

# 1 Peter 2:13 - 3:2

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well I want to dive straight in this afternoon to talk to you about the issue in this passage that I think is probably the most difficult for us to hear and accept.

! It's kind of the elephant in the room I suppose. It's the issue of submission. Submission. It's all through this passage. Three times Peter speaks about submission explicitly.

So in verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Submit. Verse 18, servants, employees, be subject, submit to your masters.

Chapter 3 verse 1, wives, be subject to your own husbands. Submit, submit, submit. Citizens and authorities, workers and bosses, wives and husbands, submission.

How do you feel about that this afternoon? It's quite an unusual idea, isn't it? Peter makes it clear just how radical this submission is. It's submission, even at the very moment where it's not earned by people in authority over us.

[ 1 : 20 ] Submitting, verse 18, not only to the good and gentle boss, but also to the unjust, to the unfair, to the cranky boss. Even if they themselves, chapter 3 verse 1, as husbands, do not obey the word of God.

I reckon few of us, when push comes to shove, want to submit to people like that in moments like that.

We don't think that kind of submission is good, do we? Autonomy is good. Submission is bad. Maybe for good reasons we have a problem with submission.

We have a problem with authority. As one writer comments, we respect the law less. We're more suspicious of our politicians. We accept our teachers' views more reluctantly.

We're more wary of the police than we used to be. Authority is now based on trust. And as authority is abused, trust inevitably breaks down.

[ 2 : 26 ] And submission becomes so much more hard. Independence, then, is the ultimate goal of life. There's a certain pride in that. Subject to no one.

Submitting to no one. There's virtue in that, in our thinking. The focus is on self. We're self-employed, with self-esteem, with self-service.

Self-soothing, self-asserting, self-confidence, self-believing, self-seeking. Whatever it is in life, we self it. So submission, it cuts against the grain of that, doesn't it?

Cuts against the grain of how we think. Submission is not a very popular idea. But when Peter teaches about submission, he teaches and turns it on its head.

Submission for him becomes a mark of quality. A mark of character. Something to your credit. Something, do you notice, that is gracious in God's sight.

[ 3 : 31 ] That comes up a couple of times. It's something to strive after. It's a badge of honour. To pursue. Now, briefly, by way of reminder, we're in the section of Peter's letter that comes after chapter 2, verse 11 and 12.

And if you look there briefly, those verses are the core of the letter. They're his pattern for a purpose for God's people living in the world. The pattern, if you look at verse 11, Sojourners and exiles, keep your conduct honourable amongst the Gentiles or amongst non-believers, non-Christians.

Keep your conduct honourable with the purpose of them praising God, of them glorifying God. So it's about suffering well in the world as a Christian with that purpose that others might praise God.

This is a letter written to Christians. And it tells them to bless those who persecute them, that they will stop that. And they will praise God instead.

So it gives help for Christian evangelism, doesn't it? If you're a Christian and you're looking to share your faith, to tell the gospel, 1 Peter is so helpful on that.

[ 4 : 49 ] How do we make opportunities to tell the gospel? How do we reach our work colleagues, our family and friends? How do we reach wider society? How do we show honourable conduct among them?

How do we start to see non-believers beginning to praise God? Well, Peter says, we submit. We submit.

To be seen submitting to the right authority, to the right people, wherever we are. That is how this works out in Peter's mind.

And the call to submission is what Jesus Christ makes to his people here, doesn't it? Verse 21, if you look there. To this you have been called. Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example.

So that you might follow in his steps. I went to a party a while ago. It doesn't happen often, but I was there. In North London. And I got chatting with a guy there.

[ 5 : 54 ] And the usual questions came up. Where are you from? What do you do? That sort of thing. And I was really surprised when he told me that he was a shepherd. I'm so sheltered as a city boy.

But I don't meet many shepherds. In fact, he's the first shepherd that I've ever met at this party. It was great. So he told me about his working day. He told me about his daily grind.

Preparing the sheep dip. Washing the sheep. Cleaning the sheep pen. Working in all weathers. And I looked down at his hands. And his hands were huge.

And cracked skin. And there was a bit of dirt still under the fingernails. He apologised for the farmyard smell. Which he said, you can never quite get rid of.

He said, maybe that's why I'm still single. And peeing a city boy. I said to him, well why on earth do you do it? Why put yourself through that? Why do you do it?

[ 6 : 53 ] Well, he said, our family are shepherds. The farm's been in the family for generations. As a young lad, I remember watching my grandfather working the sheep dogs on the field.

Grafting on the farm. I remember him. He was a man of great character. A true breadwinner. And then I saw my father take over the business.

I saw him doing the same. So actually all I'm doing is following in their footsteps. The footsteps of my father. And his father before me.

At him. And his father before him. And so on. It's the family legacy. And as a town boy, I was really struck by that. And struck by the pride he had in that.

There's solidarity there, isn't there? There's a sense of heritage there. In the family. And Peter, he says, submission are the footsteps you're following in.

[ 7 : 56 ] Jesus has set you an example. That's the legacy. That's the heritage of Christians. And that is the movement of this passage, isn't it?

Verses 13 to 20. Are about our submission at work. And in society. And the climax builds up to Jesus. In verse 24.

With the submission of his death. On the cross. Now in chapter 3. It goes on to wives and husbands. And I saw a few raised eyebrows at that point.

And I want to get on to that next week. So I'm not dodging that. So we are going to look at that next week. But this week. I want us to just see three things about this Christ-like submission laid out for us to follow in this passage.

That is the legacy that his people are left with. Not conquest. Not dominance. Or a crusade. But submission.

[ 8 : 57 ] So first thing to note about this submission is it's a sinless submission. Sinless submission. Have a look at verse 22. He committed no sin.

That's Jesus. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. I don't know if any of you have seen that new Nelson Mandela film. It's called Mandela I think isn't it.

I've not seen it. But I've seen trailers. And the big thing about the film seems to be the imprisonment of Mandela. The script writers they play on the injustice of his arrest and incarceration and his isolation away from his family.

There's a moving scene in the trailer of where he meets his daughter for the first time in 13 years. But they're still separated by a pane of bulletproof glass.

And the film it just leaves you with the simple feeling of he just shouldn't be there. He just shouldn't be there. It shouldn't be happening to him.

[10:05] It's so unfair. The reality though was that he was there for 27 years. He shouldn't be there.

And it's the kind of submission that Jesus exemplifies that should make us feel that way about him. He committed no sin.

No deceit in his mouth. He was an innocent man on death row. And we should be thinking he just shouldn't have been there. It's so unfair.

It shouldn't have been happening. Submission though that still submits when it's undeserved. When Jesus was in the right.

When it's so unfair. It's the opposite of what Peter warns about in verse 16 isn't it? He says there, don't use your freedom as a cover up for evil.

[11:03] In other words, using your status as God's people as a kind of smoke screen for all kinds of wrong things in your life. Using Christianity as a cover up for sin.

Thinking that being a Christian means being on a different plane of existence to everybody else. That the normal rules don't apply. Verse 20, there's no credit in sinning and being punished for that. But it's the kind of I shouldn't be there kind of submission that Jesus demonstrates. The unfair submission.

The innocent submission. When you're in the right. Now we can pray it will never come to that. In your workplace or in society.

Sometimes it does. But actually for most of us it may just mean the simple honesty of integrity. Working well. The preacher C.H. Spurgeon once asked a young servant girl what evidence she could give of her becoming a Christian.

[12:09] She responded, I now clean under the mat. Time sheets. Tax returns. Deadline promises. Break times.

It's just being straightforward isn't it? Working well. It might not be all that sensational most of the time. But the example is innocent suffering.

When it's not fair. So sinless submission is the first thing. But second though. It's an entrusting submission. An entrusting submission.

Have a look at verse 23 there. When he, Jesus, was reviled. He did not revile in return. When he suffered. He did not threaten. But continued entrusting himself.

To him who judges justly. Now having chatted with many of you these Tuesdays and at other times. It's clear that work is a real cause of worry.

[13:11] Particularly if you work in the council. But anywhere. The way that things are in your workplace. In your office. Wherever you work. It probably feels at the moment.

That the uncertainty of the jobs markets. And all the rest of it. Has turned your colleagues. And your friends. Into rivals. And your bosses.

Are now executioners. Aren't they? Maybe it feels like that. There's nothing worse. In our thinking today. As being unemployed.

It is a truly horrible thing. Isn't it? To be unemployed. And I know that some of you feel that. But you know. In the current economic climate.

I think people think. Unemployment is like the new hell. And our bosses have become our new judges. And gods. Employment is heaven.

[14:12] I've got a job. That's all that matters. And unemployment is the new hell. Well. Maybe that's how you feel about it. If you're honest. If you've been there on that day.

When they announced the redundancies. You fear your boss. Because he or she has the power. To give you life. Or to destroy you.

It feels like. Your future is entirely in their hands. So no wonder submission is difficult. When your boss becomes your judge.

Your God. Submission is almost impossible. Isn't it? Because our bosses make mistakes. They have ultimate authority. If we give it to them.

But they sometimes treat people unfairly. There is injustice in the workplace. But Jesus can submit. To the most unfair of suffering.

[15:11] Because he entrusts himself. Not to his boss. But to God. Who judges justly. He can submit. Because his God.

Is always fair. And right. So your boss. Is not your God. Now notice that Jesus is not a pacifist.

He isn't just a kind of punch bag for abuse. He believes in justice. And that he should be treated properly. Christians are not to be sort of wet drip walkovers. Wherever they go. But Jesus is neither a vigilante. He entrusts God. To make wrongs right. He lets God vindicate him.

Which he does. It's the awareness of God's authority. In our lives. That allows us to submit. That's the perspective of the whole passage.

[16:10] Isn't it today? It's all God focused. If you scan through. Be subject for the Lord's sake. This is the will of God. Living as servants of God.

Fear God. Be mindful of God. Suffering for good. Is a gracious thing. In the sight of God. We can submit. In trusting ourselves.

To him. And he is pleased. When we do that. It's a sinless submission. It's an entrusting submission. To God.

But then thirdly. And lastly. It's a healing submission. A healing submission. Have a look at verse 24 there. Jesus 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. Jesus Christ submits.

[17:08] As a wounded healer. He's a wounded healer. His suffering and submission. Bring health and life to others. Did you see that?

Through his wounds. You have been healed. Through his death. You now live to righteousness. He submits.

For the sake of others. For their lives. For their righteousness. The wounded healer. So unless Jesus dies. Unless he suffers unjustly.

We are all in a mess. Can you see that from the passage? Jesus submits and dies. Verse 24. So we die to sin.

So if you kind of work that backwards. By implication. Unless Jesus dies. We are enslaved. To sin. Jesus submits and dies.

[18:05] To heal. So again. That must mean we were ill. In need of healing. Jesus submits and dies.

To bring us. Verse 25. To the shepherd and overseer of your souls. So we were like sheep astray. Enslaved.

Ill. Astray. Unless Jesus submits and dies. None of that changes. The Bible. It uses the image of the seed.

Doesn't it? I heard somebody say the other day. A farmer. I've been meeting all these farmers. That all seeds that are sown in the ground. Have to be dead. Before they are put into the ground.

And so. There is great effort taken. In keeping seeds dead. Before they are sown. I don't know if you knew that. They're kept in a cold dark room.

[19:03] With no water. And no light. So they don't germinate too quickly. They're kept dead. But when the time is right. That dead seed goes into the ground.

And it suddenly then brings life. It's just what Jesus says. In John chapter 12. Isn't it? Truly truly. I say to you. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth. And dies. It remains alone.

But if it dies. It bears much fruit. Speaking about his own death. When Jesus submits and dies. Death brings life.

Wounds bring healing. Submission brings others to their shepherd. Unless Jesus submits and dies. There can be no life for others. Enslaved. Ill. And astray. Now the call for submission.

[20:03] That Jesus makes. Is not the call to repeat the death of Jesus. In exactly the same way. He did on the cross. We cannot pay for a world of sin. Can we? We are not to be God.

To our colleagues. And to our bosses. But we are walking in his footsteps. In the legacy of that submission. It's the pattern.

For a purpose. That by submission. Other people. Enslaved. And ill. And astray. Would praise God. The gospel message.

It must be heard. That's why we have these. Lunchtime talks. It has to be heard. Through words. And we'll get on to that. Further in chapter 3. But as it is heard. It must also be seen.

With submission. Entrusting ourselves. To the one who judges justly. God focused. Submission.

[21:01] Gracious in his sight. Submission. For the sake of others. So the next time you're tempted. To self it. Submit to it.

Submit to the right people. In authority. Now there are lots of grey areas. Aren't there? Lots of things. Lots of questions. About this issue. But the general principle is there. It is the God entrusting. Sinless. Above reproach. Loving submission. That Christ. Shows us. Let's pray together.