

Lessons From Human Behavior

Harmony M.B.C., September 5, 2010 (Morning)

Robert P. Myers

1Peter 2:18 Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

1Peter 2:19 For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

1Peter 2:20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

1Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Peter's instructions to servants, that is people who had the most menial work, such as house cleaners, cooks, dishwashers, people flipping burgers, digging ditches, hauling garbage, raking yards, being masonry helpers or roofer's helpers, etc. is a real treasure trove about how to look at things for people in all areas of life. This advice goes well for what are called servants here, but it fits for presidents, senators, governors, mayors, city councilmen, corporate chief executive officers, doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs as well. The advice is all about how to view the two different ways we should view and respond to getting blamed for things, and how we are treated when we get blamed. The contrasts in the reasons for getting blamed, the way we handle that blame, and the results of how we handle such situations gives us a great background for looking at our own internal attitude about both. May the Holy Spirit help us to be insightful and discover things about ourselves and our dealings with abuse in the world, so that we will both mimic our Lord and Savior and grow in spiritual things.

I. First, looking at **v. 20** we see the idea of being abused for what are apparently actual faults - "For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"

■ Peter is looking at those who have been more or less disciplined for what an employer sees as a fault (the Greek word "buffeted" here describes being rapped with the fist; this would imply being smacked or otherwise hit for messing up in your work).

> The days of beating or hitting employees is pretty much over in the U.S. but it still goes on elsewhere in the world, and in the free world the **equivalent** should be seen as getting a chewing out, or being put on probation at the job.

■ When we think about Peter's statements, we first notice that scripture assumes that **the person being rapped has accepted that he or she is at fault**. We want to think about this attitude in people; more particularly about the lack of this attitude in people.

> First, there is a lot of blame-giving in the America today, but not a lot of blame-taking

- Somehow, our society has developed a cultural attitude that if something has gone wrong, it has to be somebody else's fault.

- In fact, it appears to be human nature to blame somebody else if we mess up.

- So, Peter is writing here about people who have overcome the tendency to blame somebody else if they messed up something at work, or anything that caused the boss to come down on them.

- The people he is addressing have accepted that they are to blame for why they got smacked.
 - My point is that this is probably the exceptional person today, rather than the norm. But it ought not to be. And in our personal lives, we can remedy that, if we are too prone to blame somebody else if it is ourselves that have made a mistake. That is my first thought.
 - Now, how do we do that?
 - ✓ Evaluate what happened that brought the buffeting.
 - ✓ Be honest enough to ask ourselves if the mistake was our own act.
 - ✓ Then don't try to find a scapegoat.
 - ✓ Do like the servants in Peter's writing. Assume the blame. Also, be aware that this is a very hard attitude to adopt as long as you let the natural man in you run the show (in other words, don't let the base human part of you try to get you off the hook)
- > Second, about this thing of being blamed and accepting the blame because a person knows they were at fault, there is no glory to God or the individual:
- From the human perspective: it is nothing that a person should hope to brag about in taking with patience the punishment or discipline that comes. If we bear that buffeting with patience, that is the only response we should expect people to have when guilty.
 - From the perspective of the Lord: **he is not glorified** when we patiently endure justified buffeting for our offenses.
- > A few words about this attitude and expectation, **especially the absence of this patience and acceptance of discipline:**
- In our society, there are a lot of people who make an issue out of any good discipline and act as though whoever has disciplined has not been fair, or has been cruel, or has punished an innocent person.
 - This is more of the American blame-game.
 - This attitude that is so prevalent has caused wars between parents and parents, between parents and teachers, and has empowered our government to try to stop all manner of discipline...especially the kind that is outlined in the bible.
 - We need to have a different attitude than this as believers (the Word teaches us that justice is one of the divine attributes of God...that is, God metes out justice and some of that justice takes the form of immediate whacking people for breaking His rules or for disobedience).
 - We need to teach our children that disobedience and wrongdoing lead to discipline; and that they are not to expect to blame parents or teachers when their own behavior brings buffeting.

II. Next, as we look at v. 20 further, we want to think about the second way that people are buffeted; that is, being abused when doing well: "but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God."

- This is about doing right and being treated roughly; or it could be about doing right and being misunderstood, then being treated badly.
- > Either way, it IS unfair abuse
- > The normal human response would be: to be offended; to be very forward in defending our

actions and trying to make people understand that we were right; criticizing or chewing out the person who acted out such an offensive thing; to feel picked on

> Rather, we are commanded to take it with patience (Gr. = endure; have fortitude)

> It is providential that holy scripture says “take it.” There is great teaching in this if we understand what that means

- To understand what this means I will remind us of a common saying among us, “I not going to take it!” (Which means to us that we’re going to do something about it...we’re going to make an issue out of it, or we’re going to get even with the person, or we’re going to pay them back some way). That’s the opposite.

■ Our final observation about the right attitude when we are buffeted is that patiently putting up with unwarranted abuse in the world “is acceptable to God.”

> I want to present this fact as an encouragement to not get overly wired about being abused by persecutors, or misunderstood and buffeted by the ignorant. We ought to be satisfied that, if it acceptable to God, then it is good enough to be acceptable to us, and it is a greater reward than us “righting what is wrong.”

III. Last, Peter uses the strongest argument possible for why we should take it patiently when we are abused for doing good (v. 21). “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps....”

■ As we look at this statement we see that it tells us first, that we are called out for this very purpose

■ Then it tells us why: “because Christ also suffered for us....”

> Which means that He did good for us and suffered for it as though he had done bad.

- People said He was a blasphemer when He told the world that He and the Father were one,
- People said He was a phony and many of His disciples abandoned Him when He told them that He was the Bread of Life,
- People sought to kill Him when He revealed Himself as the son of God and said that if people would listen to His word and believe on the God that had sent Him they would pass from death to life

■ This also teaches us that since He suffered for us, we should consider it our calling to suffer for Him. Doing right and being blasted for it is suffering for Him.

> This does not just mean being a missionary, or preacher, or evangelist for Him and getting abused for it. We need to understand that the same kind of abuse that a missionary or preacher, or evangelist might get can happen to you among relatives or co-workers. But if you never do the kind of good that gets you targeted, you might escape such abuse.

- You could just stay quiet when people act out profane and vulgar behavior
- You could just stay quiet when people profane the Lord
- You could just stay quiet when people talk about plans to do some evil thing
- You could just stay quiet when someone opens a door in the conversation for you to say something about Jesus Christ
- You will also not glorify your Lord!

■ I want to close by pointing out two things:

> First, going back to v. 19 For **this is thankworthy (Gr. charis = grace, or gracious)**, if a man **for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.**

- > I believe the bible teaches us here that it is answering to our conscience that gets us buffeted by people of the world (making answering to our conscience equivalent to being faithful witnesses and upright people in our behavior, because our conscience approves of it; and disapproves of bad behavior).
- > It is all a question of whether we will do what we do based on situational ethics or decisions that will be sure to keep us out from behind the bullseye, or will we do what we do based on principle?
- > Second, that our text in v. 20 says that Jesus “left us an example, that ye should **follow in His steps.**”
- > The path is clear; it is the example He set
- > If what to do was unclear, we might have an excuse
- > The problem is usually not a case of uncertainty about what to do, it is a case of not having studied Jesus enough to know where His steps go
 - As government hunters, we learn to track animals. Some of us are pretty good at it; some are maybe only mediocre. But one thing that almost every government hunter and generally every dedicated hunter is good at is following a clear blood trail. The steps of Christ are a blood trail! They go in a straight path of righteous behavior directly to the cross!