Living to Display God's Grace by Submitting in the Workplace

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] today the subtitle by submitting in the workplace I think that's something that each of us can relate to some degree or another let's read our passage for this morning and gather in the context of what Peter is telling us we'll actually begin again up in verse 12 and move down through verse 20 keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers they may become or because of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution whether to a king as the one in authority or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right for such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men act as free men and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil but use it as bond slaves of God honor all people love the brotherhood fear God honor the king servants be submissive to your masters with all respect not only to those who are good and gentle but also to those who are unreasonable for this finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly for what credit is there if when you sin and are harshly treated you endure it with patience but if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it this finds favor with God now friends Peter wrote this letter most likely from the ancient city of Rome the capital of the Roman Empire and it was during this time historians estimate the population of the city to be about 900,000 people and of that number about 350,000 were slaves if you can imagine that 350,000 people out of 900,000 living as slaves in Pergamum on the western coast of modern Turkey a city that would be within the Roman province province of Asia now don't don't don't think Asia as the big way we know it think Western Turkey and a slice of Western Turkey as Asia that's what Peter mentioned over in verse one in his list of Roman provinces that he's writing to so this is a city that would be included in this circular letters route so Christians in that city would have most likely read this letter from Peter in Pergamum the western coast of the western coast of modern Turkey there were about 40,000 slaves in that city alone and of the total population that means there was one slave for every three people slavery was a big big business and without slaves the Roman Empire would have collapsed now think of this with me just to put it in perspective

New Testament churches were made up of many many slaves converted to Jesus Christ I don't know if you think about that when you think about these letters being written to churches and who comprised these churches Philemon would be a good example for you to read about a slave who was instructed in the way of being faithful to his master that's what that book is what that book is what that book is largely about but slavery slavery these Christians living as slaves converted to Christ presented a problem especially when you read the New Testament letters and realize things like this turned if you would to Romans 6 and remember the number of slaves that are in the city of Rome even as Paul writes this letter to the Christians living there we assume that safely that many many of the Christians in the Roman church were probably living as slaves Romans 6 and let's begin there's so much we could say about Romans 6 but let's begin in verse 16 and think in terms of being a Christian slave and reading this do you know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience you are slaves of the one whom you obey either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness but thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
Can you imagine? I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further

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lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore, what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you were now ashamed?
For the outcome of those things is death. But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification and the outcome, eternal life.
[6:25] Now, can you imagine being in the state of serving as a slave and reading this? I'm thinking that this would have had a pretty profound effect on people living that way, don't you think?

Let's do this, too, in 2 Peter 2.16. I think it's 2 Peter. Let me see if I... 2 Peter 2.16.
No, 1 Peter 2.16. I think that's what I meant to do. Yes, act as free men. 1 Peter 2.16. Act as free men and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as slaves of God.
Now, imagine reading that as a slave. Act as free men. Do you see how the spiritual emphasis of all of this is what Peter is most concerned with?
He's not speaking to the issue of the wrong of slavery. He's not trying to throw off slavery in the Roman Empire.
[7:33] He's not calling these people to rebel or to revolt. He's simply speaking to the issue of living faithfully as slaves in this environment. We're going to say more about that as we go along.

I just want your mind to be thinking with me what it must have been like for these people to hear this kind of language, knowing that many, many of these Christians are slaves. Christians who were slaves struggled to know God's will for how they were to behave and relate to their masters.
And as persecution and injustice ramped up across these provinces, these people were challenged with what the Lord would have them do to be faithful in their walk with God.
So these are many of them new Christians. They're living as slaves. They're reading all of this language about being free in the Lord, and they're trying to figure out how does that reconcile with my current physical reality.
And I think we're going to be able to see that we can relate more to this than maybe meets the eye right at first. Today, I think people struggle to know God's will for the workplace.
[8:44] I've talked to enough people. I've been in the workplace enough to know that people struggle with this. There have been times I've struggled with it myself. Each one of us, I think, then could make a list, couldn't we, of the challenges that we experience in our jobs.

And many, many of our challenges, I think, we would find if we talked to each other about it would be similar, even if our work contexts vary considerably.
Now, how could that be true? Well, it's true because people are people from job to job and from company to company.
Is that not true? Most of us, if we made a list, while it might include some items that relate to the nature of the work that we do, my work is challenging for me, I constantly feel challenged in keeping up with new technology and applying it, whatever.
My job is physically demanding. I think most of us in that list would probably have toward the very top relating to people. One of the biggest issues in my job is relating to people, getting along with people, and it probably would be dealing with my boss or bosses.
[10:03] Some of you might come to me and say, man, I've got a wonderful boss. Praise the Lord. And some of you might say, boy, I've got a boss, and it is just hard to go into work every day. And I understand.

And so does Peter. In fact, Peter's going to help us. He can't solve all of our work ills this morning, but I think he can and does give us God's mind on how we can honor the Lord Jesus in our places of employment.
So whether we are employees, whether we are bosses, most of us are going to have somebody to answer to. We are called to be God's servants.
We are called to be God's servants. We are called to be God's servants. We are called to be God's servants. We are called to be God's servants. We are called to be God's servants. So following on his counsel and command for us to submit to civil authority, Peter now turns his sights on outlining God's counsel for us to submit to workplace authority.
Now, Peter knew that this was difficult counsel to hear and obey. Can you imagine, especially if you're a slave in an abusive situation and you and you read this letter?
[11:20] Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. That's hard.

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And Peter knew that. So what he's going to do is he's going to frame our submission to our bosses within the context of our calling from God to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.
It's not unlike what he's told us about human authority, civil authority. It's not unlike what Paul and other New Testament authors tell us about dealing with the world, following faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus.
Pretty basic. But difficult. Especially when we find ourselves in these work environments where our fellow employees or our bosses are being hard on us in some way or another.
Well, here's what we want to unpack today and Lord willing next Sunday. Two primary issues within the text, finishing out chapter two.
[12:27] The command to submit is Christ's servant for today. Now, remember, both of these relate to the workplace. So I'm just assuming you understand the command to submit is Christ's servant applying to the workplace today.

And then God willing next week, the call to suffer is Christ's servant. The call. Both of these relating to what we're going to look at in the way of our bosses, our supervisors, those in authority over us in the places where we earn our living.
So the first is the command to submit as Christ's servant. Let's look at it again. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect.
Now, folks, each of Peter's commands to submit relate to his goal and prayerful hope for the glory of God in the salvation of souls.
We must hold on to that reality or we're not doing justice to the concern of the author. Peter. If you go back up into verse 12, keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds as they observe them glorify God in the day of visitation, the day of salvation.
[13:49] And he hopes that these people will be spiritually impacted by the good and godly behavior of Christians and that God will use that to help them come to himself.

OK, that that should be a concern that we have as well. Consciously in the front of our minds, I am living for the glory of God in all that I do. I want to please the Lord.
And I pray that as I live like that, people will see my life and they will be spiritually impacted by what they see. And this is in the workplace as we go about our jobs.
Let me see a show of hands. How many of you currently or have at some point in your past worked a job where you worked five days a week, about eight hours a day?
Would you just show me your hands? All right. All across the congregation. Thank you very much. See, we're all in that boat. That's a lot of time, isn't it? I don't know how many hours the average American works in a lifetime of, say, 65 to age 65 or 70.
[14:55] But it would be a lot, wouldn't it? When you think about how many hours a week you put in at a job overall. So this is a big issue. This is a significant issue in the life of each one of us as we follow the Lord.

Just as it was for these people. You can add to this verse 15. For such is the will of God that by doing right you might silence the ignorance of foolish men.
That's another concern that Peter has with our good behavior under authority. All right. All right. Now, verse 18 starts off in my translation this way.
Servants. Servants. Servants are slaves. Servants are slaves. The word used here isn't doulos, which is the general word for slave.
But oiketes. Oiketes. It means domestic or household slave. The terms are very, very close. But oiketes emphasizes the domestic aspect of the slaves situation.
[16:03] Why is that important? Peter is referring to Christians who, for whatever reasons, are living as slaves or household servants under masters who have complete control over their lives.

It's very, very important for us then at this point, as we begin to think about this, that we avoid reading our modern view of slavery into this ancient scenario.
We don't want to do that. In the ancient world, slaves could be doctors, they could be teachers, they could be managers, and a host of other things.
Some people who might come on hard times could actually sell themselves into slavery to improve their economic situation, get out of debt, whatever.
Slaves could also work with and for their masters to buy their own freedom over an agreed time or price.

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[17:05] They could actually do that. Slaves were often better educated than their masters, which is amazing to me. And slavery, very different from our time that we understand slavery, slavery in the ancient world was not based on ethnicity.

There were people from all different cultures around the Roman Empire that were enslaved, not just one particular people. It had nothing to do with skin color.
It had nothing to do with ethnicity. It had nothing to do with the cultures of these people. It had everything to do with conquered nations. Whatever you found yourself in in the way of a country or a people group, if Rome conquered you, it was most likely many of you were going to be taken into slavery.
It's very different from what we understand. So there could be many, many reasons that someone was a slave. Now still, slavery was a horrible thing.
It is still a horrible thing. Slavery was not invented by the Lord. It was invented by man. God never, ever ordained slavery on the human race.
[18:18] Slavery in the ancient world could be brutal and inhumane. Slaves didn't have any rights to speak of. And masters across the empire often abused these people.

There's many histories that bear this out. So Peter, Peter clearly commands. In light of everything I just told you, Peter clearly commands, look, servants, be submissive to your masters.
The command for servants to submit to their masters comes from the same root word that he used up in verse 13. Hupotasso. Hupotasso.
Remember, it's a military term. It conjures up a military image of soldiers lining themselves up under or arranging themselves in order under.
That's the calling that the word submit has in mind as we think about it in context. It is to arrange our lives under, to line up under authority.
[19:23] Now keep in mind too, Peter is telling these people this regardless of what kind of master they are serving under. Servants be submissive.

It's very similar to what he said in verse 13 when he fleshed out civil obedience even under the authority of governments that are corrupt.
But we are still responsible to have an attitude going in of trying to arrange ourselves under, line ourselves under that authority.
That's our first knee-jerk response is not to question it, not to try to get out from underneath it, not to focus on our rights and how inconvenient it is.
But to say to ourselves, the Lord has appointed these people. The Lord has put this authority in place. So because I love the Lord and I know that about the Lord, I want to bring myself under this authority to honor Christ.
[20:22] Now, as I do that and I evaluate that, I may come to realize that in order to honor the Lord, I've got to actually say no to this authority. And that's what Tuesday nights are all about.

We're building on that reality because we understand that there are exceptions. So this is what's happening at this particular time with these people.
As Peter tells them, servants, be submissive to your masters. Be submissive to your masters. Now, the question comes, all right, I'm supposed to be under the authority of these people.
Who exactly are these people? Who are these masters? Look at this. The word is despotase. The clearest meaning that we have is master or Lord.
We get the word despot from this. In English, despot means a king or ruler with absolute power. It can be used in a negative way to identify a tyrant or an oppressor.
[21:31] That's most of the time the way that I hear it used. It has the sense of someone who is a legal possessor of and has absolute authority over another human being.

Here, Peter is using it to describe those in authority within Roman households. So master carries the idea well.
A master. Christian slaves are to submit to their masters. That is, to the person or persons who own and run the household to which they belong.
So Suzanne agreed this past week to refer to me as master because I run my household. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Everybody knows Suzanne would be like, yeah, I can see her face right now.
No, but the question begs at this point, is what we're talking about here analogous to the idea of the workplace and employees?

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[22:37] That's a fair question. Because obviously we can immediately, intuitively understand that there are differences between slavery, as Peter writes about this, and us going to work.

If I was to ask you what it was like for you to go to work, some of you might say, oh, yeah, I feel like a slave. No doubt about that. I'm a slave to my work. We hear people talk like that. But it's a fair question.
Can we really compare this to being an employee? Well, think of it this way. While there are differences, for sure, and we're not saying there's not, slaves were the workforce of Roman society. In general terms, being an employee and holding a job where you work for someone and answer to someone, I think is a fair comparison. So as you would expect, Paul and Peter and other New Testament writers are in full agreement on this issue of submission in the workplace.
Just as they agree about Christians submitting to civil authority. Now, let me just take you there and show you real quickly what I'm talking about here so that you can see that this is netted and joined together as a theme in the New Testament writers.
[23:54] 1 Corinthians 7. If you'd go there with me. Beginning in verse 17.

Paul has been speaking on the issue of marriage. He's going through some very practical instruction about how people are to approach attitudinally and behaviorally the issues of married life.
He comes to verse 17. Only as the Lord has assigned to each one. As God has called each.
You see the labor he's taking there to make this clear? In this manner, let him walk. As the Lord has assigned to each one. As God has called each. In this manner, let him live.
And so I direct in all the churches. Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision?
[25:00] He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing. Uncircumcision is nothing. But what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Each man must remain in that condition.

In which he is called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it. But if you are able also to become free, rather do that.
So he's asking the question in 21. Were you saved while you were a slave? If that's the case, don't worry about it. They were.
They were worrying about it. They were struggling with it. In a big way. So here's his instruction. Don't worry about it. If you are able to become free, do that.
So he's. Paul isn't saying, look, if you have an opportunity to get yourself free from this, that's fine. We've talked to people many times. Who have trouble in their jobs. They've tried to be faithful.
[25:58] They've tried to do right things. They've tried to be humble. And we've been able to say, look, the scripture makes it clear. You're free to change jobs.

You just need to understand the ins and outs and consequences and be discerning. There's nowhere that says you have to stay under an oppressive boss or in a bad situation. If you can get free of it and honor the Lord in that, that's fine.
Now, look, look what he says as he goes on. Verse 22, for he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freed man. Do you see the emphasis there? They are free spiritually.
He is the Lord's freed man. Likewise, he who was called while free is Christ's slave. So what he's telling us is this. Either way, you're still a slave.
But now you're a slave to Jesus. Big difference. He goes on in verse 23. You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men.
[27:02] Now, that's an interesting concept to tell somebody who might be living as a slave. But do you see the spiritual emphasis that he's making? So they might be physically the slaves of men, but they're not to give their hearts to men in the sense of of worshiping them or thinking that it's men who provides for them.

We'll we'll talk about that in just a minute and clean it up a little more. Finally, in verse 24, brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition.
In which he was called or saved. Read it again. Each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called or saved.
That's the point that Paul is making. So the issue is this. Paul and Peter were concerned with Christians living out the character of Jesus in the situation God placed them in.
I say again, revolt, whether against the government or against authority in the workplace, is completely out of character for Christians following Jesus Christ.

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[28:15] We do not display the character of Jesus when we revolt in these tough situations. That is not what we are called to do. Here is how Dr. Schreiner, one of the commentators that I consult, explains Peter's context and concern.

Very important. Peter's context and Peter's concern. New Testament writers were not social revolutionaries. They did not believe that overhauling social structures would transform culture. Their concern was the relationship of individuals to God. And they focused on the sin and rebellion of individuals against their creator.
New Testament writers therefore concentrated instead on the godly response of believers to mistreatment. And Peter fits this paradigm nicely for he admonished his readers to respond in a godly way to persecution and to oppression.
People are saved, born again, and brought to trust and faith in Christ one soul at a time. And that's what we're concerned with. We're concerned with each person being spiritually influenced by our life of godliness as they see us living out our faith in the Lord.
[29:37] One soul at a time. It's why we're not packing up. Greg and I aren't leading you to join movements. What we're saying to you is we're already part of a movement called Christianity.

And we need to be out there spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. Forgiveness for sins in him. Complete forgiveness of sins in the Lord Jesus.
Helping people understand their need for that forgiveness. And then leading them to faith in Jesus. Then bringing them in as disciples and helping them grow in grace.
They once were Satan worshippers, whether they knew it or not. And now they're God worshippers transferred from darkness to light. By forgiveness for sins.
The apostles wanted Christians to live faithfully and to suffer humbly for Jesus sake. In their current context. While living to glorify God.
[30:35] And to have a godly spiritual impact on society. All right. Now. Now we can deal with what else Peter means by telling his readers. To submit to their masters.

This is where it becomes nitty gritty for us. As we show up at our jobs. And deal with all of the different challenges that our jobs bring. Particularly the emphasis. Of being under the authority of a boss.
A boss maybe that is less than ideal. Let's put it that way. All right. And I've never had an ideal boss. I've never been an ideal boss.
So this is always going to be a challenge for us. What does he do? How are we to understand? How are we to understand? And apply the principles for our submission in the workplace.
Just as we did with government. Civil obedience. All right. We can glean four guiding principles. From Peter's command and counsel.
[31:38] To help us know God's will for us as employees and workers. All right. So let me give you these four. We'll take them in order. And we'll talk through how do you apply your faith in the workplace.

Particularly when you're being challenged in the workplace. In some way. Maybe with a boss situation. Fellow employees. Whatever it is. The first is align your heart.
Align your heart. And it's in verse 18. Servants be submissive to your masters. Servants be submissive to your masters.
And then notice. With all respect. We've covered up to this point. The servants be submissive to your masters.
We've looked at that. We've looked at servant, submissive, and master. With all respect. Boy, that's the kicker. Isn't it? That's the kicker.
[32:45] All. The word all. Isn't just inserted. It's an important little word. In the context of this passage. Servants be submissive to your masters. With all respect.

It means exactly what you would think it means. It means entire. It means total. It has the idea then. In the context of full quantity.
To the full extent. Complete. Complete. Do you see what Peter's saying? This respect needs to be in total. In full. Complete. Not lacking.
That's challenging. So let's look at that just a little bit more. Respect is phobos. We've seen this word before.
Peter used this in verb form. In verse 17. In verse 17. For fearing God. Phobos God. And that is what he means here.

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[33:43] He is not telling us. To fear our bosses. Say it again. He is not telling us. To fear our bosses. Beloved. Whenever Peter uses this word in his letter.

It always refers to God. Now I won't trace it out. But I think if I. I've given you the references here. You can write down those references. And look them up later. Every time Peter speaks of this. This issue of phobos. He is relating it in some way or another. To fearing God. But then he does do this. In verses 6 and 14.
Of chapter 3. He expressly tells us. We are not to fear man. Look at chapter 3 verse 6. Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham.
Calling him Lord. And you have become her children. If you do what is right. Peter loves that phrase. Do what is right. Without being frightened.
[34:37] By any fear. Don't fear men. Do what is right. Without the fear. Of man and consequences. And then in verse 14.

Of chapter 3. But even if you should suffer. For the sake of righteousness. You are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation. And do not be troubled.
Why does he have to say this? Because he understands human nature. He knows that when people have authority over us. And our jobs are on the line. And our livelihood is on the line. We can be easily intimidated.
And challenged can't we? See Peter is a realist. He is not speaking in pie in the sky terms. He is trying to bring this down to the nitty gritty. Of how you and I walk in faith.
In the Lord. In our jobs. And it is very very challenging for us. The sense is this then. Folks. This is what I mean. The sense is this. Align your heart.
[35:35] To fear the Lord. This is. This is what he is meaning by this. Align your heart. To fear the Lord. So that you will be able to obey your bosses.

From a high and holy reverence for Christ. Regardless of their treatment of you. You see. You are making this an issue.
Of following Jesus. Now he is going to say more. But these build on each other. So right now we are just saying. Is your heart aligned. To honor the Lord.
Regardless of how your boss treats you. Or do you feel justified. When people mistreat you. And you are under injustice. To complain. Whether you do it out loud.
Or under your breath. In your heart. To whine. To try and control. And manipulate situations. And people. Again.
[36:32] There is a difference. Between those kinds of things. And faithfully dealing. In prayer. In humility. And in kindness. And in gentleness. With the possibility. That if you can't. Effect a change.

That is making it impossible. For you to be faithful. There in your job. Then. Maybe a change. Is in order. Okay. So again. Peter. Peter is real.
About this folks. We. I don't want you. To feel trapped. I don't want you. To hear your pastor. Saying that the Bible. Teaches that you're. You're in a bad job situation. You just need to grin. And bear it. That's. This is not grin. And bear it. This is. Are you honoring Christ? And there is a way to do that. Even when it's oppressive. Just like with civil authority.
Align your heart to fear the Lord. Employees. Be submissive to those in authority over you. From a heart of total.
[37:27] That's the all. From a heart of total. Full. Complete. Reverence. For Jesus. Prepare. Prepare.

Your hearts. In this way. In your walk. With God. So you're making it. About Jesus. In your work life. And then keep your behavior.
Excellent. Among. Unbelievers. You can't. Make the people. That work with you. Or. Or above you. Make it about Jesus. Can you? See.
You can't make your spouse. Make it about Jesus. Jesus. And so Peter's going to turn. To spouses. In just a little while. And talk about that. What you can do.
Is you can set your heart. To make what you do. In the workplace. About Christ. About souls. About heavenly verities. That's what you can do.
[38:25] And this is. This is the spirit. And emphasis. Of what he's telling us. Even as he gets more practical. As we. Go along. Now you may say this. And I'm. And I'm thinking. Peter anticipated this.

You say. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's fine and all. And I'm kind of tracking with you Jeff. But you don't know my boss. And if you did. You would certainly. Change your counsel to me.

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Well I think that's just what. Peter wants to talk to you. About next. So here's the second one. Here's the second one. Adjust. Your perspective. You're aligning.
Your heart. Your mind. Willing. Your emotions. And now you're going to adjust that perspective. What does he say? Servants.
Be submissive to your masters. With all respect. Not only to those who are good and gentle. Which is our perspective. Oh yeah. No problem. I'll always.
[39:23] You know. Be good with submitting to those who are good and gentle. And do right by me. But also to those who are unreasonable. What does your translation say for unreasonable? Somebody have something different?

Unjust. Unjust. That captures it. We don't have any problems obeying the good and gentle ones. It's the unreasonable lot that we chafe and complain against. Unreasonable. So what does he mean by unreasonable? Other translations. Unjust. Harsh.
Cruel. Was one translation. Interestingly to me. Here it is. The Greek word is skolios. Skolios.
It's where we get our word. Skoliosis. So it means crooked. It can also be used within different contexts. Curved.
[40:20] Or bent. Or twisted. The main idea is crooked. And Peter is using it in the sense of being morally crooked. Even those bosses who are morally crooked people.

We might say dishonest. Metaphorically then. We could apply it this way. Perverse. Wicked. Unfair. Have you ever had a perverse, wicked, or unfair boss?
I have. You ever had a crooked boss? I have. And it's tough. Because one of them was a pastor. And I was on staff with him.
That's hard. You just never know, do you? You never know. You can find yourself in these kinds of situations in all different contexts.
Paul used this word in the context of Philippians 2, 14 and 15. You don't have to turn there.
[41:22] Let me just read it out for you. Philippians 2, 14 and 15. Do all things without grumbling or disputing. All right. That's where he starts.

So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent. Children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked, scolios, and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.
What is he concerned with in this crookedness that we live in and under and around? He is concerned that we live and appear as lights in the world.
So, friends, here's what we're saying as we capture Peter's heart. We need to adjust our perspectives about fair, about our rights, about God's call for us to endure, and why it is that God wants us to suffer well as we work under people who are unfair or wicked towards us.
Now, that is challenging. All right. As you think through with me now, just turn around in your mind some applications of this in your life.
[42:42] Consider with me just for a moment what you've seen and heard from unbelievers as they have faced unjust, unkind, or unreasonable treatment in the workplace.

Will you just take a second and think about that? What have you experienced from unbelievers? Maybe even professing Christians when they've lived under the harsh, unjust, or unkind treatment of a boss.
What kinds of things have you seen from them? Heard from them? Are you picturing it? Is it ugly? Now, rhetorically, are you thinking about you also?
Isn't that? Among whom you appear as lights in the world.
That's the issue. Please put your hand around that and grip it tightly. Among whom? Among whom are complaining?
[43:52] Among whom are trying to get you to sign the petition? Among whom are secretly talking about how to get rid of this person? Or how we can band together and secretly manipulate the situation so that they look bad?

Among, and so many other things. Among whom people who are requiring you to lie about something? Or to turn the other way?
Look the other way? Among those people. Among whom we appear as lights in the world.
Our perspectives and behavior should be entirely different from theirs. So, if your boss is unreasonable or worse, even a wicked person, a crooked person, the Lord not only does not exempt you from obeying him or her, but God calls you to submit to that person out of your deep

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reverence for Jesus Christ.
The exception. Yes, there is one. The exception is the same as with civil authority. It's when your boss requires you to sin against the Lord in some way.
[45:12] Within my first month or so on staff, right out of seminary, brand new, wet behind the ears, first position in a church, my pastor demanded that I lie for him about a situation.

And he was making no bones about it. He was ordering me to lie for him and cover for him. And he called it covering his back. You got my back, right?
Well, then if you've got my back and you're part of this team, this is what you will say when they come to you and ask you. And I said, I wasn't even there. I have no idea what you're talking about. And he said, well, you do now. And I couldn't do that, right? I had to say, I called his name and I said, I can't do that. I can't start like that.
Now, I'm not holding myself up. I'm just saying, even in church life, there can be situations where you're put in a context of being tempted to compromise your walk with the Lord because of a boss and the intimidation that boss has over you, the way that he might use his authority in your life.
[46:29] So you need to be prepared for the consequences. And Peter's going to help us with that too, folks. He's going to help us. The exception is when they require us to sin.

You cannot follow anyone into sin, but you apply wisdom and humility in order to kindly refuse. Then you honor the Lord and the consequences of your actions to fear him above all things. Now, Peter wants to help us move to the next thing in that because he understands how it will help us follow through.
Because look, you make decisions like this and you stay around, there's going to be a price to pay. You won't be the golden child and you may even receive greater abuse.
Yes, you may become a target. You may find yourself with your boss making it so hard on you because he wants to get rid of you because you're the problem person.
[47:31] You're the only person on the team that isn't going with the flow. But you're not going with the flow because you think you're all that. You're going with the flow because you want to honor Christ and they're putting you in a compromising position that says, I can't, I can't dishonor the Lord.

Okay? We're there? So he brings this next one into play. Here it is. Arm your conscience. Arm your conscience.
For this finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
All right? Arm your conscience with a God-pleasing resolve. So what we're talking about here is more a conscious awareness of God as the one you desire to obey and please in all respects.
The ESV captures it very well here. Mindful of God is how it puts it. Mindful of God. So what we're talking about, friends, is a God consciousness.
[48:43] You're building and preparing and aligning your heart and adjusting your perspective all within the framework of a God consciousness. I'm constantly aware of and sensitive to my walk with my God.

Whatever the situation is or the context is, my whole life living and breathing is about God. Loving God.
Serving God. Being defined by God. Being grown up in grace as God favors my life and leads me even when things are very, very tough.
You can think about how this all links with what we've just said. Now here's what happens as Peter tells us to have this God consciousness. To have a conscience that is educated by truth to be sensitive to the things of the Lord.
Do you understand that's what a conscience is? A conscience can be misinformed and a conscience can lie to you. Our consciences are not infallible. So we have to train our conscience and educate our conscience to become that awooga, awooga, that alarm center in our life so that while we're at work and these things are happening to us, we might have a prick of conscience.
[50:05] Maybe it's about my own attitude or behavior. Boy, that wasn't good. I walk away from a situation with my boss and I'm like, and I think, oh, my conscience immediately ought to be like, Jeff, hey, hey.

Right? So we educate, we inform with truth and that helps us to become more God aware of how things are happening and what I should respond like.

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So we're growing in that discernment and our conscience is bearing witness that this is what would please the Lord. That's what we're talking about in all of this.
Now, Peter is going to help us. Did I move it? Peter's going to help us avoid two schemes of the devil here. Two schemes of the devil. First, avoiding the fear of man.
What are we talking about? You may not be familiar with the phrase, the term fear of man. Here's what we mean. It's trying to win the approval of man as our priority.
[51:08] I need the pat on the back. I need their approval. I want, I desire for them to think that I'm this or I'm that. So the opinions of men are elevated to such a place that they're either equal with the Lord or even above the Lord in that moment.

It may even just be for a moment. And sometimes this happens because we feel threatened in our jobs. I don't want to lose my job. You see? What if I lose my job?
I'll lose my house. I'll lose my house. For a slave, it could be I get beaten.
Doesn't that just break your heart? That men and women and children lived like that and lived under that kind of thing? It's horrible.
The fear of man, trying to win the approval of man, even at the expense of pleasing the Lord. I'll compromise in pleasing the Lord so that I can win the approval of my boss, not lose my job, get the promotion, whatever.
[52:18] Now there are all kinds of ways that we're tempted to make ourselves look good with the boss. Now folks, please hear this. Anything short of us doing our jobs as unto the Lord comes to manipulation, hypocrisy, and a lack of integrity.

Now I want to show you this. Will you turn to Colossians with me? Because I just said a very strong thing and I want to show you even more in Scripture here. once again turning to the heart of the Apostle Paul.
Colossians 3, beginning in verse 22, and I just said, in the end, anything short of us doing our jobs as unto the Lord Jesus Christ will come to manipulation, hypocrisy, and a lack of integrity.
Paul says, slaves, in all things, obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart.
Notice, fearing the Lord. This is Peter's point. Whatever you do, do your work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.
[53:46] It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. Who do we serve as we do our jobs? Christ. The Lord Jesus.

Jesus. Isn't that challenging? But it's helpful. This is all about our perspectives changing, arming our consciences with the awareness that we're really, what's really going on here is I'm serving the Lord.
This person may give me my marching orders. This human being may be the person that I have to answer to physically in this world for my performance in my job, but ultimately, I understand that I serve the Lord Jesus in the way that I do my job.
That's not just for pastors. How about a second scheme? Not only the approval of men, the fear of man, but a second scheme of Satan that Peter wants to help us avoid is measuring our responses to our bosses based on our bosses.
If he's good and gentle and kind and has my best interest at heart, we're all good. But he's going to get a piece of me and my mind if he's not. No. Look, our superiors are not the measure of how we respond to them or to the situations we find ourselves in with them.
[55:05] So, again, folks, we're not talking about reaction. Our boss comes and we just react. We can't live in that kind of emotionalism.

We're talking about response. We're talking about aligning our heart, preparing ourselves, adjusting our perspective. You see, this is a lot of spade work behind the scenes where you're allowing God to deal with your heart so that as you move into these situations and contexts, you're prepared. You're spiritually prepared for these moments. Then your boss does this and now you can have a response. It's calculated. It's marinated. It's prepared in the Lord.
That's what we're looking at. So, you're not measuring your response by your boss. Folks, this applies really to how we live all of life before the Lord.
Notice, back in verse 19 for 1 Peter, notice that Peter says this. I just told you that this is about all of life. Peter kind of changes.

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[56:13] He shifts here. In verse 19, he comes to say this. For this finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God, notice, a person.

Do you notice he didn't say slave? He didn't say servant? Does your translation say person? A person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
So, Peter here, he expands his counsel to include all his readers. He kind of took a place in the letter here where he said, alright, now, slaves? Well, not everybody in the congregation was a slave.
Now, he brings it back in verse 19 and says, now, all you readers, listen, all you readers, this is the context. Any Christian bearing up under the sorrows of suffering unjustly needs to think about this as responding to the Lord Jesus Christ, living unto the Lord Jesus Christ.
where did Peter get all this? Where did he get this? I think he learned his lessons well from his time with the Lord Jesus.
[57:27] If you'll turn with me to Luke, I'm trying to give you as much ammo here as I can. I don't want you to run out of ammo. In this spiritual battle that we find ourselves in, we need to use the word of truth and our sword, our sword of the spirit.

Luke chapter 6, beginning in verse 27. Compare this to what Peter is telling us now, okay? But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also, and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.
Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.
If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?
[58:55] Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies. Do good. Lend, expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be great.

And you will be sons of the Most High. For he himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful just as your Father is merciful.
Now go back to 1 Peter with me and let's read this again. Verse 19. For this finds favor if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
For what credit is there if when you sin and are harshly treated you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it this finds favor with God.
For you have been called for this purpose since Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps. Doesn't that sound just like what Jesus said?
[60:04] Peter learned well. He learned well. Living like this finds favor with the Lord in your life. Favor is actually in your translation may say this grace.

Chorus. Grace. grace. God gives us his grace. His favor on our lives when we do what is right and then bear up under the sorrows we experience when suffering unjustly.
It honors God. I just want you to know this just what Peter wanted you to know. What you're doing as you suffer under unjust treatment as you try to make decisions and move forward in humility and honor and please the Lord you probably will not be rewarded for it in this life or by your boss who's making it hard on you but there is a reward and it's a greater one and you want to hold on to that and carry that in your heart.
So arm yourself with the spiritual preparation of always choosing to do what pleases the Lord no matter the cost and even as you endure unjust suffering and because you are following the Lord he will favor or reward you.
This brings us to the fourth encouragement. It's tied directly to a very hard reality about a slave's life because it could be one of being physically verbally emotionally and even sexually abused by their despot masters and it's this act in God's favor.
[61:42] Act in God's favor. What do I mean? Verse 20. What credit is there if when you sin you are harshly treated you endure it with patience? And of course the answer is none.

There's no credit. But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it this finds favor with God. Now here's what he's saying. Peter tells them that their sinful and or abusive behavior will not find favor with God.

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And that can happen. slaves act out in a disrespectful disobedient manner and it has nothing to do with following the Lord Jesus and they're punished.
Peter says there's no credit for that. There's no reward for that. There's no grace coming your way because you sin and suffer the consequences for you deliberately sinning.
they will get what they deserve from their masters even if they endure it with patience. But, but, and I want you to see this very clearly, when when we are true to Jesus and do what is right in his sight and the world chooses to give us what we don't deserve and to withhold from us what we do deserve, the Lord will give you what he determines you deserve for being faithful to him.
[63:09] Which would you rather have? That's it. That's what will get you through. That's what will help you stay a straight path through a difficulty like this in your job situation.

It's remembering that you're not working for the reward of your boss. That's fine when that comes and that happens and we want to do a great job, but our greatest motive in doing a great job is pleasing God.
That's where you want to live. That's how you want to approach your job and your boss. So God gives his grace to the humble. His favor rests on those who willingly choose to do what is right and then endure whatever the consequences might be for their faithfulness.
And folks, I just say it. We need more people in the workforce like this, don't we? More Christians who are willing to live like this. This is where we were.
Align your heart, adjust your perspective, arm your conscience, act in God's favor. These are ways that we can practically apply what Peter is telling us about being submissive in the workplace, making it a manner of following in Jesus' example, which God willing is what we'll look at next Sunday.
[64:33] Let's pray together. Father, it is a marvelous and wonderful thing that you have so wonderfully and practically detailed what it is for us to be faithful in our walk with you, to please you in all respects.

We also want to thank you for the consistency of the truth. No matter where we go in Scripture, we're able to read about what the writers of these different books said about living life on this earth and it all corresponds, it all connects and all of that is held together by your heart, your wisdom and so help us to live in the wisdom on high.
Help us to live in the wisdom that man calls foolishness because it's your wisdom. We want to have the mind of Christ.
Christ. We want to live the truth of Christ for the glory of Christ. Father, if there's anyone here now who's struggling in their job and their workplace situation with any issue or but especially if it's an issue of their superior, I pray that you will minister grace to them, that you will help them to be helped by what we've talked about today from Scripture, that they'll begin to apply this in a more faithful way and entrust themselves to you, that they will suffer well and suffer in wisdom and humility and gentleness, making it about you.
If there's anyone here today, Father, who doesn't know you as Lord and Savior, we pray that you will open their hearts and their eyes to see their need for the forgiveness of sin in their life and that they will turn to you and cry out to you and ask you to forgive them and make them your child.
[66:27] Father, we pray that you will help us to be a faithful people looking unto Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. We want him to be glorified in all that we say, do, and think.

It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Amen.

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