

1 Peter 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the foward.

Analysis

Peter addresses Christian slaves directly: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear" (hoi oiketai hypotassomenoi en panti phobō tois despotaī). "Servants" (oiketai) were household slaves. "Subject" (hypotassomenoi) means voluntary submission. "With all fear" (en panti phobō) indicates reverent respect. Peter qualifies: "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the foward" (ou monon tois agathois kai epiikesin alla kai tois skoliois). Easy to serve kind masters; difficult to serve "foward" (skoliois, crooked, harsh) ones. Yet submission extends even to unjust masters—not approving injustice but maintaining Christian witness despite it.

Historical Context

Roman Empire's economy depended on slavery—estimates suggest 30-40% of population enslaved. Masters had absolute power; slaves had no legal rights. Christianity didn't immediately abolish slavery (beyond early church's capacity) but transformed it from within by calling masters and slaves to mutual Christian respect (Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22-4:1). Peter addresses slaves' difficult reality: many served harsh, unjust masters. Rather than rebellion (futile and dangerous), Peter calls for faithful service as Christian witness. This eventually undermined slavery by elevating slaves' dignity and limiting masters' behavior.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can modern employees apply Peter's teaching about serving difficult supervisors 'as unto the Lord'?
2. What's the difference between enduring unjust treatment as Christian witness versus enabling ongoing abuse?

Interlinear Text

Οἱ οἰκέται ὑποτασσόμενοι ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ τοῖς
G3588 Servants be subject with all fear G3588
G3610 G5293 G1722 G3956 G5401

δεσπόταις οὐ μόνον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ ἐπιεικέσιν ἀλλὰ
to your masters not only G3588 to the good also gentle but
G1203 G3756 G3440 G18 G2532 G1933 G235

καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς
also G3588 to the froward
G2532 G4646

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 8:13 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 3:32 (Parallel theme): For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

