1340)
 - - Thus, this suffering victim believer, who "is conscious of God", operates from a position of being actively aware of and properly applying the commands, directives, and will of God, even when facing the prospect or reality of intense pain, harm, suffering, and distress.
 - - God highly values 'suffering from unjust treatment' when it is endured in the manner that He prescribes, because it accomplishes significant and substantial growth in the spiritual life of the suffering victim believer.
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v.20 - READ

[Lesson Questions: For the first half of verse 20, discuss and develop some main implications pertaining to God's perspective about this topic. For the second half of verse 20, discuss and develop some main deductions about: What effect does successfully 'going through painful unjust suffering' have on our faith?.]

SECTION POINT: By deduction, properly enduring painful unjust suffering takes our faith to a higher level of response to God.

"But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?"

- - By implication, God does **not** find it "commendable" when we suffer for "doing wrong", even if we appropriately endure that suffering.
- - In effect, God is saying that when we suffer for "doing wrong", we are "reaping what [we] sow", which He regards as **not** being worthy of any special "credit", or recognition, or "commendation" from Him. (Galatians 6:7-8)
- - From God's perspective, at the heart of this issue is that He cannot directly or indirectly reward us or commend us for "doing wrong", nor can He reward us or "commend" us for enduring suffering that results from our "doing wrong".
- - "Doing wrong" takes us far below and far away in the opposite direction from the 'going above and beyond the normal' that God determines as deserving of special "commendation" from Him.

"But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."

- - In contrast to how God regards and responds to us "doing wrong", if we "suffer for doing good and endure it" appropriately, this 'goes above and beyond the normal', therein deserving of special "commendation" from Him.
- - The approach to 'going above and beyond the normal' is to allow our-self to endure suffering that is inflicted upon us for unjust reason(s) - situations in which our heart-

attitude, words, and actions are impeccable, selfless, and good, and do not in any way deserve harsh treatment in response.

- - God finds our action in this manner as 'going above and beyond the normal' - possessing and exhibiting character qualities within the enduring of "painful unjust suffering" that are excellent, Christ-like, "commendable", and deserving of "great reward" from Him on Judgment Day. (v.19; Luke 6:35; see Luke 6:27-35, cf. 17:7-10)

-- From logical analysis and deduction, by means of conducting our-self in this God-prescribed manner when being inflicted with painful unjust suffering, we are taking our faith to a higher level of response to God:

- - - - taking a higher level of faith - that God indeed wants, and sees, and appreciates, and highly values when we believers properly endure unjust suffering;

- - - - taking a higher level of trust - that God will one day rectify the unjust suffering that we willingly allowed our-self to endure properly;

- - - - taking a higher level of determination - that we are going to endure the full extent and brunt of the unjust suffering, no matter how excruciating it becomes;

- - - - taking a higher level of commitment - that we are going to endure the unjust suffering until the end, when it ends naturally without us trying to escape or strike back at the abuser;

- - - - taking a higher level of ongoing dedication - that every day we stay solidly dedicated to completing this seemingly never-ending travail of enduring this excruciating unjust suffering;

- - - - taking a higher level of dependence upon God to strengthen us to endure the unjust suffering - like the night Jesus was praying before he was betrayed and arrested; (Luke 22:39-46)

- - - - taking a higher level of persistent waiting on God - for Him to bring an end to our painful unjust suffering, and to then facilitate our healing and restore our credibility and functioning. (1 Peter 5:10)

- - Of course, wisdom dictates that we can and should take precautions and actions in advance in order to protect ourselves and to try to maintain peace, but if unjust suffering nevertheless comes upon us, then we are to acquiesce - "consenting and complying passively and without protest" - like Jesus did during His arrest, trial, torture, and execution on a cross. (Hebrews 12:14; *AHD* - 'acquiesce'; 1 Peter 2:21-23)

- - Notice that within the contents of these verses 18-20, God is attempting to reason with us, persuade us, and exhort us true believers to willingly take on the enduring of unjust suffering and proceed through it in the manner that He prescribes here.

- - God is 'Calling Us To Endure Unjust Suffering' in this prescribed manner because it is for our benefit, earning us a "commendation" from God that undoubtedly will be highly valued and honored in the next life and will retain that high value and honor eternally.

BIG IDEA: God highly values when we properly endure unjust suffering, which undoubtedly takes our faith to a higher level of response to God.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:

-- For those of you true believers who have an employer and/or work supervisor, what is your approach to submitting to the authority and directives of your supervisor?

- - - - Are you submissive? Or perhaps, selectively submissive?

- - - - Or do you resort to tactics such as procrastination, avoidance, or ignoring, for examples, in order to escape doing work that you do not want to do?

-- Within your submitting approach, do you genuinely possess "all respect" for the authority and directives of your supervisor?

- - - - Or deep down do you harbor resentment, bitterness, contempt, or defiance, for examples?

-- If you have a supervisor who is incompetent, or lazy, or harsh, or unreasonable, or unfair, or demeaning, or verbally abusive, do you consistently respond in "submission and all respect"?

- - - - Or do you complain about and speak against that supervisor when he/she is not nearby?

-- In various situations in life, when you are victimized and inflicted with suffering due to unjust treatment, what is your approach in response?

- - - - Do you successfully and appropriately "bear up under the pain of the unjust suffering"?

- - - - Do you simultaneously maintain an awareness of and compliance to how God wants you to respond to the unjust suffering?

- - - - Or instead do you respond in whatever ungodly manner that comes natural to you, such as yelling, screaming, cussing, throwing a fit, taking reckless actions, threatening, attacking, scheming revenge, or self-medicating with alcohol or marijuana or binge eating, for examples?

- - Now that you have heard and studied in these verses what God says about enduring unjust suffering, what is going to be your response when unjust suffering is inflicted upon you in the future?

- - Are there adjustments that you need to establish in your thinking now so that you conform to how God wants you to respond the next time unjust suffering is inflicted upon you?

- - For those of you here who fail to become a true believer in this life, a reality for your consideration is that on Judgment Day, God will hold you non-believer entirely and comprehensively accountable for how you treated and how you mistreated your employees, your employers, your spouse, your children, your co-workers, and etcetera during your whole life.

- - God will use this accountability and all other areas of accountability of your life to determine the degree of punishment in "eternal fire" that you will endure forever in total isolation in the place of outer darkness. (Matthew 25:41; 8:12)

- - And regardless of what you may think or believe or hope, God **absolutely will not** weigh the good against the bad that you have done in this life in order to determine whether or not you get to go to heaven. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - To what extent does God want a believer to "respect" his/her employer or work supervisor? Does God allow limits to that "respect"? Explain your determinations.

- - To what extent does God want a believer to "submit" to his/her employer or work supervisor? Does God allow limits to that "submitting"? Explain your determinations.

- - Is living an easy and trouble-free life what God wants for every believer? Discuss calmly, without getting agitated or angry at other persons' opinions.]

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