



LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Life Group Notes – 23rd January 2022

Living counterculturally. 1 Peter 2

Please visit the LCC website to listen to the talk or read the transcript if available.

1 Peter 2v11-3v7

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor. ¹⁸ Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." ²⁵ For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

3 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Comment

The topic of submission can be controversial in our culture. Although we ask people to 'submit to the law' etc., submission to people can be seen as weak or dangerous because of historical abuse and the drive to correct unhealthy power imbalances. However, the New Testament is clear that we need to 'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' whilst doing everything from a motivation that springs from love (1 Cor 13). Peter points out that Jesus submitted himself for our sake when he was cruelly mistreated, entrusting himself to God to be vindicated. Peter sets out some principles for Godly submission where there are inherent power imbalances: Submit for God's sake; do good v15; live as free people v16; do not cover up evil v16; show respect for everyone v17. But this passage also challenges us to think through the

situations where we have power over others. In New Testament times slavery was a large component of the economy and people often sold themselves into slavery. (Note Paul explicitly condemns 'slave kidnappers' in his letter to Timothy) but in our day, employer/employee relations are perhaps the nearest equivalent. Peter says we should submit to even harsh bosses as a Christian witness – whilst keeping the principles of Godly submission outlined above. Christianity does not condone exploitation – we have a duty to call out injustice and evil in a prayerful and objective way. What we can't do is start demanding our rights and risk becoming belligerent or unreasonable ourselves. Being church together presents its own set of challenges. As the CofE safeguarding training says: *'in any given situation, an individual or a group may be relatively powerful or, conversely, relatively vulnerable... the church is therefore made up of people who are differently empowered. The relatively powerful are brought together with the relatively weak in the same community.'* We all have a duty of care to protect the vulnerable in any given situation, and that includes children, individuals, couples and families in our community. Although it was standard practice for wives to submit to husbands in those times, Christianity was already changing attitudes because of the equality and affirmation of women that Jesus modelled. Peter affirms the place of Godly marriage where husbands and wives respect one another as 'co-heirs of the gracious gift of life' (v7). So the questions we need to ask ourselves in light of this passage are:

1. Are you submitting to all authority both of this world and of Gods? In this way demonstrating God's grace. Remember to submit is to do good, not to cover up evil, love honour and respect everyone.
2. What power do you have over people? Think about the formal and the informal. Is this 'living giving power' based on love, life, service? Or is it 'life taking power' based on take, hate, ignorance, disregard, absence of love to those who are submitting to you?
3. Where are you standing in the middle of submission and power. Watching when power goes wrong. How are you supporting and championing the vulnerable?

Questions

1. What do you find most encouraging about this passage? What do you find most challenging?
2. What different types of power exist within relationships? How can these be used helpfully or abusively?
3. In what ways might submitting to others 'win them over' for Christ?
4. What should you do if you have concerns that someone in the church is being mistreated?
5. How can we become more self-aware of the power we exert over people and ensure we don't misuse it?