

# We Are To Be Slaves To Jesus Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] and hear it as your word we may be enabled to obey it as your word and that in our lives we may see your will done to your glory we ask this in Jesus name passage that we're looking at this morning is 1 Peter 2 and it's in your few Bibles on page 216 following this is Good Shepherd Sunday and the reason this passage is chosen is because of the last verses of the last verse of the chapter you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the Shepherd and guardian of your souls and the chapter starts with something of the nature of of our straying if you look at verse 11 it tells you that you are aliens and exiles and there are a lot of people I guess in this country to whom that word would come as a true description and not just a spiritual description my personal agony with this passage and having to present it to you this morning is that you belong here this is your country and you've made it in this country and a lot that I think God perhaps wants to give us we've already got so that largely this exercise this morning is a waste of time however do be patient and it may be that for some of you there will be some reality to it that you can get hold of and I don't say that critically at all I just I just think so much of the riches of the New Testament we are indifferent to simply because we have provided very well for ourselves in most of the circumstances of our lives and he was telling these people that they were aliens and exiles not just because they were aliens and exiles in having gone out into a foreign world living among a foreign and Gentile people for the most part but because spiritually they were aliens and exiles and they didn't belong to the country they lived in and that's become one of the great truths of our Christian faith and he was telling us to be immortalized and they were alive and they were living in and that wonderful cowboy song my home is not down here I'm just a passing through my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue well that may be too simple for you but nevertheless it expresses a kind of reality that we need to get in touch with

And that's why we are called aliens and exiles, because it's true for us as it was true for those to whom Peter wrote this letter. They, for the most part, were slaves and servants and not masters in their own households.

They were living under the domination of a foreign emperor. When it comes to that lovely passage in this chapter, which says that we are to honor the emperor, it's sobering to recognize that the emperor they were to honor was Nero.

And I guess Peter knew that when he wrote this. And so there's something about it that means that this was a persecuted minority of exiles and aliens who were being given a very hard time, indeed, to the point of probably being put to death by reason of their faith.

And so that if the faith was to have any reality, they needed this message from Peter to tell them how to handle it.

[ 4 : 32 ] And so he tells them how to handle it in very practical terms. He says the passions of the flesh you are to abstain from. You don't need that.

They war against the soul. Good conduct. Maintain that scrupulously because perhaps through your good conduct, the Gentiles will glorify God.

Human institutions. This word is a kind of word for the city and the whole structure of the city. Police forces and garbage men and mayors and aldermans and parks boards and all those kinds of people.

Of human institutions. You are to be subject to them. As for the emperor and the governor, they are sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.

And you are to submit to them the ignorance of foolish men, people who don't understand your faith.

[ 5 : 39 ] You are to put to silence. These are the people who are the put down experts. The people who can take Christianity and make it look so ridiculous that you wonder that you were ever

associated with it.

So professional are they at putting down the Christian faith. He says of their ignorance, you are to put it to silence by doing right.

Now, you are to live, he says, in a most amazing statement. If you look at it there, the amazing statement is that you are to live as free men.

That's verse 16. Live as free men. How could you be free? Yet these aliens, these exiles, these slaves and servants, subject to the emperor, to the governors, subject to the abuse of ignorant and foolish men, subject to the passions of the flesh.

They were free men. They were free men. And he says that they were free men and they were to live as free men. Not using freedom as we so often do as license or as an excuse for doing evil.

[ 7 : 00 ] Very hard not to do that. But you are to celebrate your freedom in a peculiar way. Look at the peculiar way that they were to celebrate their freedom.

Live as free men, but live as servants of God. So the free man is the man who can choose to be a slave of God.

That was the definition of freedom for them. Their freedom was in their choice to be a slave of God and to take orders from nobody else.

God was their master. They were his slave. They would take orders from no one else. And that was their freedom. They didn't have to live up to public opinion.

They didn't have to live up to peer pressure. They didn't have to move with their culture. They didn't have to aspire to political life. They didn't have to do anything. They could live as free men.

[ 8 : 01 ] Not subject to any of those things. The only thing they had to do with their freedom was to use it in order to establish that they were, by their own choice, the slaves of God.

And what God said they would do. And that was their freedom. And that's the freedom that belongs to us. It's the freedom to choose to be the slave of God and to be obedient to him.

Now, as the slave of God, there are certain things that you're to do. You're to honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the emperor.

Those you choose to do, not because of the authority of the emperor, but by your own free choice. But what that means, I think, is this.

And if you picture Jesus standing before Pontius Pilate and Pilate saying to him, do you not know that I have the power to crucify you and the power to let you go? And Jesus saying you have no power at all, except what's given to you.

[ 9 : 14 ] And Peter says that you and I, as Christians, are to do the same thing. And I would interpret that to mean is that when you go to the emperor, you say, I choose to honor you because I am a slave of God and he is my true emperor.

And obedience to him, I honor you. I go to the governor and I say, I choose to honor you, not because of your earthly authority, but because I am a slave of God and he commands me to honor you.

Now, this can become more practical. If you are a slave, you can go to your master and say, I choose to obey you, not because you are a master, but because God is.

Then it has implications when you go to your doctor and you say to him, you may think you're my doctor, but you're not. I trust God.

If doctors only understood that better, I don't think they'd get sued for malpractice as often. But the difficulty is that we need to recognize that, that we are, that God is our doctor, God is our master, God is our teacher, God is our counselor.

[ 10 : 31 ] He is the one whom we choose to obey. And in this, Peter is telling Christians how to live in the world. In order to prepare yourself for the kingdom, you are to, as a slave of God, submit yourself to every human institution.

Because you are a slave of God. Not because of the viability of that institution, or the honor of that institution, or the authority of that institution, but because you are the slave of God, you are to submit to it.

And you are a free man who has chosen to be obedient to God. Well, then in the passage which was read for us today, he takes one illustration of that and tells you how it works.

And that is, the slave. Verse 18. Slaves, or servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the kind and gentle, but also to the overbearing.

In other words, you are not the victim of the disposition of your master. You are serving him out of reverence for God, because you are a slave of God.

[ 11 : 48 ] And that is how Peter chose to deal with slavery. Our proud culture would abhor that kind of craven submission.

But Peter commanded it. He said, you are to submit to your masters with all respect. He said that the reason that you do that is it doesn't matter if one is gentle and kind or another is overbearing. You are to submit to them because you are a slave of God and because you are mindful of God. In other words, your mind is focused on the reality of your relationship to God.

And I don't think this makes much sense if your mind is focused on anything else. If it's focused on your social standing, if it's focused on your achievements, if it's focused on your wealth, if it's focused on anything like that, on idolatry or on the stock market or anything like that.

If that's the focus of your mind, then I don't think you're going to understand what this means.

Because it says, conscious of God, you are to submit to your masters, to be submissive to your masters because of that consciousness.

[ 13 : 12 ] And you are even to the point of enduring pain. And there's a lovely sort of interlude in there which talks about the person who does wrong and gets beaten for it, taking it patiently.

And I don't know, but that seems to me to be a very apt kind of illustration that most of us tend to think that good behavior is when you get caught, take it patiently.

I don't think Peter cares whether you take it patiently or not. If you have it coming to you, you have it coming to you. Full stop. There's nothing in that for you. But if in consciousness of God you endure suffering, then that is thankworthy before God.

Then he goes on to say, to take from that the example. For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

When we were children in school, you had a dark black map that was written out and then you put a thin transparent piece of paper on it and wonder of wonders by tracing all the dark lines through the transparent piece of paper, you drew a quite acceptable map of Canada, for instance.

[ 14 : 34 ] And what Peter is saying here is that you take your life and you place it over the dark lines of the life of Christ and then you trace what your life is to look like.

Follow the example of Christ. Be conformed to him. And that's how you are to live your life, following that example. He said you're to do this because...

And then they describe who Christ is. What the dark line, which denotes who Jesus is, maintains. Maintains. And it works it out this way.

He committed no sin. No guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten. But he trusted him who judges justly.

Now, that's the example on which we are to trace or to copy in our lives. That example. And Peter takes it from the writings of the prophet Isaiah and he says, What Isaiah wrote, and I have seen with my own eyes, I pass on to you as the pattern for your life.

[ 15 : 53 ] This is how you are to live. And you are to live to the point where, in every detail, Christ is to be your example.

He committed no sin. No guile was found on his lips. He did not revile when he was reviled. He suffered when he was threatened. Now, what he's saying is this.

That in the process of human life, there is the kind of eye-for-an-eye behavior. If you are hurt, you hurt somebody in return.

If somebody steals from you, you steal. And this is what happens. This is what goes on happening. Century after century, human beings are retaliating.

When you're in the Middle East, you become aware of the fact that for centuries, strong differences have existed between people and bloody revenge is the only thing they want, which will inevitably mean that they are attacked and bloody revenge is taken on them.

[ 17 : 03 ] And this cycle goes on and on and on and nothing breaks it. What Peter is saying is that cycle has been broken by Jesus Christ and he is your example as to how you are to live your life and he is going to use you as his people to break this cycle of revenge that goes on and on and on.

And the way he's going to do it is as we, by our lives, follow the pattern of the one who, when reviled, did not revile again.

When he suffered, he did not threaten. He said, when he says that when he's judged, he didn't judge in return because he recognized that he was subject to a higher judge, to a higher court.

He had already made his appeal to a higher court. As Jesus said to Pilate, you have no power over me, so we say in our generation in obedience to Christ, you are not my judge.

God is my judge. I am his slave. I live in obedience to him. And whatever you may say to me, I want you to know that I have already made my appeal to a higher court and it doesn't matter what you say because I have another judge to whom I have made my appeal.

[18:28] Now what he's saying here is that he's pushing us. Peter, I think, is pushing these people, these Christians, towards facing the inevitable reality that their faith is probably going to cost them their lives, at least some of them.

That as their master ended up on a cross, so will they. Now that's unthinkable for us, is that obedience would carry us to that point.

That's what it said. You're not allowed to give in and to join the rat race. You're not allowed to live by the golden rule of doing others before they do you, which is so, which is so much a part of who we are.

You're not allowed to do that. As the slave of Jesus Christ, you are to pattern your life on Jesus Christ, even to the point of death.

That's how you're to live. And that's why in this whole passage, Peter is saying to these people, this is how you are to live in an alien world. This is how you are to live as exiles in this world.

[19:45] You are to live as the servants of Jesus Christ, no matter what happens. Not as the secret of prosperity, not as to avoid pain and suffering, but right through poverty, pain, and suffering, Jesus is to be your pattern.

You are to be God's slave. The ultimate extremity is expected. And when you come to that point of ultimate extremity, you are still the slave of Jesus Christ.

And he gives us this assurance when he says about him, 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. So you end up with the picture of Jesus' submission even to the point of crucifixion.

But he bore our sins in his body on the tree. So our sins are covered. And our only job is to be the slaves of God and from being aliens and exiles astray as sheep to go back to Jesus who is the shepherd and bishop of our souls.

[21:14] We have to return to him. We have to come back to him as sheep who have gone astray. We've lost our way in this world.

We've accepted other values. We've accepted other things that fill our consciousness. consciousness. These are the things that we think about. We're called to come back to the one who is the shepherd and bishop of our souls and whom we trust.

He is our counselor. He is our doctor. He is our judge. He is our master. And we are to submit as slaves to him and obedience to him to honor worldly authorities but recognizing that we do that primarily out of obedience to God.

And we do it because our lives are in the hands of him who is our shepherd and guardian and to whom we have entrusted our lives.

And as the master is responsible for the welfare of his slaves so we as the slaves of God entrust completely our welfare to him no matter what happens.

[22:34] That's the way Peter says that Christians are to live their life in an alien world. and I think it's hard that may God grant us grace to work out the meaning of it in the personal circumstances of each of our lives as we have the pattern or example of Jesus Christ set before us we begin to see the meaning of our lives as it is conformed to that pattern and example that we've been given.

Amen. Now we'll be singing as our offertory hymn number 109 but because it may not be familiar to all of you Ed Norman is going to help us learn it.

the hymn is 109 and the text is in some ways reflective of what we've just heard in terms of someone who really knew how to apply the points we've just been taught.

It's the words of the Magnificat but they are paraphrased. The tune will be familiar to those of you who come on Sunday evenings but it may not be known well to in the morning congregation.

So what I'm going to do is play the tune through once on the organ and then the choir is going to sing the first verse and then I'd like you to stand at that point or perhaps during the first verse and then we'll re-sing the first verse together and take the hymn right through and if I can just take this opportunity to suggest that we really it's difficult with a new hymn book but let's see if we can jump

in with both feet or all four feet as the case may be when we find a tune that's a little unfamiliar and see if we can really make this building ring with the sounds of praise through our singing so hymn 109 I'll play it through you'll hear it sung through and then sing hymn y hy pulling . . .

[ 25 : 47 ] . . .

. . . The greatness of his word, in God my Savior, shall my heart rejoice.

Tell my soul the greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered.

His mercy sure, from edge to edge, shall say, his holy name, the Lord the mighty one.

The greatness of his name, make sure you write on.

[ 27 : 50 ] The greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered.

The greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered.

The greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered.

The greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered. The greatness of his name, make known his might that he is unplastered.

God of loving care, you spread before us the table of life and give us the cup of salvation to drink.

Keep us always in the fold of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Shepherd.

[ 29 : 27 ] Amen. Shall we kneel together? Amen. We come now to our time of service of morning prayer, the time of intercessions and thanksgiving.

Shall we pray this morning for the world, the world which our