

W.D.J.D. – What Did Jesus Do?

1 Peter 2:18-25

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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.

Introduction

W.W.J.D – Does anyone in this room remember what that stands for?

M.P.T. – Endure unjust suffering as a follower of Jesus Christ

M.P.S. – When Christians suffer unjustly; they should look to Jesus' example and trust their heavenly Father.

Purpose – To challenge my hearers with the call of God to suffer unjustly as Jesus did by trusting their heavenly Father

Exposition

As we seek to understand this passage, we have to keep in mind the broader context of Peter's exhortation to his readers. In **1 Peter 2:11-12**, we read, "Dear friends, I urge you as *sojourners and exiles* to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you. Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that in a case where they speak against you as those who do what is evil, they will, by observing your good works, glorify God on the day of visitation."

When we considered this passage a few weeks ago, we saw that Peter intended for his audience to live in a way that corresponded with their identity. They were to live as those that ultimately belonged to another world. They were to live as those that ultimately were under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The reality of their identity as "strangers and temporary residents" in this world was to guide their life. What we find in the verses that follow is context-appropriate examples of what it looks like to "live as strangers" in this land. Last week, we saw how each sphere of our relationships (societal, ecclesiastical, theological, political) was to be understood in light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our freedom in Him allowed us to honor our fellow man as those created in God's image, love our fellow brother and sisters in Christ in the context of the church, revere supremely God, and respect the government and its leaders so far as God's Word allows.

This week, Peter turns his attention directly to how “*servants*” or “*household slaves*” in the 1st century were to live in light of their new identity in Jesus Christ. At this point, it might be helpful to note that 1st century slavery was not like the slavery of the “New World” or the antebellum South, which many of us are familiar with from history. First century slavery differed from what we know as slavery in many fundamental ways:¹

1. Racial factors played no role.
2. Education was greatly encouraged.
3. Many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions.
4. Slaves could own property.
5. Their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn.
6. No laws prohibited public assembly of slaves.
7. The majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

While none of these factors should ever be used to argue for any virtue in first century slavery, it is clear that the slavery mentioned in the Bible was fundamentally different than the slavery that was practiced in America for so many years. We must seek to understand the Word of God on its own terms and not read our experiences and understandings back into the passage.

People in the past who attempted to argue for the legitimacy of slavery on biblical grounds were fools and should be regarded as such on these matters. Fortunately, in the grace of God, people grew in their understanding of the implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ and repented of this sin. May we never return to such sinful and debased ways of thinking!

Now, having cleared up some of the questions you may have had about the text in regard to slavery, we now return to the text and what do we see: Immediately we learn that the New Testament church was comprised of all sorts of people.

The gospel of Jesus Christ was for everyone! It wasn’t specifically for the rich or the well-to-do people of society. It was for slaves. It was for women, which for us might not seem all that impressive, but for their society, was a big deal! You see, everywhere the gospel of Jesus Christ went, it raised the status of the lowly.

I love how Peter begins his instruction by addressing the people who were considered “chattel” by many in their society. In Peter’s mind, these people, these household slaves, were image-bearers of God. They had been purchased by the blood of Christ. Regardless of the value attributed to them by their earthly master, their heavenly Father had already demonstrated in the cross of His Son that these people were valuable!

So, what is Peter’s instruction to these household slaves? “**Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.**” In verses 19-20,

¹ See Scott McKnight’s commentary from the NIVAC series on pg. 170 for more details.

Peter goes on and qualifies his command, saying, **“For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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.”**

In the simplest of summaries, Peter’s point is this: Submit to the authority of your master by enduring unjust suffering! Now, it is helpful to note at this point that Peter does not address the master at all, which is unlike the apostle Paul who addresses masters in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4. Peter is not concerned with whether or not the master is doing right, but whether or not the slave is responding to their master’s actions in a way that magnifies the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

This is most likely because Peter understood that he can do nothing about the behavior of the unbelieving masters, but he can exhort the believing slave to a particular type of behavior. For Peter, the lordship of Jesus Christ was to impact the behavior of the believer regardless of their circumstances. In other words, whether the earthly master was good or bad, the Lord of All, Jesus Christ, was good and intended to work out His will in the life of the one that obeys him regardless of the context and situation.

For Peter, there was nothing to be gained in suffering that was well deserved, but there was great gain in suffering unjustly. Specifically, Peter said that suffering unjustly “brings favor with God.” “Favor with God,” then, becomes the motivation to endure when suffering unjustly as a believer, and specifically in this text, as a slave.

But how does one ever get to such a point? How does one ever get to the point where they are willing to suffer unjustly for the sake of favor with God? It is at this point that the text become more inclusive of the entire Christian experience, extending beyond the relationship of a slave to a master to the Christian’s relationship with the call of God on their life. In verse 21, we read some devastatingly good words: **“For to this you have been called.”** Called to what? Well, just consider the preceding context. We, according to verses 18-20, are called to endure unjust suffering. That is God’s call on the Christian’s life. In fact, it is epitome of what it means to be “Christ-life.”

Notice how Peter concludes this section in verses 21-25 by pointing his readers to the ultimate example of unjust suffering, Jesus Christ (W.D.J.D.). Look at verses 21-25. Admittedly, there is a ton of rich content here, but for now, what you need to see is that Jesus was perfectly sinless, without fault, which means, any suffering that He endured would, by definition, be unjust. **Yet, what does Jesus do in the midst of unjust suffering?**

He did not revile or protest about fairness. Instead, He entrusted Himself to the Father, who would settle all accounts at the great judgment. By doing so, Jesus accomplished the work of redemption that the Father had sent Him for. Jesus’ suffering, then, becomes the paradigm (the rule or pattern) for the Christian suffering. If Christ endured unjust suffering with a fullness of faith in His Father without grumbling and complaining, we, Christians, are called to do the same, and thereby glorify God.

Conclusion

How can we summary, then, what we have encountered in this passage this morning? Simply put, when a Christian has a biblical understanding of the unjust sufferings of Christ, they will be able to endure unjust suffering of their own.

In other words, the Christian's thinking about suffering should be cross-centered. If Jesus endured unjust suffering, so should we. We are called to this! And it is in such suffering that God proves His faithfulness and power to us over and over again.

Maybe you are here today and you are not suffering yet... Be willing and ready to suffer! This is the call of God on your life! This is what Jesus meant when He called His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him! He called them to die to self! That has ALWAYS been the call of God on our life! To die to our preferences! To die to our comforts! To die to our rights! To die to our protest for fairness! To die to our self-infatuation! To get on the Calvary road, marked with suffering, but filled with hope and joy inexpressible, and follow Jesus! Prepare to suffer unjustly if you want to truly follow Christ!

Maybe you are here today and you are suffering greatly or have suffered greatly... My word to you is that God can and must be trusted! If the Son of God, Jesus Christ, entrusted Himself to the Father during the greatest example of unjust suffering that the world has ever known, then rest assured, you can trust Him too. How Jesus lived in the context of suffering should inform our own suffering. So, again, what did Jesus do? He trusted the Father. He believed that even if death would come, His Father was faithful and would ultimately vindicate Him before all. Jesus didn't have to fight. He knew that soon enough, everyone would see how right He truly was and is! We, as followers of Jesus Christ, can have the same assurance of our vindication before others by trusting in our Father to make all things right in His timing.

For those who are reluctant to follow Jesus, I want to encourage you to just stay away from Jesus. If you want to live for yourself, if you want to live for comfort in this life, if you are satisfied with your stuff and with living a purposeless life, if you think you are a good enough, if you are okay forfeiting an eternity of joy and comfort for 80+ years of empty pleasures in this world, then stay away from Jesus! But if you want meaning in this life, if you want purpose, if you want joy even in the midst of the most agonizing circumstances, if you want eternal life, then today, you need to come to Jesus! By the world's standards, He might not be safe, but He is most certainly good and He is the king! And all who put their trust in Him will never be put to shame! He begs you through me today, come, be forgiven, be restored, be renewed, Come to Him, today!