

COUNTER CULTURE

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1st Peter 2.18-25 | July 8, 2018

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our series Counter Culture by looking at the Christian's call to submit to those for whom we work. A great deal of confusion surrounds passages like this one, so a proper understanding of what Peter is saying – and not saying! – is incredibly important, both for our lives and for our working relationships.

II. Connecting with One Another

What was your first job? Share about it with your group.

III. Study the Text

a. Begin by rereading 1st Peter 2.11-17. What was meaningful in last week's study or sermon in these verses? What questions do you still have regarding this passage?

b. Read 1st Peter 2.18-21.

In the same way that last week's text has been (mis)used by political authorities to engage in unjust and oppressive rule over their people, passages like this one have been taken out of context by slave owners and those who benefitted from slave trade in America's history.

The first-century slaves to whom Peter is writing willingly served households where they were often much better off than they had been previously. Many were well educated as doctors, schoolmasters, and secretaries, but through a season of serving in a family's household could better their lot in life and, ultimately, when freed, become a full Roman citizen.

How is this different than the slavery in the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries?

- c. What reason does Peter give for these household servants to submit to their masters?
- d. Many such heads of household were undoubtedly unsympathetic to a novel, newfound religion preaching freedom and speaking of another superior Master. How does Peter speak to this tension (note again verse 16)?
- e. Why is it commendable before God to suffer for doing good?
- f. We often discuss Christ's sacrifice on our behalf – that He is our Savior, that He died so that we might live. In verse 21, however, Peter references Christ's suffering from another angle.

What is it? How would you put this verse in your own words?

- g. Orthodox Christian faith doesn't only receive Jesus as Eternal Savior but also as Lord, here and now, in the present. The former without the latter is cheap grace, wanting the benefits of salvation without personal sacrifice. The latter without the former devolves into a legalism, where we have to do all the right things, but without the joy of the relationship. Where do you usually live on this continuum?:

Savior -----Lord

How could you lean more toward the middle?

- h. How could our enduring difficulties at work help others see the good news?
- i. Read 1st Peter 2.22-25.

Without stating that he's doing so, Peter borrows heavily from the Suffering Servant Song in Isaiah 52.13-53.12.

Take some time to read that passage carefully, meditating on its significance for the early church. Why do you think the early church saw this as a prophecy pointing to Jesus? Why do you think Peter quotes from it in his instructions to household servants?

- j. Despite quoting from Isaiah (written 700 years earlier) and discussing Jesus' suffering (also in the past tense), Peter writes in verse 23 that God "judges justly" – in the present tense.

When have you been judged unjustly? How does knowing that God judges justly help you endure being judged unjustly?

- k. What do you think Peter means when he says that "by his wounds we've been healed"?
- l. Verse 25 again recalls our souls, forming an inclusio of this section (see previous references in 1.9 and 2.11). Why do you think it's important for Peter to again engage our souls?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up those you know – around the world – who are being judged unjustly, that they would trust in the One who judges justly,
- b. Pray for those experiencing persecution, that they might be led by God's wisdom on how best to respond,
- c. Ask God to help you follow Jesus as both Savior and Lord.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Peter was called to follow Jesus in Matthew 5.11, but later, followed "afar off" (see Matthew 26.58). How do you think those experiences shaped him in instructing these Christians to "follow in his steps"?

