

But You Don't Know My Boss

I Peter 2:18-21

There is a story about Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in 1971. But as great a quarterback as he was he faced a great struggle that year. Staubach said that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals was a source of trial for him. Coach Tom Landry sent in every play. He was told when to pass, when to run, and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Staubach considered coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.

I think regardless of the position we may have in the work force, we want to call the shots; we think that we know best! We want to lead instead of follow. We want to be in control. But like Roger Staubach we will find that submission is the way to achieve harmony, fulfillment and victory.

To summarize where we were last week we found that we are to submit to every authority over us and I also suggested that submission is to be our response to authority so long as it does not conflict with God's Word. We are to submit when it's easy and submit when it's difficult, even when it may bring pain and suffering. I also suggested that not submitting to authority is in fact not submitting to God who put that person in that position.

Submission requires joyful humility and willing obedience.

Before seatbelt laws were enforced a little girl was repeatedly told to sit down in the car or receive some measure of discipline. Finally in a huff she plopped herself down and muttered to her mother that she may be sitting on the outside, but she was still standing on the inside.

She did not display joyful humility or willing obedience.

As we come to our passage in I Peter 2:18-21, we

find Peter addressing another large segment of the Roman Empire population. From the very opening verses of the letter, he is addressing Christians who are scattered throughout Asia Minor or what today would be modern Turkey. The segment of his audience he singles out in this passage were slaves. I read various estimates on the number of slaves that existed in the Empire during that era. Some scholars believe that about 1/3 of the population were slaves. Other believe that there could have been as many as 2/3s of the population. Most consider there to be about 1/2 the population.

Peter uses a word here for slave that differentiates between groups of slaves, not to discount the others but the word he uses appears only three other times in the New Testament. Rather than use the more common term for slave – doulos, Peter uses the word oiketos which is also translated servant.

In Luke 16:13 Jesus used the word in the parable He told about the shrewd servant who was being terminated and set out to help himself by his actions. Jesus said a servant can't serve two masters.

In Acts 10:7 Cornelius had a dream about Peter and sends two servants to invite him to come and share the gospel.

In Romans 14:4 Paul uses it to ask a rhetorical question about judging someone else's servant.

The word Peter selects comes from the root word that means one belonging in the same house as another. Used here it refers to the servants who belonged to the house. Many were educated and ran the business or farm for their masters. Some were doctors and cared for the physical well-being of the household, even the other slaves. After all, if a slave couldn't work due to poor health, work didn't get done. But like the doulos (slaves) the oiketos had little value in Roman society. They had no rights, although in this class they could earn money, which they hoped to save to buy their freedom.

Aristotle said slaves were inanimate tools. He also said that no injustice could be done to a slave since they were merely property.

Roman nobleman Varro said the only difference between a slave and a beast was that the slave could talk.

In the early church in the Greco-Roman world, many were slaves, some even held leadership positions in the church where their master may have been a newer Christian.

Their position in the church raised some legitimate questions. Believing slaves assumed that since they were free in Christ they should be free from their masters. Believing slaves assumed they should have elevated status in society because they held positions of leadership in the church.

The issue of submission to a master was still an issue even if the slave was the spiritual overseer.

That Peter and Paul write in regard to the attitude slaves were to have toward their masters is unique in that secular writers addressed no duty code of slaves since they held no social status and weren't considered real persons.

Let me say that the New Testament neither condemns nor condones slavery. Had they come out with a strong stance against the Roman Empire for its practice of slavery would have been social and economic suicide for the society and spiritual suicide for the church because they would have been higher targets for their rebellious political views that sought to upset the existing culture.

So as they wrote, their desire was to show slaves how to live within the system in a way that demonstrated their faith, honored God, and obeyed their masters.

The application for us is to state the obvious by comparing the attitude we are to display toward our boss in a way that likewise demonstrates our faith, honors God, and obeys those we work or have worked for. But even if you are retired or have changed jobs you still should show respect to those who were over you.

From our passage I want to consider three points:
Our exhortation regarding submission

Our example regarding submission
Our encouragement regarding submission

I. OUR EXHORTATION REGARDING SUBMISSION – vs. 18-20

Let me add here before we begin there are two books I would recommend for you. The first is a book I'm not sure is in print any longer, but I found it used on Amazon for under \$8 and also available through Barnes and Nobles. It's by Doug Sherman and William Hendricks *Your Work Matters to God*.

Here's an excerpt: "Work dominates the landscape of modern life. But unless you can connect what you do all day with what you think God wants you to be doing, you will never find ultimate meaning in either your work or your relationship with God. But how can you make such a connection?"

The second book is by Timothy Keller *Every Good Endeavor*

This book "shows how God calls on each of us to express meaning and purpose through our work and careers."

Forbes magazine wrote an article in 2013 based on a study conducted by New York based non-profit research group – Conference Board in which they found that 52.3% of the people surveyed were not satisfied with their work for a variety of reasons. Many want more flexibility. In 2013 Gallup conducted a poll of 150,000 full or part time workers and found that 70% were not satisfied with their work.

Maybe it depends on the day as to whether or not a person is satisfied with their job and boss. There certainly are a lot of variables to consider when reading a survey.

So how about you when it comes to job and boss satisfaction either now or in the past, whether retired or not? Did you ever complain about your job or gossip about your boss or someone else in leadership?

Peter begins with a clear exhortation to us and once

again it is written as a command, not a suggestion. “Slaves/servants submit to your masters with all respect.”

The KJV uses the word fear and in the Greek it is phobos or our English word phobia. But in this case it does not mean that we should be afraid of our boss as if they hold the string of our employment precariously over the abyss of being fired. It is, as we see in the NIV, the attitude of respect for them that we are to show.

A. The Respect In Our Submission – v. 18

In effect Peter is saying that we are to display a right attitude toward a boss in the work place. Respect means to show them regard, to show or treat them with deference, to be considerate toward them.

Let’s say you are working on a job and the boss wants you to do it a certain way. You may have an opinion that might be different. You may even present how it will save time and money for the company. You offer your opinion but in the end they want you to continue with how they want the job done. Respecting your boss in this case would be to yield to their opinion and quietly do your job. You don’t complain about it. You don’t mumble about it. You don’t gossip to other employees about it. You don’t go over their head up the management chain to their boss. You quietly, willingly, obediently, even joyfully do your job.

That can be tough at times, because you don’t know my boss. Let me illustrate with a personal story.

When Robyn and I were married I was working in Ann Arbor for a manufacturing company owned by 3M. We made cardiovascular surgical equipment. The company was eventually sold to a Japanese firm based in Tokyo. It was a rough transition. After a short time the payroll person resigned and I was moved to that payroll position. Now I had never done payroll but I was on the fast track with a crash course. In 6 months I learned three payroll systems.

When Robyn and I met I was doing that but then also got involved in recruiting for hourly employees. After a time I also got involved in recruiting for salaried positions, mostly engineers. I would talk with the manager, place the ads, sift through resumes, schedule and at times sit in on interviews, and work with the manager to negotiate compensation. After hire I would meet with the new employee to go over benefits and walk them through all the paperwork.

10 hours a day moved to 12 hours a day and some weeks I would work 14 hours a day.

I would leave the house by 6, arrive by 7 to work, and leave around 9 at night to get home at 10, only to get up and do it all over again.

I can tell you and Robyn will confirm that I did not enjoy my job as a matter of fact I would have to say that I hated my job and resented my boss. I felt that I was being squeezed out as did many of the other employees from the old company who had been terminated by the new company. Whatever I did didn’t seem to be enough. I had no respect for my boss and I was in clear violation of Peter’s exhortation.

Now notice what Peter adds here regarding this exhortation. There are two groups of people Peter identifies. The first group to respect are those who are good and considerate. The word good implies intrinsically good, good at heart. If you have seen or read Charles Dickens masterpiece A Christmas Carol, the character Fezziwig is an example. This person is kind, compassionate, generous, considerate, likeable, easy to get along with the boss we all want.

It’s easy to see why we are drawn to this kind of boss or the kind of boss you should be.

But then the Dicken’s main character is the antithesis of this. Scrooge is the complete opposite. Cruel, mean spirited, ungrateful, insensitive, unrelenting, demanding , the one we despise and disdain.

Peter sums up this kind of boss with one word to describe the character of the second group – harsh.

It’s easy to respect the good and considerate boss.

We enjoy work and even look forward to it. It's the harsh ones that are the challenge. In the Greek the word harsh is skolios. It's where we get our English word scoliosis. It literally means curved or crooked. We hear that word and think of curvature of the spine. John MacArthur writes that "Metaphorically it can mean someone who is perverted and crooked." It describes the twisted nature of the person who is harsh.

There are no ifs, ands and buts about it. There are no exceptions and no exemptions. There are no special clauses, no fine print. The same respect is to be shown to both the considerate and the harsh.

I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that if we have been in the work world, we have had both. I even had both in the two other churches I served.

Think for a moment about the latter and ask yourself if you have shown them the same kind of respect as those who are good and considerate?

So why do they deserve the same treatment? Isn't it okay to do to others what they do to us?

First of all let me answer that with what Paul says in Romans 12:19 "'Vengeance is Mine,' says the Lord, 'I will repay.'" Do you show them respect regardless?

The second thing I would say comes from our passage. It shows us the reason for our submission.

B. The Reason For Our Submission – vs. 19-20

A friend posted on Facebook the following "Never regret being a good person to the wrong people. Your behavior says everything about you, and their behavior says enough about them."

Notice in these verses two reasons.

1. Because we are conscious of God – v. 19
2. Because we are commended by God – v. 20

In this case Peter is aware of the unjust suffering that many of these servants had endured and often times unjustly. It's one thing to suffer for something

we did that was wrong. If I am repeatedly late for work and I am suspended without pay, I deserve that kind of punishment, especially if it's in the employee handbook.

It's another thing to suffer for something when we are innocent and still take it patiently. To buffet in the KJV or suffer in the NIV comes from a word that means to strike with the fist.

Let me ask you a question for thought. How aware are you of God's presence when you are at work? Is it likely then that the degree or time you spend aware of God's presence throughout the day while at work to be a direct correlation to the respect you show your boss?

The advice James gives us is to consider it joy when we face trials of many kinds (James 1:2).

Joseph comes to mind here. He was sold into slavery by his brothers of all people, falsely accused of sexual misconduct by Potiphar's wife and wrongfully sent to prison. In both instances we find that under him things went well for those he served, they prospered. He was both conscious of and commended by God.

Throughout the day don't forget God. Walvoord and Zuck write "It is respectful submission to undeserved suffering that finds favor with God because such behavior demonstrates His grace."

I would add that as a third reason to submit.

3. Because we receive grace from God
II Corinthians 12:7-10

Whether you consider your job or your boss to be the cross you must bear or the thorn in your flesh, Paul reminds us that God's sustaining and abiding and eternal grace is a sufficient and satisfying reason to submit with all respect.

4. Because we receive strength from God
Philippians 4:13

Just a couple verses earlier Paul writes about being

content in whatever circumstances he finds himself. Even though he is writing about tangible, physical needs and gifts from the church, we can apply the same principle of content to any and all situations that are difficult by experiencing the secret of content, which is strength from the Lord.

5. Because we obey Christ
Ephesians 6:5-8
Colossians 3:22-25

When your boss gives you a job to do, it is to be done as if the job was given to you by Christ.

I mentioned earlier that I worked for a company that manufactured cardiovascular equipment, everything that was needed for open heart surgery. It could be a mindless task putting tubes together with plastic or stainless steel tips – rack after rack after rack. Something these employees were asked to consider as they did that task hours and days on end was to think if they were the ones on the table getting work done on their heart.

To the Ephesians Paul says to do it wholeheartedly not only as if the job came from the Lord but as if you were doing it for the Lord, even when they aren't looking.

To the Colossians Paul says much the same but also says to do it with sincerity as if the Lord was your boss.

Dicken's other main character is Scrooge's longtime and long-suffering clerk, Bob Cratchet. He epitomizes the person who respects his boss in spite of the way he is treated.

We are exhorted to submit to our boss. We are then given an example regarding our submission.

II. OUR EXAMPLE REGARDING SUBMISSION – v. 21

Hebrews 12:2-3

What better example do we have than Christ of someone who was mistreated for doing good, betrayed by an associate, falsely accused, beaten,

rejected, mocked and put to death? Even one of the criminals who hung next to Jesus attested to the Savior's innocence. He stated that they deserved what they were getting, but He (Jesus) had done nothing wrong.

Peter points out to the pain Christ faced.

A. The Pain Christ Faced – v. 21a

There are some Bible teachers who say that if you are in God's will you won't suffer, so what they are saying is that Christ was out of God's will.

Isaiah 53 is a great synopsis of the suffering the Messiah would endure.

You may feel like you are suffering unjustly in your work. Peter says look to the suffering of Jesus as your example. Consider the pain He faced and keep going.

Consider it an amazing thing that Christ, the innocent Lamb of God, would suffer for you. He leaves us an example in the pain He faced how to bear up under it when falsely accused or when we suffer wrongfully. Think about Christ suffering injustice when you suffer unjustly, but continue to work as if working for Christ. He is our motivation, our example for godly behavior.

The other point we see in His example is the pattern Christ formed.

B. The Pattern Christ Formed – v. 21b

The word example means pattern. It does not mean that in the same way Christ suffered for us and for our sins, that we also are to suffer for the sins of others. It does mean that with the same attitude He suffered and endured suffering we also should have the same attitude realizing that such patient suffering results in our spiritual maturity.

The word example is *hupographw*, the root word meaning graph or writing. This word means writing a copy for one to imitate.

Think of the days back when you or your children and grandchildren were in Kindergarten and First grade and they were learning to write the alphabet.

A piece of paper was handed out that had the outline of each letter and the idea was to trace the letter following the dotted lines. By doing this you learned how to form each letter. It served as an example.

Christ left us the example or pattern of Himself to follow. Following implies an unconditional sharing in the Master's destiny. Jesus said that if He suffered we should expect the same. Following also implies complete trust, that what happens to us is totally in the Master's hands. Christ is our pattern.

I want to close with three thoughts about our encouragement regarding submission.

III. OUR ENCOURAGEMENT REGARDING SUBMISSION

I Timothy 6:1-2
Titus 2:9-10

A. We Are Encourage Through Submission To Be Responsible

We saw from Paul earlier that we are to do our work as if Christ was our boss, as if He had hired us for the job, and as if we were doing it for Him. In Titus Paul encourages us to do our work in such a way that our boss will trust us, that they can leave the work in our hands it will get done promptly, competently and with quality. They won't have to look over our shoulder or need to have us do it again.

B. We Are Encouraged Through Submission To Be A Representative

We have been saying this all along, but it bears repetition. How we work and the attitude we display both in what we do and in our respect to the boss is a direct reflection on our faith. Our work attitude is a testimony of the gospel. As Paul says in Titus, how we work makes the gospel attractive.

Nothing damages the gospel more than displaying a rotten attitude about your work or toward your boss and then talking about your activity at church. By respecting the boss and working as if working for

the Lord we won't slander God's name or the gospel.

C. We Are Encouraged Through Submission To Reverence God Through Work

When we understand that there is not or should not be a separation between the sacred and the secular only then can we begin to view our work as worship.

John 4:23-24 is clear that God seeks worshippers and worship should be incorporated throughout our day. Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might."

Colossians 3:17 "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

"Whatever you do" includes our work regardless of what it is.

"Giving thanks for all things" is the way in which we worship God through and at our work.

So how do we make sure we worship God in our work and as we work?

We have already talked about one way to do that back in I Peter 1:15-16. From that we learned that we are to be holy as God is holy. We can't live for God on Sunday and then be like the world the rest of the week hating our job and resenting our boss.

John 13:34-35 gives us another way to help in submitting to our boss by telling us we are to love others in the same way the Lord has loved. This is a testimony to them of our following Christ. Every work place is a mission field.

Philippians 2:13 gives us another way we worship God through work and submission to our boss. "Do everything without complaining." Think for a moment about this past week and the work you did. Was there any complaining?

We saw also in our passage today to show respect for our superiors. That honors God and brings worship to Him.

You may have a really bad job or a really bad boss. There is nothing wrong with going out on a job search. But remember there is no perfect job and no perfect boss. If you find yourself looking or thinking of looking a bit of introspection is in order, because the problems you think you might be leaving by changing jobs and bosses may in fact be the problems you take with you. You may be the cause, not the victim.

Our work and the boss are not ends in themselves, they are but opportunities through which we can worship God. So when the alarm clock startles you in the morning to the reality of another day of doing something, whether a job from which you get paid, or if retired, any volunteer work, or even just cleaning around the house, remember that you are to do it as if doing it for Christ, doing it as an act of worship and reverence, doing it as a way to witness to the lost.

It may be that just like Roger Staubach you need to humble yourself and submit.