

**FULFILLED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD**  
**"Part VI: Enduring Difficult But Mandatory Relationships"**  
**(1 Peter 2:18-25)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

(1) Marriages are supposed to be made in heaven, but sometimes they end up on the rocks! Take Tom and Barbara Place of Waterbury who were married in 1960 and lived on Fredericks Street. They had four girls, worked hard to pay the mortgage, and generally looked like they were thriving.

But then things went wrong. Tom lost his job, and went to work for himself. With long hours away from the family, and the new job beginning to falter, the pressures mounted. In 1976, they lost the house, and Mrs. Place took the girls to live on Rowland Drive in Prospect while Tom got an apartment and new job and turned to drugs to drown out his sorrows.

**In a situation like that, what could Barbara Place do? Could she still remain loyal to Tom though he wasn't anywhere near being the husband he was supposed to be, or was she justified in getting a divorce?** Good question. God says that once we are one flesh, that there is no parting, Matthew 19:5-6. **But was Barbara Place supposed to stay in that hopeless marriage? How long?!**

(2) Over the years I have seen people who have put up with biblically mandatory but difficult relationships like that:

(a) While visiting Emma Clark at Koury Apartments on Wednesday, I saw this note on the foyer bulletin board: "Some seniors have reportedly said some harmful things about other Seniors. If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything! We have to get along with each other here!!" When I mentioned the notice to Emma, she shared that it is tough living in close quarters with some seniors even though one may think that the elderly are a kinder, gentler lot!

(c) I have talked with several who feel snubbed or mistreated by other so-called believers at **church** gatherings, but who feel that God called them to attend that body! Yet they wonder how! How long should they try to work things out?!

(3) Since returning from my vacation, I have received 6 calls or visits with people both in Nepaug or outside of our body concerning a total of 53 such troubled relationships between **believers**!

**What about very difficult relationships where Scripture does not allow us to leave -- how can we handle them?!**

***Need: "There's this biblically commanded relationship status I have at home, work, school, church or somewhere else which I cannot stand anymore! Is there a limit to how patient God expects us to be before withdrawing from such relationships?!"***

**I. The Apostle Peter gave instructions to Christians facing difficult but biblically required relationships in their lives, 1 Pet. 2:18.**

- A. The word used for "slave" in verse 18 is not the usual *doulos*, but the word *oiketays*, meaning, "household" slave, UBS Greek N.T., p. 795; Moulton & Milligan, A Vocab. of the Greek N.T., p. 440.
- B. This word pictures not so much slavery itself as it does a slave's relationship in a "family", Trench, Syn. of the N.T., p. 33.
  1. House slaves in Biblical times were considered part of their owners' families, Z.P.E.B., v. Five, p. 456.
  2. Thus, their marriages, their religious activities, their housing and jobs were set up through their overseers, Ibid.
- C. Peter thus focused his address on believers facing difficult but biblically mandatory relationships wherever they might turn!

**II. Peter revealed that Christians were to endure difficult but biblically required relationships patiently even until death!**

- A. On the one hand, a slave could legally buy his freedom, 1 Cor. 7:21.
- B. However, assuming they were **not** able, Christian slaves had to endure even difficult but mandatory slave owners at home and work and church patiently even unto death (as follows):
  1. The order to remain a good slave was given in verses 18-20.
  2. To back up this command, Peter appealed to Christ's example:
    - a. Christ's suffering was an exact model for those in difficult, required relationships: "example" in v. 21 means "formulae given by writing-masters to their pupils, containing all the letters of the alphabet," Alford, The Gr. N. T., v. IV, p. 354.
    - b. As such, every believer in such relationships was to copy Christ exactly by patiently suffering unto death, 1 P. 2:21ff!
  3. We can certify this interpretation of 1 Peter 2:18-25 elsewhere:
    - a. Acc. to Strong's Ex. Conc., p. 775 and Trench, Syn. of the N.T., p. 195ff, only three Gr. N.T. nouns (besides their same-meaning verbal forms) are properly translated "patient": *hupomonay*,

*makrothumia* and *aneksikakos*. They **all** have the lexical base meaning "endure", cf. world authorities A. & G., A Gr.-Eng. Lex., p. 854, 489 & M. & M., The Voc. of Gr. N.T., p. 41 resp.

- b. 2 Pet. 3:9, 15, Rom. 8:25 and He. 12:1 use the first two words to order us to "wait" until the rapture for relief (UBS Gr. N.T.)!
- c. Passages using the first two words to order **less** time than that are: James 5:7-11, 1:4 and He. 6:12; 10:36: they tell us to wait like Job or Abraham did until God alone helped, which for Abraham was decades after he first desired fulfillment!
- d. **No Scripture anywhere** allows the sufferer to decide **on his own authority** to stop being patient; rather, Ja. 5:7-11, 1:4 & He. 10:36 teach that we often don't wait long enough!

- C. To be **able** to accomplish such action in difficult, mandatory relationships, Christians were to commit to God their crises:
1. While suffering, Jesus spoke of the Father directing His crises, 1 P. 2:23c with Mt. 26:51-54; Jn. 19:10-12a and Lk. 23:33-34.
  2. Accordingly, the believer was to commit to God the custody of his being (*psuchay*), which was the material and immaterial parts of a person that are afflicted by trials (T.D.N.T., v. IX, p. 653); B.K.C., N.T., p. 848. (1 Pet. 2:25) The believer entrusts One who guides through trials as a Shepherd and Who guards him as his Overseer, v. 25, Ibid. (1 Pet. 4:19)
  3. In summary, the sufferer's both (a) **knowing what to do** and (b) being **sustained** enough under trial to be **able** to **follow** that guidance effectively were God's worry -- not the sufferer's!

III. **Lest such suffering seems pointless to us, Peter said that Christ's agony produced our invaluable redemption, v. 24a; thus, it is always invaluable to suffer this way! (2 C. 4:16ff; 2 T. 2:12a)**

*Application: If we face mandatory relationships that are grievous to bear, (1) believe on Christ for salvation from sin to come under His Shepherding and Oversight ministrations, Jn. 3:16; 1 P. 2:25. (2) Then, stay in proper relationship with Him by (a) confession of sins (1 Jn. 1:9) as needed and (b) rely on the Holy Spirit for behavior control, Gal. 5:16-23. (3) When under fire, copy Jesus' actions in suffering! (a) Avoid using deceit, (b) reprisals and (c) threats against the unjust, and do so even unto (d) death by (e) heeding the step-by-step lead of God in every event, and (f) leaving all personal cost this racks up for God to handle!*

*Lesson: If one fellowships with Christ, difficult but biblically required relationships are not tragedies, but God's lofty assignments!*

**Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon . . . )**

We started this message by asking if Barbara Place was still required by God to stay married to Tom when he no longer lived in the home with Barbara and her four children, and when he had turned to a life of drugs!

Well, Barbara received Jesus Christ as her personal Savior from sin in 1980 while Tom continued to fall deeper and deeper into a life of sin and drugs. Barbara started to pray for Tom, and ask God for reconciliation with her troubled, estranged husband. The love of Christ drove her to desire to fulfill the plan of God that once a party was wed, they were to be continually wed until death did them part!

The Waterbury Republican-American ran a story about Tom and Barbara Place a few years ago. There was a picture of Tom and Barbara at the head of the story, and under the picture these words: "Thirty years after their first vows, Barbara and Tom Place were remarried Sunday in Waterbury." You see, Barbara had kept praying and looking to the Lord, never giving up on Tom. Tom, in the meantime, eventually entered a 15-month rehabilitation program in 1988 and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior! At their wedding were four children and three grandchildren from their first wedding back in 1960.

Barbara says, "There were a lot of years of uncertainty, pain and bitterness, but God has since wiped them away." According to the article by the Republican-American reporter, Terry Corcoran, "Mrs. Place, a born-again Christian . . . credits her success in her life to her personal relationship with God."

**Because she patiently sought to do the will of God in relating to the difficult, wayward man she first wed 28 years before, God broadcast Barbara's testimony to God's glory through the secular news media!**

Not all difficult, biblically required relationships end with such blessing in **this** life. But, in the life **to come**, they all result to the glory of God if we, like Barbara Place, copy the Lord Jesus and carry our crosses as far as God lets us go en route to our own personal Calvaries!