

Lesson 7: On the Job Training

A Series Thru First Peter

Spirit Filled

The Apostle Paul devotes two lengthy parallel passages (Ephesians 5:18-6:9 and Colossians 3:16-4:1).

Comparison of the passages shows that being Spirit filled (influenced, led, controlled by the Spirit) is accomplished when we let the word of Christ dwell (live) richly in us. In both passages, the outworking of being Spirit filled or letting the word of Christ dwell richly in us is the same. Part of that outworking is submissiveness and obedience in different contexts. Note that to submit (hupōtassō) means to subject oneself to, and while that may entail some level of obedience, submit is a different word than obey. In fact, we see Paul use both terms in these passages but not interchangeably (e.g., wives submit to husbands, but children obey parents). Especially relevant for our lesson today in 1 Peter are Paul's admonitions in Ephesians 4:5-9 and Colossians 3:22-4:1 where he addressed slaves (Greek *doulos*). In our 1 Peter passage today, Peter addresses household servants, which could be slaves or employees.

1. **Servants (2:18)**: Peter addressed submitting to human government earlier in chapter 2 and now moves to the sphere of household servants (Greek *oiketēs*). This term literally means “member of the household” but typically means a household slave, though it could also indicate an employee. In the Roman Empire of Peter's day there were 3 main types of slaves: agricultural, household, and penal. Conditions for agricultural and penal slaves were poor, while those working in the homes of wealthy Romans could have considerable influence, earn money, seek to buy their own freedom or manumission (usually by the time they were in their 30s), and even own slaves. As much as half of the people in Rome were slaves, and 20 to 30% of the population of the Roman Empire were likely slaves. Many Christians at that time were slaves.

— Peter tells Christian household slaves to be subject to their masters, even the bad ones

— What application might we make to the employer / employee relationship?

2. **Suffering With the Right Attitude for the Right**

Reasons (2:19-20): Peter says it finds favor with God when Christians endure undeserved suffering. The word “suffering” is from the Greek term from which we get the “paschal” lamb and means to experience pain.

— What are some reasons why an employee might suffer from his / her employer that is NOT undeserved suffering?

3. **Called to Suffer (2:21)**: Peter says Christians are called to suffering and that Jesus is our example for how to endure undeserved suffering. (cf. Philippians 1:29; John 15:18-20) In other words, “let's be like Jesus even in suffering.”

4. **The Supreme Example of Suffering (2:22-25)**: Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:9, but we do well to read the longer passage Isaiah 53:4-9 for context. Peter appeals to Jesus' suffering at the cross as the example for us to follow in enduring undeserved suffering in the workplace. And the point Peter emphasizes is that Jesus did not sin by actions or speech. When we suffer for the right reasons and with the right attitude, it glorifies God and affirms His right to rule in our lives even when it costs us. Jesus not only died for our sins, but so that we could live righteously for the shepherd and overseer of our souls (or soul-lives).

— In the context of the workplace, why might a Christian choose to stay with a job, rather than quitting, when the boss or the company is difficult?