

1 Peter 2:18-20, Part B

1Pe 2:18 (NKJV) **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.** ¹⁹ **For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.** ²⁰ **For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.**

If we are going to be able to properly appreciate the practical value of this passage for our lives, then we need to understand something about what we want to call “biblical” suffering. As stated in the previous study, there appears to be no practical value in just suffering meaninglessly, nor any value in letting people take advantage of us in a pointless way. There is no obvious spiritual benefit in just becoming someone’s doormat or punching bag. However, what Peter says in v20 is that there are probably going to be times when believers are to “**do good and suffer**”. Then he adds that part of that process is simply learning to “**take it patiently**”. So, a very important question becomes “*take what patiently*”? Well, it is suffering in some way for actually doing good.

Now, as we begin this discussion it is very critical to understand some elementary things about God. Some things are very pleasing to Him and some things are not very pleasing to Him. In this passage, one of the areas of a believer’s life that really pleases God is when they are able to “*faithfully accept and deal with any adversity*”.¹ All believers will at some time in their life face different levels of adversity, hardship, difficulty, and misfortune. I was thinking about all of the post-hurricane victims from Hurricane Florence and how the waters are cresting the rivers in their areas. The damage to their lives and to their homes is really difficult to measure. Some of their homes are nearly under water, and they have not even been able to go back to their homes. They cannot pay their bills, their places of work are closed down, and some of them have no flood insurance and will possibly lose everything that they own. Their children have no clothes, their cars have been ruined, and they are now completely dependent on someone else in some kind of shelter to help them. How will they handle that adversity? How will they react or respond to the devastation that has happened in their lives? Will they blame God and become bitter? Well, that is one kind of circumstance that will test anyone when they find themselves in an almost helpless situation that they did not create.

So, when coming to [1 Peter 2:18-20](#). It is obvious that there are believers who will find themselves in a very similar kind of circumstance - one over which they have no control and no actual recourse, and Peter says that what is “**commendable before God**” is to take their mistreatment “**patiently**”. We must remember that if Peter was in fact addressing actual “slaves” and not just household servants that they had absolutely no recourse against a harsh slave owner. So, the phrase “**commendable before God**” has to be one of the constraining principles in this passage because how God sees the believer’s response to a very difficult circumstance is what is important here. In many cases, our focus becomes skewed and becomes focused on personal rights, personal privileges, or the violation of and infringement on our personal freedoms. This happens all the time in the form of boycotts, protests, and workplace strikes where people are expressing their dissatisfaction with how they are being treated in the workplace or they are fighting for higher wages and more benefits. What is important to understand, though, is that

¹ MacArthur, 162.

the Greek word for “commendable” is “*charis*”, or the New Testament word for “grace”. In this context, it specifically refers to the attitude and disposition that someone has towards someone else. I.e., it represents God’s favor and His goodwill towards the believer who is actually “suffering”. So, ultimately the believer becomes the object of God’s favor and blessing when they actually respond properly to a very difficult circumstance.² This word is implying that God provides His favor and His blessing on a believer when they are willing to absorb unjust treatment for His sake. If I can say it in a different way, it does not appear that God’s primary focus is on the believer’s rights in difficult circumstances, but the believer’s response in their difficult circumstances. That is what is commendable to God. Listen very carefully. Anyone can complain, anyone can criticize, anyone can murmur and whine about what is happening in their life. We can find fault in anyone and everyone, as well as any uncomfortable circumstance if we so chose. However, God is not interested in how well we may grumble, but how deeply we become grateful in the midst of adversity. It still staggers me personally that Christ asked His Father to forgive those who were actually persecuting Him and nailing Him to a cross.

Now, just to make sure that we do not lose our focus on how God expects a believer to respond to a difficult circumstance in their life, the following are several verses that simply reiterate this reality. For instance, in this epistle Peter will address this very same issue in several other places ([1 Peter 3:14, 4:14, 4:16, 4:19](#)).

1Pe 3:14 (NKJV) But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

1Pe 4:14 (NKJV) If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.

1Pe 4:16 (NKJV) Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

1Pe 4:19 (NKJV) Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

It is very important to recognize in [1 Peter 4:19](#) that God permits suffering. He could prevent any suffering at any time, but in His greater purposes for the believer’s life, it could actually be stated that God often orchestrates the difficult circumstances. I love what Job said in [Job 13:15](#) to his oppressors when he said,

Job 13:15 (NKJV) Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...

[1 Peter 5:10](#) says,

1Pe 5:10 (NKJV) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

In this verse, the purposes of God that are achieved in our life through suffering wrongfully are that God will perfect and mature the believer, He will establish and resolutely confirm you in a certain direction, He will strengthen you with might, and He will ground you in both Himself and His ways. However, it

² Zodhiates, “*charis*”, 1469.

must be understood that this kind of strengthening is the by-product of suffering, not this modern day spiritual hodge-podge of personal prosperity and affluence.

Matthew 5:10-12 says,

Mt 5:10 (NKJV) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1 Corinthians 4:11-13 says,

1Co 4:11 (NKJV) To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. ¹² And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; ¹³ being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

2 Corinthians 1:5-7,

2Co 1:5 (NKJV) For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. ⁶ Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. ⁷ And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation.

Philippians 1:29 says,

Php 1:29 (NKJV) For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

There simply are times, events, circumstances, and very difficult things in life that every believer must endure. There is no escaping this spiritual reality. No believer is exempt. In our flesh we want the easy road. We want to be able to push the proverbial “Easy Button”. However, the spiritual reality is that it simply does not exist.

The Greek word for “**patiently**” in **1 Peter 2:20** is the word – “*hupomone*”, or to stay under, to endure. It means to bear up under trial, to have fortitude, and to persevere. It is a word that means to bear up courageously under suffering.³ I am sure that all believers have a sense of self-protection that is embedded within their core beliefs. We all have that perspective innately. The problem in **1 Peter 2:18ff**, however, is when that attitude of self-protection turns into insubordination, defiance, or even rebelliousness. In the context of **1 Peter 2**, the believer is to take his mistreatment “**patiently**”, or to keep enduring. Let me state this another way, and I think this is really very critical to this passage. The kind of patient endurance that Peter is wanting the believer to develop in their life is not possible without them being conscious of God. At some point in their life, all believers will be stretched by God and the difficult circumstances that He allows into their life so that they can learn to trust Him in those difficult moments.⁴ Trust me, but no one wants to hear that simply because of its implications to them personally.

³ Strong, “*hupomene*”, 1430.

⁴ Grudem, 127.

No one wants to hear it. However, no believer will ever learn to trust God apart from adversity, struggles, and trials. The less conscious a believer is of God, the less inclined they will be to submit to His ways or to trust in His sovereignty over all things. The less time that someone spends in the Word of God, the less appreciation they will have for what God really desires for their life.

In the American culture, the focus is generally on the comforts and conveniences that the believer wants as opposed to what God desires for their life. However, the issue is never about personal comfort and convenience. There is nothing in the New Testament that even approximates that kind of mindset or perspective. As Peter states it, the issue is always what is “**commendable before God**”, or what pleases God. You have to ask yourself a simple question – “*Why am I reacting or responding this way to this difficulty?*” How someone genuinely answers that question will be very revealing as to how conscious they are of God’s greater purposes in their life. It would really be nice and convenient if trusting God was easy when our life is under duress – but it is not. Trusting God in the most difficult moments of life is not something that is easy or even natural. However, that is exactly why God allows the believer to be tested in the lesser trials. It is so that they will truly be able to trust Him in the greater trials – and those moments are inevitable. It is amazing to me personally how often I have made big deals out of little trials, how I have maximized my complaints and dissatisfactions with issues of no eternal importance. However, the spiritual truth and reality is that genuine faith in God is always developed in the crucible of trials and those moments when life simply does not seem fair.

Take careful notice of what truth Peter begins with in [1 Peter 2:21](#) – “**For to this you were called...**” That is such a contrast to all of the almost blasphemous teaching that pervades the Christian landscape that says the very opposite. Many of the television guru preachers say that God always chooses to provide healing and prosperity for His people, and when any kind of pain or suffering comes it is either because of Satan or because there is some kind of unknown and unconfessed sin in the believer’s life that is preventing God from blessing them. That entire perspective is such a distortion of God’s truth that it almost defies any kind of spiritual logic or reason whatsoever.⁵ Peter says the exact opposite. He says that suffering and suffering for doing good is a divine calling on a believer’s life so that God Himself will be glorified. In fact, the second part of v21 says that “**Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps**”. The truth of that verse could not be any clearer as to its meaning and intent. When you as a believer do good and endure it and take it patiently, you have God’s approval because that is exactly what He has called every believer to do.

In [Job 2:9](#), Job’s wife told him to “**Curse God and die**”. However, it is important to notice how Job responded to the terrible trials that had afflicted his life. In [Job 1:21-22](#) he declared the following,

Job 1:20 (NKJV) Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ **And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."** ²² **In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**

In [Job 2:10\(a\)](#), he responded to his wife this way,

Job 2:10 (NKJV) But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed

⁵ Sproul, 83.

accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

So where do we leave this? How do we respond to these verses on suffering for doing good? Well, we simply allow God to bring into our life whatever He chooses without complaining, without questioning, and without finding fault in His ways. We accept His sovereign and providential hand over our life and when we suffer for doing good, we simply endure it and place our life into God's divine care and goodness. It will not be easy, but it will always be the right thing to do and is fully commendable to the God who we will find to always be strong and mighty on our behalf.

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