

Duties of Servants

BY B. G. ECHOLS

SERVANTS, BE IN SUBJECTION TO YOUR masters with all fear (1 Pet. 2:18a).

The term used here is not the usual one for slaves, but rather domestics. They were probably still slaves, but ones who worked in the house. It is likely that many early converts were slaves and lower classes.

They were in a bad situation. They had trouble just becoming Christians. They must not add to their problems by being disobedient slaves. Obeying the gospel might make a slave mistakenly feel it permissible to revolt against his master. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free..." (Gal. 3:28).

What possible application can this have to us? Slaves or servants were to do their business faithfully and honestly with reverence and affection, and to submit patiently. Has not our sense of freedom made us lose sight of this need on our part? The gospel deals with every day, even with the small duties of life. In reality, it is the small duties that tell more about how deeply

the gospel has influenced our lives. Nothing in our lives is so small that it cannot be exalted by Christ. We are not to think that our apparent insignificance in life excuses us from service to God. Just as all men can be saved, so all can do something in God's service. All are living stones in God's spiritual house. The faithful discharge of our humble duties can still bring honor to God and His gospel.

Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward (1 Pet. 2:18b).

"Froward" means "wicked, perverse, unfair." The word literally means "crooked," thus would refer to one with a warped nature. If Christians show respect to harsh masters, they will be blessed by God. He doesn't say

the masters will become gentle, but God will reward. The sin of the master does not justify sin by a slave. The master's harshness is not to be used as an excuse for disobedience.

A valuable lesson for us is that our responsibilities and duties as Christians remain the same regardless of what is happening to us or what the reaction of others is. Our relationship to our duties does not depend on the character of the person to whom they are to be performed, nor whether they perform their duties to us; but on our relationship to God and His will. This is often hard to remember. The gospel never encourages confrontation except when preaching the gospel arouses opposition. Even then the Christian is to be meek, humble, and never violent.

For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully (1 Pet. 2:19).

Such conduct by slaves brings God's favor. Some human masters may never be satisfied, but God can be when we continue to have the submissive attitude to Him and man. Conscientiousness of God's presence, His will, and of our duties to Him should be the motivation in our lives. We must not allow our

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emotions to drive us. This involves believing God sees us. The most conscientious persons are very often the greatest sufferers, but sufferers of this sort are praiseworthy as they do honor to God and the gospel. It is possible to endure but with impatience and complaining. Our endurance is to be of a higher order. It is to be free of unkind feelings toward its source. If one lives with a consciousness of God then that will show even in his lowly surroundings. Thus his life will fulfill his purpose as a Christian.

Suffering in itself is not an occasion for commendation from God. It is only when such proceeds from one's determination to do what is right that it is acceptable to God. The tendency when suffering unjustly is to retaliate or sit and sulk. Neither is what God wants since both focus on self rather than others. Focusing on self makes it worse. Our desire to right the wrongs of humanity must not lead to violence or rebellion, but to quiet endurance in doing what is proper. The love of Christ in us and from us to others will transform society more surely and deeply than any other power.

For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? (1 Pet. 2:20a).

To be patient when suffering deserved punishment is often difficult, but it is no more than duty. It adds no glory to Christ. Christians ought not to suffer any kind of punishment because they are to do what is right. Too many times the so-called "heroes" of modern times are those who take their deserved punishment and

act tough. They glory in being too tough to break. But what glory is that except to others who are of the same sort?

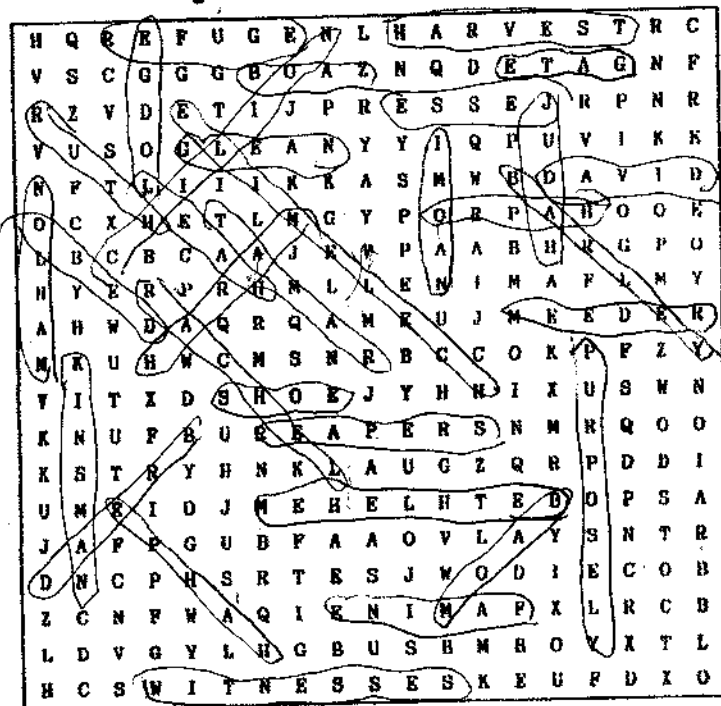
But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God (1 Pet. 2:20b).

It is not mere suffering that is acceptable to God, but our re-

action of patience which brings honor to Christ. Our reaction shows the power of the gospel in our lives (Acts 5:41; 16:25). If nuclear protesters today can endure abuse for their convictions, we should endure mistreatment for Christ.

Words From The Book of Ruth

by Robert W. Goodman



Find the Hidden Words (from the New King James)

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| FAMINE ✓ | GATE ✓ | GLEAN ✓ | HARVEST ✓ |
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| LODGE ✓ | MARLON ✓ | MARAH ✓ | NOAH ✓ |
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