

A Living Subjection

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter chapter 2, and we'll read again at verse 16.

We're going to look at the whole section that we read, but if we just read again at verse 16. 1 Peter writes, The 23rd of March 2020 is a date which is going to be etched in our minds for years to come.

Because it was on the 23rd of March 2020 that our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, he appeared in our television screens, announcing to the nation that we're going into lockdown.

And in his speech, our Prime Minister explained that we're facing unprecedented circumstances that will require an unprecedented submission from the public of the United Kingdom.

Because in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and to protect the NHS and to save lives, we were all given rules to submit to and to follow.

[1 : 25] And in his speech, you might even remember it yourself, in his speech, Boris Johnson said, No Prime Minister wants to enact measures like this. I know the damage that this disruption is going to and will do to people's lives and to their businesses and to their jobs.

But at present, there is just no easy options. The way ahead is hard and it is still through that many lives will sadly be lost. And our Prime Minister, he went on to warn us that if you don't follow the rules, the police will have the powers to enforce them through fines and dispersing gatherings.

And you know that night on the 23rd of March 2020, regardless of our power, our profession, our prosperity, or even our political position, as a United Kingdom, we all subjected ourselves to the authority of our Prime Minister and his government, and we submitted to the rules, the rules that he set out.

And as you know, it was because of this announcement from the state. It was because of the announcement from the state that the Church responded in the way that it did. Because out of a concern to love our neighbour and to honour the 6th commandment of protecting and preserving life, the Church took the decision to submit to the decision of the state, and we closed our doors to the public worship of God until further notice.

And you know that's because the Bible repeatedly emphasises that as Christians we are to have a living subjection. As Christians we are to have a living subjection.

[3 : 13] And you know that's what Peter is teaching us in this passage this evening. But as you know, the letter of Peter, Peter wrote his first letter to the 1st century church because they were scattered saints.

They were scattered not because of a pandemic like ourselves, but because of persecution. And like us, they needed a word of encouragement. That's why we've been studying this letter over the past few weeks.

Because Peter reminds us that if we have bowed our knee to King Jesus, and if we've confessed Jesus as Lord, then we're blessed. We've been born again to a living hope.

We're being kept by the power of God. We have this promised glorious inheritance awaiting us beyond the veil of this world when we will see Jesus face to face.

Therefore, says Peter in this letter, we need to live like Jesus, and we need to love like Jesus in our mind, our body and our soul. Because as we saw last week, the Church of Jesus Christ is not lifeless stones built in the heart of a community.

[4 : 20] No, the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of living stones because we have a living salvation through a living Saviour and we're being built into a living structure.

But as the Church of Jesus Christ, Peter reminds us in this passage that we're to have a living subjection. We're to have a living subjection because the Christian life, it's not only to have an impact upon us as individuals.

The Christian life is to have an impact upon our government, our workplace and even our home. The Christian life is to have an impact upon our superiors, our supervisor and our spouse.

And that's what we're looking at this evening. The Christian life is to have an impact upon our superiors, our supervisor and our spouse.

So if we look first of all at the fact that the Christian life is to have an impact upon our superiors, our superiors. We see that in verse 13.

[5 : 28] Where Peter says, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the Emperor, a Supreme, or to Governors as sent by him, to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

For this is the will of God that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the Emperor. Now the 23rd of March 2020, it's not the only date which should be etched in our minds.

Because as a denomination, the 18th of May 1843 should be another date which is etched in our minds. For it was on the 18th of May that the Free Church of Scotland was born, or the Church of Scotland free as it was first known.

And of course the disruption of 1843 when some 480 ministers, they came out of the established Church of Scotland, affirming that Christ alone is the King and Head of His Church.

[6 : 41] And that Church Government is to be distinct from and not subordinate to the State Government. And I don't know how much you've read about the disruption, but it was Thomas Chalmers, the first moderator of the Free Church.

He memorably defined their position between the relationship of the Church and the State. He said, when the disruption took place, he said, although we quit the establishment, we go out on the establishment principle.

Although we quit the establishment, we go out on the establishment principle, which simply is a principle that the State is not to interfere in the spiritual affairs of the Church of Jesus Christ.

But both Church and State, they are to help one another for the Christian good of Scotland. And that's why the Christian is to have a living subjection, because the Christian life is to have an impact upon our superior.

The Christian life and indeed the Christian Church is to have an impact upon those who are in authority over us. And that's what Peter reminds us as the Church. He says that we're to be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the Emperor as Supreme or to Governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

[8 : 08] But you know, why are we to do it? Why are we to be subject to the State? Why are we to submit to their government? Why are we to obey the laws of the land? And Peter says in verse 15, this is the will of God.

This is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Honor everyone. Love the Brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the Emperor. You know, when Paul wrote his letter to the Church in Rome, he was writing to Christians who were living in the heart of the Roman Empire.

And Paul, he not only gave the Romans information about their salvation, he also gave them application about their salvation. And the application that Paul gave to the Romans in Romans 13 is exactly what Peter is saying here.

That as Christians were to have a living subjection. Because Paul said in Romans 13, he said, let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God.

[9 : 24] And those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed. And then Paul went on to say down in verse 7 of chapter 13, he says, therefore render to all their due.

Taxes to whom taxes are due. Customs to whom customs are due. Fear to whom fear is due. Honor to whom honor is due. Owing no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the law.

And what we see is that Peter and Paul, they taught that the state government and the church government, they exist for the glory of God.

And as Christians and as the church were to have this living subjection, in which we seek to be law abiding citizens who live peaceably within the state.

And as the establishment principle emphasizes, both church and state, they are to help one another. They are to work together for the Christian good of the people.

[10 : 32] And as we said, that's why the church took the decision to suspend its services and close its doors until further notice. And we did it in order to protect and to preserve life.

But more than that, you know, the church of Jesus Christ worldwide, it works with the state for the Christian good of many communities.

And whether that is providing food banks, we see that up and down our nation, whether it's helping with drug and alcohol rehabilitation, or reducing homelessness or assisting with financial struggles, both church and state, they often help one another.

They often work together for the Christian good of people. However, the state is not to interfere in the spiritual affairs of the church of Jesus Christ.

And you know, this was particularly relevant to the scattered sense of the first century, because the state government, which was then the Roman Empire, it had instituted and insisted upon emperor worship.

[11 : 40] And that everyone, everyone living within the Roman Empire was to bow down and confess that the Caesar is Lord. But as you know, for a Christian, that was an impossibility because Jesus is Lord.

But when you refused to go with the flow and you refused to confess Caesar as Lord, well, you didn't receive praise, you received persecution. And for Christians living within the Roman Empire during the first century, persecution was extremely volatile and extremely violent.

And we'll see this more next week when we consider suffering, the suffering experienced by the church. But you know, by calling the Christian church to have this living subjection, Peter, he wasn't encouraging Christians to compromise.

He wasn't encouraging them to compromise their confession or to compromise their convictions. In fact, he was saying the opposite. Peter was calling the Christian church to live peaceably with the state, so long as the state allowed the Christian to live by their religious confessions and convictions.

Because he says, if there is ever a conflict between human authority and heavenly authority, then we must seek first the kingdom of God.

[13 : 06] You know, we see that in the example of Corrie 10 Boonman, her family, when they helped and they hid Jews during the Holocaust. There was this conflict. There was a conflict between church and state.

There was a conflict between human authority and heavenly authority. And as you know, Corrie 10 Boonman, her family, they put the Lord first. And sadly, it cost them dearly. But they put the Lord first.

But you know, the Church of Jesus Christ, it's not only to have an impact upon our superiors, it's also to improve our superiors.

My friend, as the church, we have a responsibility not only to make an impact upon the state, but to improve the state by our Christian influence.

That's why Paul urged the church to pray, to pray for those in positions of authority and positions of royalty. And you know, praying for those in positions of royalty and authority, it's certainly one way to improve and impact upon the state, because the state, as Paul says in Romans 13, it's under the authority of God.

[14 : 23] But more than that, we should pray that the Lord would have his people. He would have them in positions of royalty and authority. That there would be Christians, more Christians in the royal family apart from the Queen.

There will be more Christians in government. That there will be more Christians in places of influence in society like the Christian Institute. Because as the Church of Jesus Christ, we are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

We're to have this penetrating and preserving impact and influence upon our nation. Therefore, we should pray, we should pray for those in positions of authority and royalty.

And we should pray that there should, that there would be Christians in positions of royalty and authority. My friend, we're to have a living subjection, because the Christian life is to have an impact upon our superior.

The Christian life is to have an impact upon our superior. But secondly, we see the Christian life is to have an impact upon our supervisor.

[15 : 34] Our supervisor. We see that in verse 18. Peter writes, servants be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

For this is a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endure sorrows while suffering unjustly. 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. As the Church of Jesus Christ, Peter says that we're to have a living subjection that will not only have an impact upon our superiors, but also our supervisor.

And with that, Peter brings us into the workplace. And Peter says to us, servants be subject to your master.

Now, whenever we think of servants or slaves, we immediately think of the African slave trade. And it was the slave trade which John Newton was involved in, and the slave trade that William Wilberfords brought to an end.

[16 : 44] But that's not what Peter is referring to here, because servants or slaves during the first century, they were different. Servants living within the Roman Empire, they were actually often well educated, and they worked as teachers or even doctors.

Therefore, what Peter is emphasizing is that as a Christian, your Christian witness in the workplace is important. Because if you have a faithful and consistent Christian witness, it will have an impact, and it will have an impact upon those in your workplace.

Peter says you're to have a living subjection to your employer or to your manager, and you're to have this living subjection with all respect.

Servants be subject to your masters with all respect. And that word respect, it's important, because it literally means fear.

It's where we get the out English word phobia from. And Peter has repeatedly used this word in this letter in order to emphasize the importance of our Christian character, conduct and conversation.

[18 : 01] Because Peter, you remember, he urged us in chapter one to conduct ourselves with fear throughout the time of our exile. And then in the previous verse, verse 17, Peter says, honour everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the emperor.

And so what Peter means when he says that we're to have a living subjection towards our supervisor, and we're to have it with all fear or respect. What Peter means is that if we fear God, we'll respect God, we'll obey God, we'll serve God, we'll praise God by living according to God's word.

And we'll seek to be a faithful Christian witness and possess a consistent Christian character, conduct and conversation, even in the workplace. So if we respect God, says Peter, then we'll have a living subjection which respects our supervisor, whether our supervisor is gentle and good or unjust and unfair towards us.

Regardless of how they treat us, says Peter, as a Christian, we're to treat them with respect. Of course, just because you're a Christian, that doesn't mean that you're to be walked all over by your supervisor.

But we're to have this humble character and a respectful conduct and even to guard against our conversation. And you know, even if you're a Christian employer or a Christian manager, then you're also to have a faithful Christian witness. You're to possess a consistent Christian character, conduct and conversation.

[19 : 43] As Christians, we're to have this living subjection in the workplace. We're to have a living subjection in the workplace. And with that, Peter then addresses our Christian attitude in the workplace.

He says in verse 19, for this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrow while suffering unjustly. 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. Peter says, if you're a Christian, and your employer or your manager is always getting on at you about the lack of quality in your work, or the fact that you're always turning up late for work, or that he highlights or she highlights that you have this lazy and unprofessional attitude or appearance at your work.

Peter says, well, if that's the case, that's not suffering. That's actually what you deserve. Because as a Christian, he says, there's no excuse for slacking or lacking in your attitude or your aptitude or even your ability.

There's no excuse for it, because as Peter says, we're to be mindful of God. That's what he says in verse 19. We're to be mindful of God. Literally, we're to be conscious of God.

[21 : 10] We're to have this conscious awareness of God in our life that God can see us in our workplace and that he sees our character and our conduct and he hears our conversation, whether it's Christian or not.

Therefore, if we're conscious of God in our workplace, it'll have an impact upon our Christian attitude, our Christian aptitude, and even our Christian ability in the workplace.

If we're conscious of God in the workplace, then it will reflect in our hard work and our diligent efforts and our timekeeping and our professional attitude and appearance.

My friend, if we're conscious of God in our workplace, then we'll submit ourselves, says Paul, as unto the Lord. We'll submit ourselves as unto the Lord.

And whether we're working at home or on the shop floor, the work site, the office, the classroom, the staff room or the T-Shed, whether it's in public or in private, the one thing we'll desire is that we possess a consistent Christian character, conduct and conversation.

[22 : 26] But, says Peter, if you suffer in the workplace for having a living subjection, he says it twice, this is a gracious thing.

This is a gracious thing. Why? Because you're following in the footsteps of Jesus. He says in verse 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.

He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued in trusting himself to him who judges justly. 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, for you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Peter says that if you suffer in the workplace for having a living subjection, then it's because you're following in the footsteps of Jesus.

And as you know, following in the footsteps of Jesus is not comfortable. Because as Jesus said, if anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

[23 : 52] If we have a living subjection, then we won't have a comfortable Christianity. We'll step out of our comfort zone and we'll consciously step out of our comfort zone, because we know that the way of the crown is the way of the cross.

The way of the crown is the way of the cross. It was my good friend, J.C. Reil, who once said, a Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing.

A cheap Christianity without a cross will prove in the end a useless Christianity without a crown. A Christianity that costs nothing is worth nothing.

My friend, if we have a living subjection, then we won't have a comfortable Christianity. We'll step out of our comfort zone. We'll consciously go the way of the crown, because the way of the crown is the way of the cross.

And so Peter reminds us that we're to have a living subjection, because our Christian life is to have an impact upon our superior. Our Christian life is to have an impact upon our supervisor in the workplace.

[25 : 02] And also he says, our Christian life is to have an impact upon our spouse. That's what we see lastly. The Christian life is to have an impact upon our spouse.

He says, chapter 3 and verse 1, likewise wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be one without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewellery, or the clothing you wear. But let your adorning be the hidden portion of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

So following on from what he's just said about having a living subjection, that will impact upon our superiors in the government and in royalty, and also our supervisors in the workplace.

Peter now says likewise or in the same manner, we're to have a living subjection, because our Christian life is to have an impact in our home, and it's to have an impact upon our spouse.

[26 : 17] And Peter says that a Christian wife is to have a living subjection to her husband. It's to submit to her husband because of the biblical principle that Adam was created first and then Eve.

That said, the subjection and submission of a wife to her husband, it's not that she's to be this object of oppression. No, a wife is to be an object of affection and adoration.

And you know, every time I conduct a wedding, I always remind the couple of what the 17th century English Puritan, Matthew Henry, what he said about marriage.

Matthew Henry said, the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam, not made out of his head to rule over him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him.

That's the kind of marriage that God has instituted. And it's in that kind of marriage that God has instructed Christian wives to have a living subjection, because it will have an impact upon their spouse.

[27 : 36] In fact, Peter goes as far as to say that what should be attractive about a Christian wife is not her outward beauty, but her inner beauty through Jesus Christ.

What should be attractive is not only her love and commitment to her spouse, but also her love and commitment to her saviour. He says, as we read there in verse 3, Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the putting on of gold jewelry or the clothing you wear, but let your adorning be the hidden Persian of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

Now, Peter isn't saying that as a wife, you shouldn't make an effort in the way you dress, or you shouldn't use makeup, or you shouldn't wear jewelry. No, Peter is emphasizing that outward beauty is perishable, but inward beauty through Jesus Christ is imperishable.

Solomon, he summed up this teaching with just one of his wise proverbs. He said in Proverbs 31, Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Now, that's what Peter is saying. He's saying, your marriage is precious in the sight of God, when you respect your spouse by respecting your saviour. Your marriage is precious in the sight of God, when you love your spouse by loving your saviour.

[29 : 11] Because the more you love Jesus, the more you will live like Jesus and love like Jesus. Therefore, your living subjection to your spouse is important because of your saviour.

Your living subjection to your spouse is important because of your saviour. And Peter says in verse 7 that the same is true for husbands.

He says likewise, in the same manner husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are armed with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Peter says that Christian husbands are to have a living subjection, so that they too will have an impact upon their spouse. But as husbands, our subjection is not to our wife.

Our subjection is to Jesus Christ as the king and head of his church. That's what Paul emphasised to the church in Ephesus, when he said, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[30 : 25] And husbands, says Paul, they should love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. So Christian wives are to have a living subjection to their husbands, but Christian husbands are to have a living subjection to Jesus Christ.

And you know, although Peter doesn't say as much to husbands in comparison to wives, he says six verses to one verse, although Peter says a lot less to husbands, what Peter says, you could say it even, it raises the bar even higher.

Because what Peter is doing is, he's exhorting and encouraging Christian husbands to be like Jesus in their marriage. He's saying, live with your wife like Jesus would live with you.

Understand your wife like Jesus understands you. Know your wife like Jesus knows you. Care for your wife like Jesus cares for you. Listen to your wife like Jesus listens to you.

Provide for your wife like Jesus provides for you. Show compassion to your wife like Jesus shows compassion to you. Forgive your wife like Jesus forgave you. Love your wife like Jesus loves you.

[31 : 49] My friend, whether we're a Christian husband or a Christian wife, we're to love our spouse by loving our savior. We're to love our spouse by loving our savior because the more we love Jesus, the more we will live like Jesus and love like Jesus.

But you know, there's a reason why Peter has called us to a living subjection. And it's so that our Christian life will have an impact. An impact upon our superior in government and in royalty.

An impact upon our supervisor in the workplace, but also an impact upon our spouse in the home. And the impact Peter hopes that a Christian spouse will have in their home is that as he says in verse one of chapter three, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be one without a word by the conduct of their wives or husbands when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

The impact Peter hopes that a Christian spouse will have in their home is that their husband or wife who is not yet a Christian will submit their life to Jesus Christ.

Because you know, in marriage, you share everything. You share your home, you share your finances, you share your food, you share your children, you share your bed, you share your life, you share everything.

[33 : 26] But when that home is separated by the gospel, you don't share your love for Jesus. And that's what the Christian spouse in the home wants more than anything else.

They want to share their love of Jesus with those in their home. They want their unconverted spouse to share their love of Jesus. They want their unconverted spouse to turn to the Savior.

And you know, we looked this morning at Sam 13, where David asked the question, how long, oh Lord, how long? And you know, if you are that unconverted spouse tonight, I want to tell you that that's the prayer of your Christian spouse for you.

How long, oh Lord, how long? You know, my friend, your Christian husband or your Christian wife, they may not be able to express it to you with words, but their heart's desire, their heart's desire above everything else, is that you'll be saved.

And as a Christian spouse, they seek to have this living subjection because they long for the day, they long for the day that you'll turn to them and say, I love the Lord.

[34 : 49] I love the Lord. Their heart's desire above everything else is that you'll be saved. And you know, my friend, I hope and pray that there will be rejoicing in heaven and also rejoicing in your home tonight because you, as an unconverted spouse, has turned to the Lord and committed your life to Jesus Christ.

Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Now, let us pray. Oh Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word, thy word that is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

We thank the Lord for that reminder that we are to have this living subjection in which we are to be subject to our superiors, our government and even the royal family where we are to be subject also to our supervisor, our employer and even those whom we work with and even subject to our spouse.

And Lord, as thy people, that we would be an influence, not only in the nation and not only in our workplace, but an influence in our home for those whom we love so dearly, that they too would come to know this Savior, that they would share in his love, that they would know the blessing it is to trust in Jesus for time and for eternity.

Lord, remember us then, we pray, bless us as homes and as families and Lord, that thou wouldst pity us, shine thy face upon us, that the earth, thy way and nations all may know thy saving grace.

[36 : 37] Lord, do us good and we pray, undertake for us we ask and keep us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our time to a conclusion by singing in the words of Psalm 145.

Psalm 145, it's in the Scottish Psalter version and we're singing from the beginning. We're singing verses 1 to 3 and then we're going to sing verses 7 and 8.

And Psalm 145, it's a lovely Psalm, especially verse 2. I always love the words of verse 2. The Psalm that confesses the Lord as one who is king, he's God and king.

But then the Psalmist says in verse 2, and I hope that this is our prayer, each day I rise, I will thee bless and praise thy name time without end. Much to be praised and great God is, His greatness none can comprehend.

So we're singing Psalm 145 from verse 1 down to verse 5 and then verses 7 and 8. To God's praise. All are thou art, by God and king, In heaven I am great, by and great, I will be blessed and glad they say, Until thy glory be gone away.

[38 : 22] Each day I rise, I will thee bless and praise thy name time without end.

Much to be praised and great God is, His greatness none can comprehend.

They after shall have a wonderful being, For every old, thy goodness great, And shall sing praises, dear fully, As they my righteousness relays.

For Lord, I know this gracious, The wise shall reign, as He also, In mercy He is grandiose, The country round and English soul.