

1Peter 11-04-22a

This is Friday, the 22nd of April, 2011. We continue our study in the book of 1 Peter. We are in chapter 3, and we'll pick up at verse 15.

Take a moment at the outset to follow our usual custom of going before the Lord in prayer individually and collectively gives us a chance to kind of refocus our thoughts and our priorities for the next few minutes as we share this study in God's Word together. Father, we look back over the preceding week, and we see your watch care and your provision and your gracious attention to our needs, and we're thankful, and we recognize how undeserving we are and how fully you have rescued us and delivered us and given us standing in the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for him.

We thank you for his work on the cross in securing our salvation. We thank you for his ongoing work of intercession, of sanctification, of the expectation we have of his return for us, whether soon or distant. We know that it can be as close as our next breath, our last breath, and we know that the time that has been given to us on this earth and in this life is precious.

We pray that as we invest time tonight in the study of your Word that God the Holy Spirit will superintend, that the truth will be clear, that its meaning and its applicability for each one of us will be evident, and that we will come away from our time of study renewed and refreshed and encouraged and equipped for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this is just a very interesting chapter in 1 Peter. This whole letter to me has been fascinating. I will tell you honestly, even though I've been through it a time or two before in various ways, you go through every book in the Bible in seminary in some way, shape, or form, but I was completely unaware of just how substantial, how much meat there is.

There's hardly a phrase that you couldn't stop and do a beautiful edifying study on in this letter. And it's so well organized, it's so carefully constructed, it is so clearly communicated, it is so well illustrated, it is so practical and so immediate in its impact that I think you would be hard-pressed to find any letter of Paul that is any more valuable than this study is for us. We find ourselves now in chapter 3 and we saw that when Peter came to the issue of submission, and we know that there's a lot more to that word than meets the dictionary definition.

I like the way humility has been defined, that it is strength under control. It is power harnessed by discipline. That's what humility is.

That's what submissiveness is. Submission is really just another word for humility. You don't become weak, you're not devalued, you are not reduced, you're not made inferior.

Someone who is subordinate or submissive is not any of those things. It is not value-related, it is function-related. I found myself making this point in another context earlier this week.

You look at Israel, who could be a priest in Israel? Careful when you answer. Who could be a priest in Israel? I know what you want to say. You want to say the Levites and you would be wrong.

It's not the Levites, it's only some of the Levites. Which Levites could be priests? Sons of Aaron, right? That's only a fraction of the Levites. The Levites are only a fraction of Israel.

So God said, these men will be leading worship, conducting sacrifice, and presenting the nation of Israel before the face of holy God, before his Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies. These men and these men only. Now, were the sons of Aaron superior to the other Levites? Were they superior to the other tribes? Were the men in Israel, tasked with leadership, superior to the women in Israel? No.

The answer to all of those questions is no. It is not a matter of quality, it's not a matter of value, it is a matter of function. They were assigned a function.

God constructed a patriarchal society in Israel. It has ever been thus, going back to the garden and the fall and the expulsion from the garden. And God said, the man is going to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow, the woman is going to bear the children, and the woman was taken out of the man and part of the curse, because she fell for the lies of the serpent, is that she will look unto her husband for leadership.

Anybody that's been in the military, anybody that has taken one glance at the military knows that officers who are tasked with leadership and are said to have superior rank are not actually superior. Many of them are quite inferior to the enlisted people and the staff NCOs and so on that they command. It's not a matter of value, it's a matter of function.

And there's, I would say probably most of the staff NCOs I have ever known are intrinsically worth more and are better quality than most of the officers I knew. If for no other reason than they got more done. If you're looking at work product as a measure of value, enlisted people always get more work done.

Which would you rather have? A 12-page report or the barracks completely cleaned and ready for inspection? Which would you rather have? Your vehicle ready to drive or some five-paragraph order for the middle of next week? I like practical results. All of us like to see where we've been. We like to look at the house and say, wow, it was dirty, now it's clean.

Had a sink full of dishes, now they're gone. They're clean and put away, not gone. And so, just bear in mind that as Peter addresses this issue of submission, this is not the issue of inferiority or lesserness or devaluation or diminishment or putting down anyone.

It is a recognition of function. And all of us are called to identify our function and to fulfill it as faithfully and as much before the Lord as we possibly can. We do it as unto the Lord and not unto

men.

And when you look at it in that light and stop saying, you know, I'm being put down by the man, you know, the man is grinding me down, blocking my progress, glass ceilinging me over and, you know, holding me back. And I'm talking about men and women, you know, that somebody's thwarting my rise to the success that I deserve. Just remember, submission is what the Lord Jesus did.

He was completely and totally submissive to His Father's will. Now I ask you, is Jesus Christ the Lord of glory in any way inferior to anybody? Right up there to the other two members of the Trinity, is Jesus Christ inferior in any way? Is He diminished or devalued or humiliated in the sense of through and because of His subordination and submission to the Father? Does that humiliate and devalue Him? No. So what right do you or I or anybody else have to say, well, I can't submit because that devalues me? You take it up with the Lord Jesus.

He wasn't diminished. He wasn't devalued. And we're not either.

It's a matter of function. And Peter talks about that. You'll notice that when he brings up these situations, he says, look, you've got slaves and masters, you've got husbands and wives, and you've got wives and husbands.

So we've got three situations, one of which he just flipped around, right? But who does he talk to in these situations? Think about the slave master deal. Who does he talk to? Look at chapter 2, verse 18. Servants, be submissive.

Where does he say, masters, be nice to your servants? He didn't really address that, did he? Chapter 3, wives, be submissive. Where does he say, husbands? He gets down to verse 7 and he says, Husbands, dwell with them. And this is your Greek preposition, sun, which means with in the same level sense.

He doesn't say dwell over them. He doesn't say dwell above them in lofty, you know, lordly glory. He says dwell with.

Sun is a parallel. The relationship is lateral. Dwell with.

With understanding. And I don't know if I pointed this out in verse 7 or not, but that word understanding is gnosis. Husbands, in the same way.

In the same way as what? In the same way as the wives are submitting to your God-given responsibility and authority. Husbands, in the same way. You do it the same way the wives are doing it.

The same way the slaves are doing it. But your submission is to God. And what is God's instruction to you, oh husband, oh under-authority person? It's like the under-shepherds.

Christ is the great shepherd. Pastors are the under-shepherds. Well, Christ is the head of all things to the church.

And husbands are under-shepherds, under-authorities. And he says, husbands, in the same way as the slaves and the wives, you dwell with your wife according to gnosis. It doesn't say epinosis.

He says gnosis. What is gnosis? Well, it's translated here understanding, but that's really a different word group in Greek. Gnosis is knowledge.

And this means you know your wife. You should know her better than anybody else. And you know what grinds her down.

You know what hurts her feelings. You know where she's fragile. You know where she's vulnerable.

And you dwell with her with that knowledge in mind. And you be careful. You treat her like the fragile, not in the sense of inferior, but in the sense of superior.

In the sense of the way you would treat anything of great value. Most things of great value. Fine crystal is very thin.

Fine china is very thin. Great vases, myson, porcelain, and all these very valuable things. You don't just go tossing those in the corner.

You don't treat them casually. You treat that thing reverently. You treat it carefully.

You treat it with great respect. And you honor its fragility. It's valuable because it's delicate.

And Peter says you know this. So you dwell with them according to that knowledge. And you give honor to the wife.

It's interesting that the wife is to be submissive and to obey. But the husband is to give honor. As a fellow heir.

As a fellow heir. Not as a junior heir. Not as a secondary heir.

Well, if you die before the will gets executed, then they get it. Fellow heir. Another one of those lateral, equal footing things.

You remember that there is a reference to this inheritance back in chapter 1. The blessing that starts chapter 1, verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is Resurrection Weekend. It's a great time to review that.

Through this, God has begotten us again. We are born again with a view toward a living hope. To

an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

We talked about how much of that has a present tense aspect as well as a future aspect when we went through chapter 1. Well, that's the inheritance. And he says, remember, your wife is just as much an inheritor as you are. So, don't be putting on the dog and acting like it isn't.

Your heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. And this is an often referenced principle in scripture that the judgment we mete out to others is the judgment that we are going to receive. The weight that we weigh others with, if we use an unbalanced scale, God's going to use an unbalanced scale on us.

If we don't forgive others, we ourselves are not forgiven. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you and as you would have God do unto you is the idea. And if the husband is not sensitive to the petitions and the input and the expressed concerns of his wife, God is not going to be interested in the petitions and the concerns and the expressed desires of that husband.

God is going to treat the husband the way the husband treats the wife. That's basically what Peter says here, very elegantly so. So then in verse 8, finally all of you be of one mind and the result, this is the result, tell us if you learn this submission, if you pursue this submission and if you're in a position of authority, then your submission looks even higher to a much more sobering level of authority to God himself.

So we've worked through this now and we came down through verses 13 through 14 here. Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? We pull ourselves out of investment in the things of this world, whether it's just a dispute, whether it's an argument, whether it's a debate, whether it's a power struggle at work or in the home or in the family or in any other area. We pull our investments out of that.

You look around at the imbalance and the rising debt and the instability of world markets and there's a lot of people who have investments or pulling their investments out. They're trying to find something that will hold its value because it doesn't pay to be invested in those things anymore. Stock market rises and falls.

The dollar falls and falls and falls. So you say, well, this isn't going to pay. I'm going to pull my investment out of that.

Well, guess what? The details of this life, subjectivity in the sense of eyes on things and eyes on people doesn't pay. So we pull our investment out of that and we invest in the eternal securities that will never fade, that will never corrupt, that will never be subject to moth and rust or any of the other vagaries of this life. But it's a conscious redirection of our priorities.

It's a conscious change in thought. You're in the middle of an issue. You kind of got your back up over it and you're irritated and you're running it over in your mind.

And boy, if I could continue that conversation, here's what I'd say now. I didn't have a snappy comeback, but I just thought of one now. Maybe I can work it into conversation later.

Maybe I can fan that thing back into flame and then use my zinger. And I'll even the tables. I got the worst end of that deal, but you haven't heard my best arguments yet.

And right at that point, we need to stop and say, wait a minute, what am I going to gain by investing in this situation? By trying to overcome and prevail and win and get respect or get revenge or get comeuppance or whatever I think I need to get out of it? What's the upside of this? I need to pull out of this thing. I need to let it go. I need to take a loss.

If I have to pull out and take a loss, so be it. I'll take a loss and what I get out of it, I'm going to reinvest in what I know cannot fail and will always and eternally bear fruit. But we have to consciously do it.

It's not just going to happen. You can't wake up one morning and say, you know what? I just kind of feel very balmy and well disposed and I just really don't feel like fighting with anyone. It's not going to happen.

This is why we're given commands. We're not given predictions. Oh, just rightly divide the word of truth and by and by, you're just going to have peace that passes understanding.

No, we're given all of these imperatives. We're given these be like this commands. And one of the be like this commands is learn to practice submission.

It's the same mindset. And submission, let's say you do. Let's say you let the argument go.

You let somebody think they won. You let them think they prevailed. You let them think that they've walked off the field with your colors in their hand and you've taken a drubbing and you're coming back all raggedy with your stuff in disarray.

Let's say that that's the case. What have you actually lost? Where is your real expectation? It's really not that important. You're not going to bleed.

You're not going to break a bone. You're not going to lose money. In some cases you might lose money, but your father's got the cattle on a thousand hills.

If you don't think he can replace that money for somebody who's being faithful and following his exhortations, then you don't know the Father very well. You cannot sacrifice, if I can use that word, and come up short if you're trying to pursue obedience and faithfulness in the plan of God. There's nothing you can give up that God's not going to say, oh, no you don't.

You're not going to suffer a loss and you're going to get it back a hundredfold either now or in the future. Why struggle to keep what you can't keep when you have the opportunity to invest in

something that you can never lose? That's Peter's idea. He says there's no point in returning evil for evil.

There's no point in reviling for reviling. Give a blessing instead. Same thing Jesus said.

Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for those that spitefully use you.

Counterintuitively. That's counterintuitive. But an awful lot of the plan and purpose of God is because God's not a human.

God's ways are not our ways. And we start to enter into just a little bit of His thinking when we do what's unnatural. And all of that leads into where we come to tonight in verse 15.

He says in verse 14, even if you suffer for righteousness' sake, even if you take a loss, what you pull out of that and invest is going to come back multiple. 30, 60, 100 fold. You can't lose on this reinvestment.

No matter what the immediate penalty might seem to be. Even if you suffer for righteousness' sake, you're still blessed. Do not fear with their fear.

Do not be afraid of their threats. And don't be troubled. How many times does the Word of God say, Fear not.

Let not your heart be troubled. Calm down. Peace be still.

Jesus told the disciples this seemed like every other week. And we're told it over and over again. God has not given us a spirit of fear.

He's given us a spirit of power and of love and a sound mind. And submissive people are not fearful in the terror sense of the Word. They are phobos in the respectful obedience sense of the Word.

That's functional. It doesn't reflect on your value. It reflects on your ability to do the job you've been asked to do.

Anybody takes satisfaction in doing a job well. Anybody. Our job is to be submissive to the authorities that God has placed in the human race.

Those things He has created. That's our job. People try to get out of their job by diverting attention to saying, Well, if I do this job it devalues me.

And that's a cop-out. That's a lazy man's answer. Sanctify, verse 15, the Lord God in your hearts.

We talked about what it means to sanctify, set apart as valuable. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. Or, actually, Christ as Lord.

If you remember, we go to the better text there. Because, now you're recognizing the authority that we are all submissive to. Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and faubas, with humility and respectful obedience.

He's just summed up and reiterated everything that we've reviewed here in the first two and a half chapters. But, be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you. What other possible words could have been in there instead of hope? Be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for your faith.

Be ready to give an answer to everyone that asks you a reason for your love. Why does he choose hope here? When you are in submission mode, what is it that sustains you? Certainly faith. Faith and hope are really inextricable.

You cannot have one without the other. If you have genuine faith, you have hope. If you have hope, it is built on faith.

My hope is built on what? Nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. How do I claim Jesus' blood and righteousness? By faith. Faith gives me hope.

Faith is the foundation and the substance of our hope. The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, that's faith. They're inextricable.

They're two parts of the same thing. Here's a thought you might not have crossed your mind before. You remember it's been a few years ago now, we talked about the triad of Christian virtues.

Remember that when we were doing Colossians? What are they? Find the same in 1 Corinthians 13 at the end. Faith, hope, and love, right? Did you know there's one of those that Jesus never talked about? Never mentioned? Which one? If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, say to this mulberry tree, greater love hath no man than this. So which one did he not ever mention? The word Elpis is never found crossing the lips of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament.

Nowhere. Is that not kind of remarkable? Jesus never mentions hope. Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are they that do this that and the other for this that and the other shall happen to them. He never says for they shall have hope or hope in this or here's your hope. He never mentions it.

Why is that? I ask myself. And I'm not sure I'm prepared to give you an answer, but I will say this about that. When we look at what our hope is, we need to know what the hope is because it says they're going to ask us a reason for it.

It's going to be pretty hard to explain the reason if I don't really know what it is we're talking about. Somebody comes storming in and says why did you do that? What reason are you going to give?

Well, you've got to figure out which of the malfunctions you've recently committed is in view when they ask that question. So somebody's going to ask us a reason for our hope.

What is the hope? What is it they are seeing as we submit? As we look to the Lord Jesus? As we sanctify Christ as Lord? Set Him apart as our authority in our hearts? And we are ready to give an answer because people are going to see there's something different about us and they're going to ask us about it. And it's called hope. Well, what is that hope? Well, we're going to pause here and take our break and when we come back, we're going to see what the New Testament in particular, after the Gospels, has to say about hope.