

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expository Journey Through 1Peter 1Peter 2:11-25

### 26- How to Live as Aliens and Strangers- Part 8 Submission to Sinful Institutions

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July 15, 2018

#### 1Peter 2:11-25

**11** Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

**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.

**13** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,

**14** or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

**15** For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

**16** *Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.

**17** Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

**18** 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.

**19** For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

**20** 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.

**21** 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,

**22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;**

**23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;**

**24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**

**25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

To the Glory of God

Now we are *continuing* to examine how the Apostle Peter taught that we are supposed to live as "Aliens and Strangers" in the earth. And today, we are going to examine what Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write down concerning how "slaves" are to submit to their earthly masters. So, beginning today, we will very *narrowly* examine verses 16-20 that says:

**1 Peter 2:16-20**

**16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God.**

**17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.**

**18 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.**

**19 For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.**

**20 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 I hope that at *some* point in this miniseries of what living on this earth as "Aliens and Strangers" looks like, you have picked up on the concept of "Submission". Peter liked that word, and he loved the concept behind the word even more, and so, he used it often.

He first used the concept of godly Submission back in **1 Peter 1:13-15**, when he said:

**13** Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**14** As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours in your ignorance*,

**15** but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

**16** because it is written, "***YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.***"

... so, even though he didn't use the word "**submit**" here, the believers submission to God and to His Ways is clearly in focus. And he *continues* to teach the concept of godly submission when he said:

**1 Peter 1:17b**

... conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*;

... and ...

**1 Peter 1:22**

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

... and Peter will *continue* to use this term in the future. Now the word "**submit**" comes from a Greek word (*hupotassoo*; Strong's #5293), that literally means: "*to arrange under*". So, we are told, over and over again in Scripture, that we are not "autonomous" beings. We do not have the right or the authority to live on this earth "as we see fit." We are *created* beings who have been formed "**for God's Glory**"<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, we cannot "do our own thing", and we have no right to be *selfish* or *self-centered* about anything.

So, we are told repeatedly and clearly all throughout sacred Scripture that we are to "submit"; we are to "arrange" our lives "under" the Will and the Word of God. We are to *resist* the temptation to "go our own way", and we are to struggle against those sinful impulses, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be found humbly and

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 43:7

joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in our daily lives, all to God's Glory.

So, the entire Christian life, from the moment we experience the miracle of the New Birth until we close our eyes in death and pass through that door into Everlasting Life, is one of ever-growing *submission* to God and to His Ways.

So, I would suggest that Sanctification is really not us learning *how* and *why* to submit to God, but rather us being so transformed by the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ that we behold, that we truly *enjoy* that submission, that we genuinely *delight* ourselves in being "hidden in Christ", and that we find the *fullness of our joy* in Him.

Now, as Peter gets deeper into his Epistle, his Teaching about Submission gets clearer. But, as it gets clearer, it also gets more *invasive*, and it begins to *require* more from us. And so, by the time we get to Chapter 2:13, we read:

### **1 Peter 2:13a**

**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution ...**

... which we studied over four different weeks. But now, here in verse 18, we read something patently absurd, where Peter says:

### **1 Peter 2:18**

**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.**

Now I am certain that the translators of the NASB and the King James and the ESV were and are all good and godly men, who did their best to give us a reliable and trustworthy English translation of 66 Books that were originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. I used the King James exclusively for the first 40 years of my journey with Jesus, and since about 7-8 years ago, I switched to the NASB, which I have found to be even *more* accurate than the King James.

But I have come to understand that the most important issue concerning which English version of the Bible someone uses is usually the issue that most people overlook, and that is if you're going to study the Bible correctly, you're going to have to go back to the original languages anyway. We are simply kidding ourselves if we think we can

arrive at a full and complete understanding of the Word of God by using *any* English version exclusively. You simply cannot get there from here.

But when you go back to the original biblical languages, you find out that the word that was translated here as “**Servants**” is the Greek word (*oiketees*; Strong’s # 3610), that means: “*Slaves*”. Now I’m not sure *why* the translators didn’t translate this word correctly, but they didn’t. And most English translators simply followed the lead established by the King James Version, over 400 years ago, and *mistranslated* this word as “Servants”. I think the HCSB is the only English Bible that originally translated it correctly as “slave”. And then, in one of the later revisions, they botched it up and went over to translating it as “servants”.

But we must understand that the Apostle Peter is *not* addressing “willful servants” here. In these verses, Peter is addressing “bought and paid for” slaves, who are part of the larger group of believers, who have become refugees by the hand of the Emperor, Nero, toward the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And, almost inexplicably, Peter says:

**... be submissive to your masters with all respect ...**

... so, now we see that the Divine Command for believers to submit to all “Human Institutions” goes way past Government, and now includes an “Institution” that is patently sinful. Slavery was an Institution of Man that we rightly despise today, and one that has been *abolished* by law in much of the modern world.

So, exactly *how* do I preach about Slavery? What am I supposed to teach concerning the evil Institution called “Slavery”? The notion that any human being can buy and sell another is abhorrent to every fiber of my body. I recoil in both horror and outrage at what I read and hear and see in how Slavery existed and was carried out. And yet, I know that, at the time that Peter wrote this, Slavery was in full force, and the Reality is that both slaves and masters were genuine believers.

Now, right out of the box, let me say that I do not believe that we are better off by ignoring the hard issues that we find in Scripture. I think that struggling with deep and profound issues is a sign that we take the Bible seriously, and that we are, at least, *trying* to “get it right”. So, since the Bible is the Word of God, it is Inspired. And

because every Word of Scripture was “breathed out” by God, it is also Inerrant and Infallible.

But we need to acknowledge that there is no verse anywhere in the entire Bible, no Passage, that explicitly *commands* God’s people to *eliminate* the Institution of Slavery. But, there are, however, plenty of verses that teach *how* genuine believers should engage themselves *within* Slavery, as both slaves and masters. But there is no overt Command to bring Slavery to an end.

Now in my dialogue with people from all over the world in regard to Human Sexuality, the statement came up frequently that since there is no *explicit* Condemnation by Jesus anywhere in the four Gospel Records concerning homosexuality, that this “silence” means that Jesus didn’t think it was an issue deserving of much attention.

But then I explain to them that Jesus never mentioned anything about Slavery either. And then I ask them if they think that His silence about what is so obviously wicked means that He was in favor of people buying and selling other human beings like they were cattle? Hardly.

But I *do* think we have a duty to explain *why* the Bible doesn’t explicitly condemn Slavery, and why it talks about how to *manage* Slavery the way it does. And to get this Issue right, we need to begin with a few facts of History:

1. Slavery existed in almost every nation on earth *before* Moses wrote the first five Books of the Bible.
2. The group of people who have suffered the most and the longest under Slavery are the Jews, who, under the Old Covenant, were God’s *exclusive* people.
3. There were different *forms* of Slavery throughout Bible History, however, *all* forms had both people who *gave* orders and people who were *forced* to obey.

... so, it appears to me that rather than command its *extinction*, God “moved along” certain writers to teach *how* Slavery was to be “carried out” and “managed” *until it would be completely eliminated*. And I say that because the interesting thing that we find in studying this is that when the Commands of the New Testament began to be *implemented* and *obeyed*, the harsh Institution of the “Slave/Master” system very

quickly and radically *transforms* into a more benevolent “Employee/Employer” one that has godly love as its basis.

For example, at some point around AD60-62, the Apostle Paul was “moved along” by God the Holy Spirit to pen down the inspired and inerrant New Testament **Book of Philemon**. And this Book was written to three people:

1. *Philemon*, who was a slave owner.
2. *Archippus*, who was a minister.
3. *Apphia*, who is thought to have been Philemon’s wife and Archippus’ sister or mother.

... and Paul says that all three of these people were believers. And he uses phrases like this to address them:

### **Philemon 1b&2**

**... To Philemon our beloved *brother* and fellow worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:**

... and then, Paul says:

### **Philemon 3-7**

**3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**4 I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers,**

**5 because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;**

**6 *and I pray* that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.**

**7 For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.**

... so, there is every reason to conclude that, *at least at that time*, there were genuine believers, who had experienced the miracle of the New Birth, and who were actively serving God, who were, also, slave owners.

But then the Apostle was “moved along” to write strange words which sound out of place. For example, he calls, Onesimus, the fugitive slave:

### Philemon 10b&c

... my child ... whom I have begotten in my imprisonment.

.. and he says:

### Philemon 11-13

**11** who formerly was useless to you, but now is useful both to you and to me.

**12** I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *sending* my very heart,

**13** whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel;

... and then the Apostle tells Philemon:

### Philemon 8, 9, & 14

**8** Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* what is proper,

**9** yet for love's sake I rather appeal *to you* — since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus —

**14** but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.

... so, we sense a gentle persuasion here, *away* from the “Slave/Master relationship” and into a radically different one that is described like this:

### Philemon 15&16

**15** For perhaps he was for this reason separated *from you* for a while, that you would have him back forever,

**16** no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

... so, at a time when the Institution of Slavery was commonplace, the Apostle Paul teaches radical doctrine concerning several issues that were not accepted by many in his day:

- ✓ Slaves *could* (and *should*) be saved
- ✓ Saved slaves are “**beloved brothers**”, not merely possessions



... and, in 1847, from that inspired statement about slaves, Adolphe Adam, took a poem written some 35 years earlier and put together a beloved Christmas Hymn called, "*O Holy Night*". And in the final stanza, it says:

Truly He taught us to love one another,  
His Law is Love and His Gospel is Peace.  
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.  
And in his name all oppression shall cease.  
Sweet hymns of Joy in grateful chorus raise we,  
With all our hearts we praise His holy Name.  
Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we,  
His Power and Glory ever more proclaim!

... then the Apostle Paul puts his own personal credibility on the line vouching for this runaway slave when he says:

**Philemon 17-19**

**17** If then you regard me a partner, accept him as *you would me*.

**18** But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account;

**19** I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well).

Now, from this, we see that, at various times during the "Church-Age", there have existed *some* "Human Institutions" which were created by Man (for a variety of reasons) that were *always* sinful and that were *always* targeted by God for complete annihilation. However, they were *permitted* by God to exist for a time (sometimes for a long, long time) until it was Good in God's Mind to raise up men, endowed with a special anointing and Common Grace, to change them, or remove or abolish them.

And we can speculate all day long as to *why* God permitted Slavery to continue for as long as He did. Perhaps it was until the "Common Grace" of God had sufficiently controlled the consciousness of people so that they hammered out a type of Government/Society where freed slaves could survive until they could become stable. I don't know. But suffice it to say that at least one thing is true:

**God's Word (when fully implemented and obeyed) makes Slavery untenable.**

A genuine believer simply *cannot* buy and sell another human being, and force him to labor without his consent, and then treat him as a "beloved brother in Christ" at the same time. One attitude and action will *always* "give way" to the other. It is truly "either/or". It is entirely *inconsistent* on a fundamental level to say that we are "Christians" and then strive to obey what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:12**:

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

... and then tolerate Slavery. But before we look at those who came before us with eyes of condemnation and self-righteousness over their obvious failure to live up to what they said they believed, we must realize that it is *also* inconsistent on a fundamental level to say that we are "Christians", and that we are striving to obey what Jesus said now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with our universal condemnation of Slavery and then:

- ✓ Walk in Unforgiveness
- ✓ Seek Vengeance on our enemies
- ✓ Participate in Retribution
- ✓ Be apathetic to Injustice when we know about it
- ✓ Treat employees unfairly
- ✓ Turn a deaf ear to the widow, the orphan, and the poor

... with little or no conviction, because those attitudes and actions are also sinful, and they are also categorically "unchristian", and they are also entirely contradictory to what we say that we believe in. So, when the Question is asked:

*"How could people think they were saved and participate in Slavery?"*

... we can quickly respond:

*"Because every saved human on earth has "clay feet" and has not risen to the level of sinless perfection, and therefore, tolerates some degree of sin and wickedness in his life with little or no conviction."*

And when they ask:

*"How could God use wicked sinners like this?"*

... we should just as quickly respond:

*"That is what Grace is all about".*

One of the reasons I came to the conclusion that the Holy Bible was true was precisely because it "airs out" all of the "dirty laundry" of every one of my heroes. If the Bible was written by a group of religious geniuses, who simply wanted to try to deceive the world with a new invented philosophy, they would never have allowed Abraham's and Moses' and David's and Paul's and Peter's sins to be memorialized in writing. But all through the Bible, God used liars and adulterers and thieves and murders and hard-hearted and self-righteous people *not* to justify their wickedness, and *not* to say that sin doesn't matter, and *not* to suggest that since everybody has something wrong with them, then Salvation really doesn't matter anyway. No, the reason God included all of the sins of all of God's people in the Bible was to illustrate the Majesty of Grace.

God *could* have set this thing up so that we would no longer sin after we are saved. But He didn't. And even though God condemns sin, in every form and without exception, genuinely saved people sin. And one of the reasons that is true is to remind us of Who God is, and who we are, and of how much we *need* Grace, and how utterly *amazing* Forgiveness is, and of how *precious* Mercy is.

Being constantly reminded by our own personal attitudes and acts of sin that we are *not* "Good" people, but that we are sinners, deserving of *nothing* but Eternal Damnation and yet we are *not* given God's Wrath, but are truly loved by an infinitely Holy God and that we are *guaranteed* to spend all of Eternity in Heaven, that Knowledge serves as a buffer against *the* single most atrocious attack against God that human can engage in, Pride.

You see, there is only one Man in all of Scripture, yea, in all of Human History, that didn't *need* Grace or Forgiveness or Redemption or Mercy. Jesus Christ *earned* His Salvation by His Works. He obeyed His Father *perfectly*, in thought, word and deed, 24 hours every day and seven days every week, for 33-1/2 years. Jesus was *perfectly* led by God the Holy Spirit. Jesus was *completely* submissive to the Will of His Father. Jesus *loved* God with all His Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength. Jesus loved His neighbor as Himself. But every other character in the Bible (including Mary the mother of Jesus) was a wicked sinner, who *needed* Grace, Forgiveness, Mercy, and Salvation.

So, at some point after the Fall, satan gave somebody an opportunity to act on what he already wanted to do anyway, and he took another human being captive by force and made him his slave. And from that, nearly every nation on earth participated, to some degree, in the Institution of Slavery, including the United States. And 6,000 years later, even though most of the countries of the world have abolished Slavery, right now this morning, the Institution of Slavery is alive and well, and is an integral part of life in at least six nations:

1. India (18.4million)
2. China (3.4 million)
3. Pakistan (2.1 million)
4. Bangladesh (1.5 million)
5. Uzbekistan (1.2 million)
6. North Korea (1.1 million)

... and that doesn't count millions more living in Slavery throughout the world in small groups dominated by tyrants and "war-lords".<sup>2</sup>

But it is important to know that it was *not* the rise of Education that abolished Slavery. It was *not* the advancement of Government or Economics or Medicine or Technology that abolished Slavery. American History will teach you that in 1857, the United States Supreme Court ruled that black slaves were not "human beings", and therefore, not entitled to "equal protection" or "due process" that is guaranteed by the Constitution.<sup>3</sup> And it wasn't even close. The decision was a 7-2 vote.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://borgenproject.org/countries-that-still-have-slavery/>

<sup>3</sup> Dred Scott v. Sandford

So, the lawyers and the judges, who are charged with the task of being sentinels of the Declaration of Independence that clearly says in part:

“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness....”

... justified their blatant violation of this proclamation by simply ruling that black people were not “human”. And we also need to remember that the elected politicians of all four political parties<sup>4</sup> repeatedly *refused* to make Slavery illegal when they absolutely had the power to do so. And the medical professionals, who took an oath to preserve life, *sanctioned* the ill treatment of other human beings. And the business owners *facilitated* the buying and selling of people made in the Image of God and profited from it.

So, the very people who *should* have brought this evil Institution to an end failed. And their arguments in favor of *keeping* Slavery up and running are eerily similar to the arguments given today by these very *same* groups as it pertains to the unconscionable practice of Abortion.

- ✓ The Supreme Court has ruled that unborn babies are *not* “human”, and thus, *not entitled* to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”, or “due process” or “equal protection”, and may be systematically eliminated at the whim of the mother<sup>5</sup>.
- ✓ The Politicians cowardly proclaim that Abortion is a “woman’s health issue”, or a “litmus test for Supreme Court nominees”, rather than say what it really is, “the intentional murder of a human being made in the Image of God”. And they repeatedly *refuse* to pass laws to protect the weakest and most vulnerable people on earth.
- ✓ The Medical Professionals, who have taken an oath to *preserve* life, are the very ones who either burn the baby to death with saline solution, or systematically dismember the child, using a “surgical hoe”, or pierce the baby’s skull and suck out its brain.

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<sup>4</sup> Federalists; Democratic-Republicans (Jefferson Democrats); Whigs; Republicans

<sup>5</sup> Roe v. Wade; 1973

- ✓ Business owners facilitate in the holocaust of Abortion for the worst of all possible reasons, to make money.

Back then with Slavery, just as it is now with Abortion, it is left to the average Christian who rises in moral outrage at what is happening all around them. And back in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, these Christians cried out against Slavery in their sermons and in their Bible Studies and at the dinner table and at work, until a vacillating President signed an Executive Order (that was probably unconstitutional) freeing the slaves.

So, the people who were the *most* vocal, the people who were on the front lines in the struggle against Slavery, were the people of the Christian Church who believed the Bible to be the Word of God. So, we must understand that it wasn't the Government that moved against the Institution of Slavery first, it was the Church.

Now those of you who went with me as I struggled to teach Eschatology (and were sorely disappointed) will also probably be disappointed in how I teach Submission to Human Institutions. You see, there is a great chasm between my mind and my ability to put what I believe into practice as it pertains to our Submission to every Human Institution. I read these Passages and it becomes crystal clear in my mind. God desires that, as a "bought-and-paid-for" bond-slave of the Lord Christ, I am to:

### **1 Peter 2:13a**

**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution ...**

... or another way of saying it is:

### **Romans 13:1**

**Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.**

... and that is crystal clear in my mind. Until we talk about the Patriots, and the Revolutionary War, or until we talk about Dietrich Bonhoeffer seeking to assassinate Adolf Hitler, or until we talk about the Institution of Slavery, and then, suddenly, submission to Human Institutions become much more cloudy. For example:

- ✓ What is our duty, as believers, to submit to “Sinful Institutions”?
- ✓ At what point do those of us, who live under a Constitutional Republic, not only have the “right”, but actually have the “duty” to *resist* and even to *overthrow* an “unjust Government”?
- ✓ Did Bonhoeffer sin by planning to assassinate the Dictator of Germany?
- ✓ Should Christians hold political office?
- ✓ How much time and money and energy are we supposed to expend in changing our Government?
- ✓ What political “hills” should we be willing to not only fight on, but to die on?
- ✓ Is it sinful to be apathetic about changing Human Institutions, if we have the ability to do so?

... and I confess to you that I agonize over issues like this. And the clarity that I have in my mind about what I read in Scripture quickly becomes unclear as I strive to put what I believe into action. Because, on the one hand, I am as militant as anyone on earth. But, on the other hand, I am truly seeking to become obedient to God, *including* the Command to submit to every Human Institution.

And, in case you try to run into the “safety” of great and godly leaders from Church History, you will run into the Reality that some of my greatest heroes, who were faithful to God, and who taught and preached the “Whole Counsel of God”, and who modeled Biblical Holiness better than most anybody I know, *willfully* participated in the Institution of Slavery. For example, Jonathan Edwards actually owned slaves himself, and George Whitfield campaigned fervently and repeatedly in favor of Slavery.

Now, of course, there are *nuances* about how our ancient parents lived that absolutely need to be studied and understood. Things like “debtors prison” and “indentured servants” and “the Company Store” all matter. And as human beings are gifted with more and more Common Grace, Society, as a whole, is becoming more just and more equitable, even if that doesn’t always translate into true Salvation.

But, *why* would a “Good” and “Gracious” God *permit* Slavery, *especially* by His Own people? First of all, I think we are correct to say that God *is* both “Good” and “Gracious”. Secondly, I wish to *re-enforce*

that the Bible is true. And, thirdly, it would be a terrible mistake to assume that people, who find such things as Slavery to be abhorrent today, are somehow more moral, or even more godly, than the people who lived before us who engaged in Slavery.

And so, the best answer I have is that there are Old Testament Laws and Principles that don't have validity today under the infinitely superior New Covenant. And there is a sort of "redemptive-historical flow" in the Bible that accounts for why some things were both *commanded* and *permitted* earlier, that aren't now.

And part of this flow is that the people of God in the Old Testament were a political and ethnic Reality with God as their King, (and later with an earthly king). And God ordained, in those circumstances, that His people exercise some of His "Rights" and His "Judgments" upon the other peoples of the world.

And so, we find the entire annihilation of the Canaanites by Joshua and his army with brutal, universal destruction. And that's because God said repeatedly all through the Book of **Deuteronomy**:

"I'm punishing those people for *their own sins*. So, it is not *your* righteousness, O Israel, that is bringing this about. It is *their own sins* that is bringing this about."

So, God was using His people as an Instrument for His Own Judgment. And in the context of a "Theocracy", that was a perfectly *legitimate* and right thing for God to do, even though the Jews themselves may have not been any more saved than the people they were annihilating, and even though the Jews may have been sinful in the way they carried out the Judgment of God.<sup>6</sup> And it was similar with things like Slavery. God was saying, in essence:

"You are my people. And I have a Divine Right to judge the other peoples of the earth. And so, when I use you to carry out that Judgment, You may own them."

But at the appointed time, Jesus came, and He *undoes* much of the Old Testament Law. In fact, I think He undoes *all* of it as Law, according to **Romans 7:4**, which says:

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<sup>6</sup> A "Theocracy" is a type of governmental structure that has God and His Ways as the dominating influence. Before the Judges and the Kings- Israel operated as a Theocracy.



**Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.**

But we must understand that the reason Jesus did away with the Law was *not* because it was "wrong" under those circumstances to do what God said to do. Rather, with the Coming of Christ, Jesus' absolute *rejection* of any temporary "earthly kingdom", and His *establishment* of an eternal "spiritual kingdom", teaches us the Kingdom of God will be taken *away* from the Jews (as an ethnic people) and be given to people out of every nation, tribe, and language, who bear unmistakable "kingdom fruits" which testify that they have been truly Born Again, which is the Church of Jesus.

So, now, under the New Covenant, the Kingdom of God is *not* "political", "ethnic", or "geographical". It has no earthly king. It is a Church made up of *all* ethnicities from all over the world, and therefore, it has a very *different* witness to bear in the world.

You see, under the inferior Old Covenant, the one true religion that was taught in the Old Testament Scriptures (it wasn't Judaism) was a "come see" religion. God had "set aside" an entire nation of people that existed solely for God's Glory, and put them on display for the whole world to look at. And so, the nations of the world were told to look upon Israel and marvel at what God had done. And if God was dealing with anybody else, they had to "come" to Israel and "see" for themselves.

But under the infinitely superior New Covenant, the one, true, religion, that is taught in the entirety of all 66 inspired Books, is a "go tell" religion. It is a religion of us going to the nations of the world and proclaiming, "*Behold your God!*" It is a religion of binding Jew and Gentile of all stripes together under the Blood-stained Banner of Grace and Love. It is no longer a religion of a Jewish phenomenon performing wonders so that the world could look on and maybe get saved. (And whether you want it to or not, that Truth will affect your Eschatology)

And under the new circumstance of a spiritual "dying and rising" Messiah, Who reigns from Heaven (with no political dimensions to His Faith on the earth), and a Desire for all the peoples to "come together" (not just one ethnicity), and a Desire that the Command of Love take on a whole new universal Scope (because the very *essence* of the

Incarnation and the Death of Christ was to love your enemies), a whole string of Old Testament “processes” and “procedures” and “allowances” and “Commandments” simply go by the wayside as part of the Old System, precisely because they *cannot* become part of the New.

So, with regard to the Human Institution of Slavery, in particular, it seems to me that the New Testament also causes us problems, because here, Peter tells slaves to be submissive to their masters. And if that was all Peter taught, and if that was all the New Testament teaches about Slavery, then we could rightly say that the New Testament was *woefully* inadequate.

But that is not all that the New Testament says about Slavery. The glorious New Covenant also *clearly and repeatedly* commands masters *not* to threaten their slaves. And, as we have seen, the Bible also commands masters to treat their saved slaves as “beloved brothers”. And that tells me that as the New Covenant was being initially revealed, it was being brought into play in a world that not only indulged in Slavery, but also Polygamy and the horrendous treatment of prisoners and the aged and the sick and the poor and the widow women, literally dying on the side of the road.

And as the divinely inspired Words of the New Testament were finalized and supernaturally confirmed, and as they began to grip the hearts of God’s people, they changed. And they became kinder people, and more loving and more patient, and they became more able to disagree without violence. Churches began to hold its members accountable with how they treated the aged and the sick and the widow and the orphan. And this transformation occurred in every nation where the Gospel was preached and taught.

But, in many cases, it took decades, even centuries for pagan nations that participated in Slavery and Polygamy to change. But, as it became more and more clear that the Bible not only taught how sinners could be saved, but also how saved people should live after they are saved, entire civilizations were radically transformed.

For example, back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, in the Churches at Ephesus and Crete, the Apostle Paul taught the young Pastors, Timothy and Titus, that qualifications for being an Elder *required* that men:

**1Timothy 3:2b**

**... must be above reproach, the husband of one wife ...**

## **Titus 1:6**

**... is above reproach, the husband of one wife ...**

Now many in the modern Church have taught that Paul was excluding men who had been divorced from becoming Elders in the Church. But the literal translation of the phrase, the “**husband of one wife**”, is:

“a one-woman man”

... so, it is clear that what Paul was condemning here was Polygamy, *not* divorce. And many today wonder at this and don't seem to understand the significance of it, since there are very few people in America, who practice Polygamy. But we must understand that Polygamy was *prevalent* in the ancient world, *especially* among the Gentile lands. And as the Christian Gospel went into those pagan areas, it ran right up against the ongoing culture of that area.

And this is actually the *source* of some of the persecution of the missionaries. As men became burdened by God the Holy Spirit to cast all their worldly goods aside and go to the unreached peoples of the world to preach the Gospel to them, they not only taught the pagans to *abandon* their false religions and superstitions and trust in Jesus for Salvation, but they also began to teach them how to live to God's Glory. And *part* of living to God's Glory was to obey the New Testament in how believers treated women and slaves and children and the sick and maimed and the poor and the weakest and most vulnerable people in their communities.

And the Reality is that at the time that Paul restricted the Office of Elder to only those men who had one wife, 90% of the men of Ephesus and Crete at that time were *disqualified* because they all had more than one wife. And, according to history, it literally took many generations before most of the men of those regions could qualify. Because to simply end Polygamy at once and let men choose which wife he would keep would doom the other wives to a life of poverty, shame, and probably begging or prostitution. And how was that better than Polygamy? Yet, *eventually* the practice of Polygamy ended in those nations where Christianity dominated. So, we must understand that God was working

on, not only saving souls, but in changing entire cultures and nations and customs and practices, and bringing them into conformity to His Word.

Now we can debate that it took way too long for Slavery to be finally abolished in those nations where Christianity dominates. And that argument would probably get a lot of traction these days as we might wonder how genuinely saved people could do that. But, in any discussion like that, we should also rejoice that God's Word *did* prevail and Slavery *was* abolished. And because that is true, I think it is fine for us to take the verses and passages that deal with the harsh Institution of the "Slave/Master" system and *apply* them to our own lives in the more benevolent "Employee/Employer" relationship that we have in our day. So, for example, in **1 Peter 2:18**, when Peter tells slaves:

**... be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.**

... we might think about our attitude toward the jerk we have for a boss at work.

But as we struggle to understand how genuinely saved people could work within and justify Slavery, to be fair, we should also look honestly at how long it has taken for many of *us* to change *our* ways and *our* attitudes and *our* customs and practices and to adopt Biblical Principles in our own lives. And yet, as we continue to struggle with those sinful attitudes and actions that the Bible clearly condemns, we don't hesitate to claim that we are saved.

So, eventually the Christians in America moved from *justifying* Slavery to *abolishing* Slavery. And that was a long and hard battle. But the New Testament Principles that were used to *undermine* the Old Testament's own speech about Slavery were right. And so, it is right to say that there are changes that come about in the process of Redemptive-History which make *some* Laws in the Old Testament no longer *appropriate* or *relevant* at all in the New Testament. And we should all be thankful for that.

But as we rejoice that Slavery has been almost universally abolished, let us redouble our prayers and efforts to become submissive

to all of God's Divine Commands in our *own* daily lives, all to the Glory of God.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.