Slavery & Race, Long Shadows, and Sowing Good Seeds

1 Peter 2:18-25

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Extended Version

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18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. **19** For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:18-25, ESV)

In the middle of the 19th century, a debate raged in America over the institution of slavery. There was the pro-slavery side and the abolitionist side. Tangled in the middle of it all was the Bible. Many said the Bible condemned slavery. Moses freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Jesus frees people from bondage to sin and death. Jesus teaches us to love neighbor and enemy. *How can this be compatible with a system of oppression?*

Others, however, said the Bible supported slavery.[1] One passage the pro-slavery camp appealed to comes from 1 Peter 2:18-25. Verse 18 reads: “Servants/slaves, be subject to your masters with all respect” (1 Peter 2:18), where the Greek word can be translated as “slave” or “servant.”[2] Read in the atmosphere of 18th and 19th-century chattel slavery—where slavery means an absolute denial of rights, justice, and recourse to freedom—this text seems unthinkable.

Is the Bible a book about freedom or oppression? Could God’s Word bless an institution as awful as slavery? Perhaps, it is the case that we can misinterpret, misapply, and even abuse the Bible? Could it be that for us—removed by millennia from the culture and language of the Bible, unfamiliar with the social

and historical context of its first readers—we may need to do a little more work in grasping the meaning of passages like 1 Peter 2:18?

Frederick Douglass found himself in the middle of this controversy, not only about abolition but about the role of the Bible in the debate. In a speech given in New York in 1859, he offers us important guidance:

> [Many] have declared that the Bible sanctions slavery. What do we do in such a case? What do you do when you are told by the slaveholders of America that the Bible sanctions slavery? Do you go and throw your Bible into the fire? Do you sing out, 'No Union with the Bible!'? Do you declare that a thing is bad because it has been misused, abused, and made a bad use of? Do you throw it away on that account? No! You press it to your bosom all the more closely; you read it all the more diligently; and prove from its pages that it is on the side of liberty—and not on the side of slavery.[3]

Douglass' admonition is a guide for us. We need to take passages like 1 Peter 2:18 and press them to our hearts and study them more diligently. We need to discover what the voice of the Holy Spirit says through this passage, not only to those first Christians but to us, who yet live in the long shadow of misapplications and abuses of this passage.

We'll organize our study of the passage into three steps:

(1) What does this passage from 1 Peter 2:18-25 mean in its original setting? Does it support an institution like chattel slavery?

(2) What does this passage mean in today's setting, here in America, where issues of slavery in our past draw us into conversations about race and justice in our present?

(3) What does this passage ask of us? How does its message tutor our engagement with these issues in our day?

Respect and Compassion

Before we go any further, we should be mindful of two things. It's no secret that the topic of race in American is loaded with energy. Well-meaning people—who equally hate racism and equally desire

flourishing for all— when engaging this issue, use different language, draw different diagnoses, and advocate varying solutions. Rather than leading with distrust of each other, can we, as fellow Christians, begin by showing respect? We should enter into discussions about 1 Peter 2:18 keeping the previous verse in mind, "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood" (1 Peter 2:17).

Jesus drew people together whom the world held apart. For example, Matthew the tax collector—likely seen by his Jewish countrymen as a pro-Roman sell-out (Matthew 9:9-11), and Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15)—where the label Zealot, as one Greek dictionary explains, conveys "an ultranationalist earnestly committed to one side."[4] These men were on polar ends of the political spectrum, yet Jesus called them to unity around Himself.

Second, can we lean towards compassion? The topic of race involves real people who have experienced real pain and are really hurting. It's not merely academic. It's guttural. Let us conduct ourselves with the heart of Christ, who never divorced truth and love. Let's now turn to our text, asking first what it meant in its original setting.

I. Understanding 1 Peter 2:18–25 in Its 1st Century Setting

Our passage runs from 2:18-25, and has a basic three-part structure:

1. First, in verse 18, Peter gives a command: "servants be subject to your masters with all respect, not only the good but also the unjust".

2. Second, in verses 19-20, Peter gives a reason for why this command should be kept: "If when you do good and suffer for it you endure; this is a gracious thing in the sight of God" (v.20). Peter is teaching a general principle for all Christians here: Christians don't return evil for evil. Christians return good for evil. When this principle means suffering unjustly, Peter says a special grace from God rests upon them—"this is a gracious thing in the sight of God."[5]

3. Third, in verses 21-25, Peter gives a further reason for not returning evil for evil: the example of Jesus: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps" (v. 21).

Here, Peter draws from an ancient prophecy in Isaiah 53 about a Suffering Servant, which has been fulfilled by Jesus. We see that God Himself entered into the place of a suffering slave; He was reviled, suffered, and bore the sins of others to the point of death. And He did all this without returning evil for evil.

Not returning evil for evil does not imply indifference to justice. In the middle of the picture of Jesus's suffering unjustly we find Him appealing to the justice of God: "he continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23). Christians never ignore justice, but they are willing to suffer injustice themselves if faithfulness and sacrificial love require it.[6]

The question looms, however, as to why—in light of the broader reality of equal dignity within the Church (Galatians 3:28) and Jesus' call to sibling-love (John 13:24)—Peter seems to be supporting the institution of slavery in verse 18. Why doesn't he call for emancipation?

To understand what Peter is doing in verse 18, we need to better see two things: (1) Differences between Roman slavery and our modern images of slavery; and (2) the subtle yet ultimately radical subversion that is, in fact, at work here.

Differences between Roman Slavery and American Slavery

Modern people tend to think that universal rights are the norm and slavery the exception. In terms of human history, it's the opposite: slavery is the norm; emancipation is the novelty.[7] This was certainly the case in Rome. Slavery affected every area of society. Estimates range that 25-50% of the population was made up of slaves.[8] It would never have crossed the mind of most ancient people that slavery was unnatural—unfortunate, perhaps, a necessary evil, but an inevitable part of life. Even more importantly, slavery in the Roman world differed greatly from the slavery of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Professor of history at UCLA, Scott Bartchy, explains:

> It must be stressed that for the most part knowledge of slavery as practiced in the New World in the 17th–19th centuries has hindered more than helped achieving an appropriate … understanding of … life in the Mediterranean world of the 1st century,

> knowledge which is absolutely essential for a sound [interpretation] of those NT [passages] dealing with slaves.[9]

Bartchy goes on to explain differences:

> Racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including their own slaves); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn … and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.[10]

This is not to say there weren't atrocities. Some slaves were victims of war or stolen, sold, and forced into bondage. It is said that Julius Caesar once sold the entire population of a conquered region in Gaul to slave dealers on the spot.[11] Those sentenced to labor in mines and quarries knew notoriously brutal lives. Even the New Testament writers condemn the practice of "slave-trading," stealing and forcing someone into the institution: "The law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful … slave traders, liars, perjurers and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching" (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

When Peter or Paul call "servants," "bondservants," or "slaves" to obey their master, they do not have in mind these horrific situations. Rather, as one commentator notes, those "referred to as slaves in Peter's world included many who would today be regarded as professionals: managers of estates, physicians, teachers and tutors."[12] Many entered the institution voluntarily, whether for access to training, career opportunities or to pay off a loan or debt (hence the common term in the New Testament, "bondservant"). The life of a bondservant was often far more secure than existence as a poor, freeborn person.[13]

Therefore, when we read passages like 1 Peter 2:18, we would be closer to the mark if we pictured an indentured servant, perhaps an image of servants in a modern TV series such as Downton Abbey, or even an employee-employer relationship, rather than a 19th-century plantation owner towering over a man in chains. This is not to say the institution was okay, commendable, or without horrible abuses. But it's crucial we read passages like this in their proper context.

A Subtle Yet Ultimate Subversion

With this historical context in mind, let's look more closely at what Peter and other New Testament writers do say because it reveals that acquiescence is not all they're after.

The early Church was in no position to plot revolt or radically reform Roman public policy. Their position was more like a tiny house church, meeting in a totalitarian regime, which saw Christianity as a threat to be crushed. However, they knew Jesus' teaching about the mustard seed. The Kingdom of God was like a mustard seed, Jesus had said. It starts small—a tiny idea or a changed heart—but eventually grows "larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree" (Matthew 13:13-32). If we look closely, we can see Kingdom Seeds that Peter and his colleagues are sowing.

Aristotle taught that "the majority of human beings may be enslaved without injustice because they are slaves by nature."[14] Slaves were beings lacking rational capabilities, by nature inferior, and by nature lacking rights. Hence, Aristotle could write, "There can be no injustice against slaves."[15]

But Peter and his comrade Paul, suggested otherwise.

- **Slaves have *God-given rights* and therefore, experience injustice**
  "When, mindful of God, one endures … suffering unjustly" (1 Peter 2:19).

- **Slaves are *not by nature inferior* persons, so should seek freedom if they can**
  "If you [as a slave] can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity"
  (1 Corinthians 7:21).

- **In Christ, slaves and free persons are of *equal dignity***
  "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free"
  (1 Corinthians 12:13).[16]

- **Both the slave and the master are *under the same authority*, God**
  "Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 4:1).[17]

- **In Christ and His New Community, slaves are not property, but *family***

"Have him [Onesimus] back for good—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a beloved brother" (Philemon 15-16).

- **God dignifies the slave by *becoming a slave himself***
  "Christ Jesus … though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant/slave" (Philippians 2:5–7).[18]

Read in light of some of the assumptions of 1st century thinkers, these biblical words about slaves and masters bring us into an atmosphere "in which the institution [of slavery] could only wilt and die."[19] To summarize, then, Peter is not advocating for the continuation of a system of chattel slavery. Peter is sowing seeds of mutual dignity and value of all persons before God and in Christ; truths which can only sit uncomfortably within a system of oppression.

We now must turn from the 1st century Roman world to 21st century America. *How do we read this passage in light of the struggles of our own day that arise from our own history of slavery?*[20]

II. Reading 1 Peter 2:18-25 in the Context of America Today

This week the Senate unanimously passed a bill, which the President then joyfully signed, making Juneteenth a federal holiday. Yesterday, June 19, 2021, was the first time Juneteenth was celebrated with this official honor. Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger in Galveston, TX issued General Order No. 3, announcing that in accordance with the Emancipation Proclamation, "all slaves are free." The many names that day has been called since suggests something of its importance to Black Americans: Jubilee Day. Freedom Day. Liberation Day. Emancipation Day.

Juneteenth marks a milestone in a long journey to undo the unthinkable: slavery as a legal institution in America. No, not everyone agreed or endorsed. No, not everyone owned or directly participated. And no, it is not the case that nothing has been done, no blood spilled, no progress made. But, written into the law in the United States for decades-turned-centuries was the rightful ownership and subjugation of stolen, abused, and dehumanized people.

We are not in the same place we were on June 19, 1865. But along the way promises were made and promises were broken. And even while certain laws were changed, racism persisted in the hearts of people, and discrimination embedded itself in structures through things like Jim Crow law. Days like Juneteenth or MLK Day are opportunities to celebrate the progress made, but also to repent of and lament the horrors of the past and ask where we are at present.

I believe that for Christians living in America, a passage like 1 Peter 2:18 must remind us of the failures and sins of Christians and churches in America's past. We should, and do, honor those Christians who gave so much in the name of freedom—from Christians in the underground railroad to the early Quakers to Abraham Lincoln and the lives spent in the great war, to Jackie Robinson, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr., and so many more. However, we must also lament the church's involvement, explicitly and implicitly, in slavery and racism. We can't read 1 Peter 2:18 without lamenting its abuses in our own land and then asking how this shapes life in our present.

Diagnostics and Engagement

It seems that the two big questions for Christians when considering racial issues today involve diagnosing and engaging.

What is the extent and scope of current racial injustices in our society? Some may reject even raising this question. Either because they feel there are no racial justice issues today and to bring them up is to become entangled in underlying ideologies. Or, because they feel these issues are so obvious that one must be willfully blind to not already see them. I would ask both such persons to remember that Jesus called Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot to work and fellowship together, and their immediate opinion on matters likely varied greatly.

Identifying the state of the problem leads to the second question for the church: *What is the solution and how is God asking us to engage?* Reading our passage in light of today, we turn first to diagnostics.

Death Works, Long Shadows, and Dark Fruits

Sociologist and cultural critic Philip Rieff used the term “deathworks” to describe actions within a culture that undermine or destroy that culture’s past or assumed values. I want to borrow his term but use it somewhat differently. Cultures can practice things that turn out to be deathworks in terms of how they affect the future. These are practices or beliefs that, across one or many generations, embed themselves into the culture’s institutions and moral psychology. Even if future generations come to see these practices as evil, the deathworks—like a large tree that has grown up, continue to cast long shadows and produce dark fruits. You see this in the Bible when Judges or Kings in Israel embed dark practices in the nation which later generations, even while aware of the evil, still suffer their long shadows and dark fruit.

Two examples of deathworks currently cultivating in American culture are pornography and abortion. Nurtured and woven into the fabric of culture and our moral imaginations, even if future generations decry these as evil, they will taste for some time their dark fruits. American slavery, practiced for over 200 years, followed by decades upon decades of further racism, is a deathwork. Even while we try to uproot and do away with it, its long shadows and dark fruit don’t go away quickly.

A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Why Black Homeownership Lags Badly in Minneapolis,” shows that racially restrictive covenants—contracts stipulating homes could not be sold to an African American—and discriminatory lending practices, though both now illegal, still affect property values, favoring Whites and disadvantaging Blacks.[21] A beefy study recently published by the American Enterprise Institute and The Brookings Institution considers “the Black—White gap in multigenerational poverty.” We find that Black families are over 16 times more likely than White families are to experience three generational poverty…. Three-generation poverty occurs among one in 100 Whites, but it describes the experience of one in five Black adults.[22]

We can debate to what degree racism exists in legalized and institutionalized forms, and we can discuss the complexity of causation when it comes to present ills or the dangers of single-variable analysis. But it is evident that in terms of diagnosing its existence today, we must recognize that long shadows and dark fruits persist. At this point, I believe some “White Christians”[23] get nervous, wondering if noting the longshadows that persist is to accuse all White persons of fault or guilt. There is a place for each and every person to search their hearts and lives for overt or subconscious prejudices, and sincerely to repent of them when identified. And far too many “White Churches” supported slavery and racism, explicitly or implicitly. Reconning with this history and lamenting it

matters. However, questions of how guilt is dispersed from individuals across groups, and from one generation to another, are as complex as they can be problematic. And studies suggest that ethics motivated by guilt or shame may not be as effective as desired.[24]

A more fruitful path for guiding Christian engagement would be not to ask whose fault is it, but rather to ask *how might God be asking Christians to be conduits of further healing and hope?* To do this, we turn to the example of Jesus Christ Himself, and how He models engagement with the world around us, especially towards any persons in pain.

Our next and last question, therefore, is does this text from 1 Peter give us any guidance about how we, as Christians and as a Church, should engage? *What is God asking us to do?*

III. What Does This Passage Ask of Us? What Can We Do?

In our passage, Peter guides Christian behavior, not based on a cultural ideology, but based on the example of Jesus. As a general principle, Christian ethical engagement issues are approached, not from ideology, but from Christology. It is the example of Jesus that Christians follow, and it is the motivation of mercy and love that fuel action. In our passage, it is in fact the image of Jesus that supports Christian behavior: “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Jesus did not engage with human brokenness because He had to, or because our problems were His fault, but out of sheer grace. His heart overflowed with sacrificial love. Following the example of Jesus’ heart and life, we can say at least three things about Christian engagement.

1. Cultivate Compassionate Hearts

Jesus goes towards the pain of people—whether friends, sinners, or enemies—with compassion. In the church, we too often respond to the topic of race and justice academically and critically, without the compassion requisite of Christ-followers.

Imagine a husband who after a brutally hard day at work comes home to his wife’s question, “how was your day?” Relaying his pain and frustration to her in some detail, she suddenly interrupts and says, “You're making too big of a deal about this and that; you're too sensitive. In fact, some of these

things are likely your own fault." He doesn't need her to affirm every detail, but what he needs is simply to be listened to and affirmed in his pain. "I am so sorry it's been a hard day."

I heard a story from a sister in Christ who is Black. She was at a predominately White church and after one of the widely publicized police shootings where a young Black man lost his life, she was feeling all types of emotions and sadness. But it seemed nobody else felt anything. One day at church a sister in Christ who was White sat down next to her, hugged her, and cried with her—she simply said, "I am so, so sorry. How are you doing?" That woman said, "that's all I needed."

What a difference compassion and empathy make when meeting someone who feels wounded. Our model in this passage is of Jesus as someone who willingly enters into the pain and suffering of others. Within the church, a listening ear and a knowing nod are not endorsements of some totalitarian political ideology; they are called Christian bonds of love.

2. White Christians, Learn of Faithfulness amid Unjust Suffering from the Black Church

1 Peter is all about being faithful in the face of unjust suffering. Jesus wants us to learn how to be faithful in the face of suffering. The Black Church in America is second to none in understanding faithfulness amid unjust suffering. All throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and beyond--without rights, seemingly without hope—Black Christians still gathered to pray, read Scripture, and sing.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent a year in New York, it was a Black Church in Harlem, Abyssinian Baptist, that impacted him most. He took back to Germany with him a crate of albums of African-American Spirituals and taught them to his students. While he found the theology in the American Academy dead, Bonhoeffer saw in the Black Church life and vitality, writing,

> One may also say that nowhere is revival preaching still so vigorous and so widespread as among the [Black Christians], that here the gospel of Jesus Christ, the savior or the sinner, is really preached and accepted with great welcome and visible emotion.[25]

Consider the diet of thinkers and musicians and preachers you take in. If you are a White Christian, look for some solid Black voices to bring into the mix.

3. If You Feel Led, Do Something Practical and Local

Not every individual Christians will be called to engage deeply in the same issues. Some may be passionate about pro-life issues, others education reform, still others are mainly called to care for their family or share the gospel with co-workers.

If God is prodding you to get more involved in race and justice issues, I would recommend finding something local and practical to do. You could find a ministry that supports kids in neighborhoods where the housing situation is partly linked to past discrimination. You could support a locally run Black business. You could even go to your local police station and ask for the names of the police officers who work near your local school or in a particular neighborhood, and you could commit to pray for those offices by name every morning for one year. Pray that these men and women would be protected and kept safe, and that through them God would bring justice and peace in their respective neighborhoods. If ministries crop up in our area that we become aware of as a whole church, we can then consider how we might support these and become involved in larger ways.

Like our brothers and sisters in Christ that Peter is writing to let us sow seeds of the Kingdom rather than seeds of strife—in whatever situation God puts before us. These Kingdom seeds, if God pleases, will grow up into the good trees of the Kingdom and produce the good fruit of God's Kingdom. People will find rest and sustenance under these branches, whose shade is the only real remedy to the longshadows and dark fruits of slavery and racism, and of misreadings and abuses of 1 Peter 2:18.

Endnotes

1. For example, J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 169, offers as an instance of pro-slavery positions that used to the Bible to support their position, noting, "Moses Stuart, the most famous biblical scholar in America at the time, published his *Conscience and the Constitution* (1850), an exhortation to the nation to obey the Fugitive Slave Law, which exposed previous abolitionist exegesis as uneducated in biblical criticism."

2. The Greek word used in 1 Peter 2:18 is oiketēs (οἰκέτης), which emphasizes a slave or servant within the home, a household slave. The word also appears in Luke 16:13, Acts 10:7, Rom 14:4. The more common term used for slave or servant in the New Testament is doulos (δοῦλος), which describes someone who is "solely committed to another" or "in a socioeconomically binding relationship to another" (see "δοῦλος," BDAG, pg. 260). Jesus uses it in Matthew 10:24,

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." Both these terms, as used in the biblical context, can be translated by the English term "slave" or "servant," but in all cases the reader needs to be aware of the different contexts and therefore connotations of these terms in the biblical world.

3. Frederick Douglass, Speech in New York, New York, 12 May 1859, in Frederick Douglass, John R. McKivigan, Julie Husband, and Heather L. Kaufman. *The Speeches of Frederick Douglass: A Critical Edition*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 180–81.

4. "ζηλωτής," BDAG, 427.

5. See also 1 Peter 3:14, where he writes that those who suffer because of faithfulness to Christ "are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests" upon them (3:14).

6. To ignore justice would be to ignore the character of God, "who is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

7. Historian Tom Holland, *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World* (New York: Basic Books, 2021), 430, notes that when in 1842 an American diplomat defined "the slave trade as a crime against humanity," that "Slavery, which only decades previously had *been taken almost universally for granted*, was now redefined as evidence of savagery and backwardness" (Emphasis added).

8. M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: 1980) 65, explains, "There was no action or belief or institution in Graeco-Roman antiquity that was not one way or another affected by the possibility that someone involved might be a slave."

9. S. Scott Bartchy, "SLAVERY," *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 6:66.

10. Ibid, 66

11. Wikipedia contributors. "Slavery in ancient Rome." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 Jun. 2021. Web. 19 Jun. 2021.

12. Edmund Clowney, *The Message of First Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 112.

13. S. Bartchy, "SLAVERY," *AYBD*, 6:67. Also, "Many entered into the system of slavery willing in a form of "debt bondage." There was such a practice in Rome, for instance, where by contract a free man pledged himself as a bond servant as surety for a loan," see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome

14. Malcolm Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery." *Phronesis* 53, no. 3 (2008): 243-70.

15. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* 1134b 9ff; see also Aristotle, Pol. 1.5, 1254b20–23; Pol. 7.7, 1327b18-31.

16. "[In Christ] there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free; but Christ is all, and in all" (Col 3:11).

17. In other, non-canonical, early Christian writings we see a similar theme but with the emphasis that slaves and masters worship the same God, e.g., "Do not order your male slave or female servant out of bitterness—since they hope in the same God" (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 19.7).

18. Another example of differences is that for Peter and Paul, slaves do have rational and moral agency and are called to the same good deeds as all persons, "But if when you *do good*" (1 Peter 2:20).

19. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 401. "Do not order your male slave or female servant—who hope in the same God—out of bitterness" (*Didache* 4.10-11).

20. A brief caveat: as we turn to issues of our own day, we are aware that matters of race and injustice involve many different ethnicities and people groups. Here the focus on race relations is between White and Black Americans mainly. This is not to downplay the importance of other matters, but because 1 Peter 2:18 and its language of slaves and masters takes us so directly to the relationship between Whites and Blacks in American history, it seems pertinent to focus therein.

21. Rachel Bachman and Douglas Belkin, "Why Black Homeownership Lags Badly in Minneapolis." The Wall Street Journal, 1 May 2021, https://www.google.com/search?q=why+black+homeownership+lags+badly+in+minneapolis&oq=Why+black+hom&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l2j0i22i30l3.4944j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8. Accessed 19 June 2021.

22. Scott Winship et al. "Long Shadows: The Black-White Gap In Multigenerational Poverty". *American Enterprise Institute*, 2021, https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/long-shadows-the-black-white-gap-in-multigenerational-poverty/. Accessed 19 June 2021.

23. At times labels such as "White" Christian or "Black" Christian are necessary, as they point out how racial or ethnic identities shape our social experiences. However, for Christians, it is theologically problematic to emphasize any "aspect" of identity—whether ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic standing—as more decisive for our identity than the fact that we are Christian. In Christ, we are a "chosen race" (1 Peter 2:9), brothers and sisters who call upon a shared father (Rom 8:13-17). The latter truths only underscore how tragic the race-based slavery and discrimination was that many Christians supported in the 17th-20th centuries.

24. E.g., Richard D. Harvey and Debra L. Oswald. “Collective Guilt and Shame as Motivation for White Support of Black Programs.” Journal of Applied Social Psychology 30.9 (2000): 1790–181. This study found, “[B]oth shame and guilt appeared to be more highly correlated with personal distress than with empathy.… It seems that the mere exposure of Whites to guilt- and shame-inducing stimuli concerning the oppression of powerless groups by the in-group may invoke antipathy more so than empathy.”

25. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Protestantism without Reformation.” Pages 88-113 in Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Edwin H. Robertson, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures, and Notes 1928-1936* from the Collected Works, Volume I (London: Collins & World, 1977), 10.