

1 Peter 2:11-25 "True Freedom and The Public Good"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know our hearts. You know how we're prone to want your Word to say certain things, and you know that we get upset when you don't say the things that we think you should say. And you also know, Father, that we sometimes feel a bit trapped with that, that we don't feel we can maybe share that with other people, that it just seems like the Bible missed a moment to speak the way it should. And Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know us. And you know when those things are going on in our minds and our hearts. And Father, we know that you are true, and your Word is true, and your Word is good and beautiful and deeply helpful for us in its wisdom. And so, Father, we ask that you help us to be honest with our own hearts and to humbly listen to your Word, that you might lead us and guide us into all truth and into a wise way of living today that brings you glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.

So, I don't know how much of you watch things, you know, on the internet. Some of you might have seen the clip, about a two-minute clip, about a Princeton student. I think it came out on Monday or something like that. She's part of a group that's occupied part of Princeton. At least she did a few, you know, a week or so ago. She's occupied part of Princeton, demanding, of course, that Princeton cut all ties with Israel, and in terms of academic relationships and financial relationships. And her and a couple of other people have gone on a hunger strike, so that the Princeton will do what they want. And there was a clip that was circulated, posted, by the way, by her admirers.

[3 : 11] And in it, she gets very emotional and very upset, and she says, this Princeton administration is starving me to death because they won't do, in a sense, what I want. And as you can well imagine, it's been very widely mocked.

And, um, now I, I mentioned this, uh, well, I mentioned this, we're going to be looking at 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 and following, but if you just look at what we studied last week, just before this, I'd like you to hear what it is that the Bible says. It's 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, and the Bible text says this, But you, that's referring to Christians, you are a chosen race. Last week I explained that that word race means lineage, that when you give your life to Christ, you have a new lineage. You are a chosen lineage, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his, that's God's own possession. And I explained last week that in the original language, the idea there is a very precious possession, a treasured possession, not just sort of like, you know, this water bottle that I'll throw out later on, but of precious possession. Uh, so that's who we are, a people for his own precious possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Now it would be very fair, uh, for somebody,

maybe that Princeton woman, uh, listening to this text and said, George, I don't know why you're giving me a hard time. That text sort of says that you guys think that you're special, that, uh, you know, like you're God's special possession, so doesn't that mean you think you should get special treatment by the government? Doesn't, don't you think then that, you know, if, if you say something or want something, the government should pay attention and listen to you? Like, aren't you picking some type of privileged place with this text?

Now, let's be honest, uh, there are lamentably, I've given away part of my view on it, many Christians who think this way. But the question for us is, Christians who do think this way, that we have a, we're sort of, in a sense, entitled to a special place in our culture. When Christians think like that, are they thinking biblically, or are they thinking against the Bible? All of this is very relevant, because increasingly in our culture, we feel, well, let's, let's get into it. Let's look and see what the Bible actually says. So right after these things, what's the very next thing that the Bible text says? So once again, if you have your Bibles open, we're going to look at verse 11, and, uh, um, and here's, uh, here's what happens. First Peter 2, oh, just one, one other thing about this. Just by the providence of God, I, I happen to get invited to speak on Parliament Hill on Friday, and, uh, the deal is when I get to speak to some of the staffers on Parliament Hill that they get an early form of my sermon, um, my rough notes, so to speak, before I've, I've been able to finish it.

And, and I said to them on Friday, I said, probably every single one of you, part of your job is reading documents and helping, uh, helping your MP or the senator, uh, sort of understand the document, giving them a summary or a praece of it. So I said, one way to understand these next two verses is in some ways what Peter's doing is giving you a praece, or the big idea of something that's going to take up, like, the next two chapters. So that, that's what these two first verses are. Sort of a geek moment, but that's, so let's listen. And it goes like this. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the pagans honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify the God on the day of visitation. Now there's a couple of very simple false paths we might go with that text and not realize what it's referring to us. But just go back to verse 11 again. Beloved,

I urge you as sojourners and exiles. Now just sort of pause there. I talked about this a couple of weeks ago. I don't expect anybody to remember what I said a couple of weeks ago. I probably don't remember what I said a couple of weeks ago. Um, there's a very wonderful book called Everything Sad is Untrue. And, uh, it's the story of, uh, a woman who was a doctor in Iran and she becomes a Christian in Iran. And, uh, she has to end up leaving her husband behind, fleeing from the country, taking her two kids with her. She's a refugee for a while in Germany. And eventually she gets accepted as a refugee into Oklahoma of all places. And the story is about this, basically this young Iranian, uh, refugee in Oklahoma, uh, navigating life. And the name of the book is Everything Sad is Untrue.

[8 : 18] And, um, uh, but the point of it is that before she became a Christian, she was more or less at home in her culture. But once she became a Christian, she was no longer at home in the same way. Uh, the book, I haven't finished the book by the way, but in the book, like the, the, the young man has a, a, a, a great appreciation for much of, much of Persian history and, and literature, but they're no longer at home in the same way. Many Canadians now know that when we become a Christian in Canada, all of a sudden we've become the bad guys. And that's a bit of a traumatic thing for people.

So this word, sojourners and exiles, is trying to capture this sort of perennial truth, that when you give your life to Christ, you have a new king, you have a new Lord over you.

So, uh, we live in a country where Trudeau was our prime minister and, uh, and King Charles is the monarch. And there's a variety of, you know, government and, you know, parliament and senate and commissions and the judiciary. But at the end of the day, we live under them, but really, truly we live under our true king, which is Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And that's why we're described here as sojourners and exiles. So look at verse 11 again, beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. And this isn't saying that, by the way, that our body is really bad and evil and our souls are pure and good. No, it's not saying that at all. It's, it's using two sort of, uh, words as symbol words.

And flesh here says that there is a part of every single human being that is in rebellion against God. And soul here is referring to your identity. So what it's really saying is that remember that your

identity now is a sojourner and an exile. Jesus is your King. And there's going to be part of you that's going to rebel against that all of the time. And passions here doesn't just mean sex.

[10:18] Say your passion for money, your, your passion for education, your passion, uh, for, for power, your, your passion for prestige, your, your passion for possessions, like your passions for, in terms of, of, of sexual knowing. These passions, there are passions in you that are very strong.

They go against your identity in Christ and you need to put them to death. Okay. You need to abstain from them. That's part of what you need to do. Remember, this is the high level thing about how we're going to fit into our culture. And then it, and then he goes on in verse 12 to say, keep your conduct among the pagans honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation, which means when Jesus returns. Um, I was just watching a four year old, a four month old, uh, interview of Glenn Scrivener with Molly Werther, who's an elite journalist, uh, writes for the New Yorker, New York times, the Atlantic, uh, as a professor at an elite university. And about, you know, 16 months ago, she became a Christian. And, uh, and the interview is about her whole journey to going from a secular background to giving her life to Christ. Uh, and part of it, she makes a joke about so many things about Christianity are weird, like the second coming of Christ. Like that was just weird for her as a very secular person. She had a hard time getting her mind around it. And if you listen to the, it's very interesting interview. Uh, you know, she tells you how she gets her mind and now she believes it, right? That's the whole thing, her journey from one thing to the other. But, but here's the thing, the command of the text is that we should be doing good. And what we do is good is not defined by the government. And, uh, it's not defined by our culture. It's good as God defines it. And sometimes when we're doing good, pursuing good, people will think we're doing a bad thing. Uh, but we're to, to continue to pursue that. But at the same time, we need to live as honorable a life as possible. I'll give you a, uh, uh, uh, and, and in term, and honorable in terms of the eyes of the world. Now, how does this all go together?

Well, here's the point, and it's going to get unpacked in the rest of the book. If you could put up the first point, that would be very helpful. Uh, we need to acknowledge, uh, those of you who are maybe watching this online in the eyes of the world, I'm a very conservative Christian. Um, uh, you know, I don't think that's actually a very helpful category, but that's, that's what I am. And that's what our church would be. And I, we just need to acknowledge that conservative Christians tend to be deeply addicted, deeply addicted to legalistic recipes. So what would we really like? How do we relate, how should we relate to the government? What in our heart we wish the Bible said? Yeah, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this. Be very, very clear. Don't do this. Don't do this. Don't do this. Don't do this. You add it all up. You get an A plus. And then we can look and say, oh, you're doing a really good job at those things. You suck. Like, and on and on. And we could be very, very clear. That's what we deeply want. And we're, on one level, we don't like it when we don't see those things in the Bible. And if you just hear verses 11, 12, Peter didn't do that.

Really, what the Bible is calling us to is to think more in the lines of this, that, that we are to think principles, purposes, and communal discernment, not recipes. So in other words, what we see here in this text is that the Bible has given us some fundamental principles, that we're to do good as God defines it, that we're to seek, you know, that we're, to understand our identity in terms of Jesus as our King and our Lord, and that we are to try to, as much as we possibly can, whenever we have a choice, we're to try to live in such a way that even though people in our culture might think we're doing things which are wrong, they see things within us which are honorable from their point of view. And, and, and that's not a simple thing to always figure out. And what we need is that we need to spend time with the Bible and in prayer and with each other in the local church, through friendships, through small groups, through women's groups or men's groups and youth groups, to help each other discern what on earth that means right now in our culture. Now this is going to get even more clear or messy. It's either going to be more incomprehensible or more beautiful when it now gets to talk specifically about the government, which is what's going to happen next. So let's look at verse 13 to 17. And I just need to warn you, you might not remember how I prayed, but remember one of the things that we don't always like to acknowledge is that we sort of think, oh, okay, it's going to talk about how to talk about the government.

And, and once again, we don't want to acknowledge that deep within us, we'd like a recipe that's very legalistic and very, very clear that we can just tick off the boxes with that. We don't have to actually want to have to, you know, puzzle over it and think about it and, you know, maybe get

Victor and Owen and, you know, and Louise and, and Deborah and Andrew together and, and, you know, and Emma and try to talk it through and figure out like what on earth this means in this, like we don't want that.

[15:40] We just like simple answers and the Bible is not going to give us, but it gives us very powerful things. And this next little bit sounds as if the Bible's telling us to be minions, only not as cute. And it bothers us. And if you don't know, minions are supposed to serve bad guys.

If you don't, if you don't have kids and don't watch those things, right? Minions serve the bad guys. They want to do evil, but they're really cute. So it sounds as if the Bible's telling Christians to be uncute minions. Let's read it and then we'll go back and sort of unpack it. It goes like this, be subject for the Lord's sake. Verse 13, be subject to the Lord's sake for 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. 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 you can hear there's a little bit of room in there, but it's actually, it's a very, very, it's not calling us to be minions only on, on cute. Look back at verse 13.

It begins like this in verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake. Huge condition. Some of you serve on Parliament Hill. Some of you work for MPs or have or work for senators. Some of you have senior levels in the government. And of course, on one level, you are to serve his majesty's government. You're to do that well. But you don't do it for Trudeau's sake, ultimately. You do it for Christ's sake, ultimately. That puts everything else. I used to say, I haven't said it in a long time, Christians should be the leading relativists in society. Because our society absolutizes things that the Bible relativizes. We absolutize certain types of positions of power and money and institutions, and the Bible relativizes that. And it comes even clearer in the next little bit. Verse 13 again, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Now, what's going to happen right here, it's an unfortunate translation. It's like it's a good translation, but it's a bit unfortunate.

The original language actually is very curious. What it actually says, it either can be translated literally one of two ways in the original language. Be subject to every human creature.

[18:17] Isn't that interesting? Every human creature. The other way it can be translated is every human creature's institution. But human creature is in there in both cases. Now, that's very interesting.

That's, especially at the time it's written, but even today, that like de-divinizes the state. Who is Justin Trudeau? He's a human creature. Who's Pierre Polyev? Human creature.

Head of the Supreme Court. Human creature. Are there institutions? Yeah, they are. Human creatures have institutions. That's what we have. It's part of what makes us human. The very word creature reminds us that there's a creator. And that we might put on lots of airs and think we have lots of power and prestige. And we do. The Bible's not having us dismiss that. But at the end of the day, we're creatures. That's what we are. And then this next little bit, be subject for the, verse 13, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor's supreme or to governors, is 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 people. What you need to understand when you're reading this, and here's our problem, and here's where, here's what we need to do. The emperor at this time that Peter's referring to is Nero.

Now, Nero was probably insane. Nero, everybody does worship his horse as a god. I'm not making that up.

[19:57] And so he's referring to Nero in this. So what the big mistake that we make when we read this is, and I know, here's one of the things in the world, but there's Biden fanatics and Trump fanatics.

And Biden fanatics don't think, none of them think they're fanatics, but there's Biden fanatics, and there's Trump fanatics. There's just fanatics on both sides. And if you're a fanatic on one of those sides, if Biden or Trump says that outside it's completely sunny, there's palm trees, you can pick coconuts off of the palm trees outside. We have no drug problem and full employment. And Biden and Trump fanatics go, yes, sir. Absolutely, sir. And then we go out to the rain, to the drug problem, unemployment, and no palm trees or coconuts, right? So it sounds as if this is just one of these propaganda pieces. But actually what Peter is doing is creating this big gap of being subject to them.

But at the next breath, he isn't saying that Nero's doing this. He's saying that God has an intention for government and institutions. And what is God's purpose? To punish evil doing and praise or promote the good as defined by God. That's a very, very, and it's not the only thing the Bible has to say about government, but it's a very profound, on one level it's very, very simple. You can tell it to a child. And obviously it's very, there's complexities to it. You see, what's doing this right off the bat is it's helping us to understand, and this is going to be important when we look at this next week, is being subject to or submit to is not an on-off switch. It's a dimmer switch.

It's not an on-off switch, but a dimmer switch. And that we need to live in a world and navigate the fact that our culture has different understandings, not always. Our culture would share a Christian understanding that racism is a very bad thing. Most of our culture, not all of it, would say that pornography is not a good thing, which is a Christian view as well. And there'd be other areas like that that are, you know, that we would have in common, but they have some things which they think that are good, Christians say are bad, and vice versa. And we need to understand the pursuit of the Christian thing. And the government and institutions might be promoting this, and we can't go there. And we're under Christ. And how do you live? How do you live?

Well, what the Bible is doing is it's giving principles, it's giving purposes and aims. The letter is written not to individual Christians, but to churches. And the implication is that we need to have times of worship like this. We need to have small groups.

[22 : 52] We need to have friendships. We need to be able to say, maybe I should have a bit of a chat with Don and Victor and Owen and Andrea and try to figure out how do we live with this thing, like the way things are going. Like how do we keep these things and work them out? It creates a space of discernment.

And, you know, and then it goes on, and you see it again, is that what we should be knowing for is doing good. And verse 15, for this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. I meant to write this down, and I can't pronounce her name. There's this very, she's not a Christian, but she's a really interesting person. I think she's originally from India or Sikh background, and she's England. And she's completely and utterly gone against the entire English educational thing. And she's gone and set up a school in a very poor area. And what she's done by doing, and she's brought in discipline, she's brought in, in a sense, different older ways of teaching. And these poor kids coming from a variety of racial groups are thriving academically. She's doing good. And by doing good, she's silencing people who think they know better, but in fact are doing foolish. That's in a sense what the Bible's telling us to do. And then it says this very profound thing, live as people, verse 16, who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. And here, and if you're familiar with some literature and all going on in the culture, there's two fundamentally different views of freedom. And most Canadians understand freedom as freedom from limits, freedom from restraints, freedom from duties, freedom from obligations, freedom from consequences. And Christians here are understanding freedom as freedom to, that it's freedom to love, it's freedom to serve, it's freedom to not be bound by our passions, it's freedom to have duties, that that is the understanding of freedom. It's a completely different way of understanding freedom, and that's what it's telling us that we should do. And then it goes on in verse 17, the final one, I have to watch my time, and then it goes on sort of closing this whole section, verse 17, honor everyone, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor.

Now, just, I have a four little points to sort of see how you can triangulate that, what it's trying to say, if you could put up the first one, 2A, so to speak, is what the Bible's talking about here now in terms of relating to government and culture. And it's just as true if you're in Canada as it is if you're in China, it is just as true if you're in Nigeria or the United States. It's very, very wise. Remember, it's giving us principles and purposes, it's giving us direction, and it's really calling for the fact that, dang it all, we need to spend some time with Steve and Stella or Andrew and Deborah, and we need to pray together. We need to try to figure out what this means, how you do this. Sometimes, when the culture goes crazy, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer tried to figure out how he could do that during Nazi Germany, and he did it by actually trying to undermine Hitler out of his desire to honor Germany and honor, I mean, that was a very evil time. But here, so the first thing is that Christians are called to have a posture, a posture to submit to and honor human creatures in authority. Justin Trudeau's father once got caught saying the F word in public, and he said he didn't say, I think he said he said Fuddle Duddle or something like that. And so, when you see posters that say Fuddle Duddle

Trudeau, that's not something a Christian should hold, that sign. It doesn't honor him. You don't have to spend time in prayer discerning that, that you just, that shouldn't be a sign that we hold. Have a posture to submit to and honor human creatures in authority, remembering that submission and honor are dimmer switches, not off and on switches. And they're defined by God, not by our culture. Secondly, 2B, if you could put it up, know that civil authority has a God-ordained purpose to punish true evil and praise true good, defined once again by God.

[27 : 39] You know, by the way, this doesn't mean it's always going to be simple. Trying to do things about online speech and how you balance the true good of free speech and freedom of conscience and how you balance that with some of the, from what I've been told, horrendous things you can see in the internet in terms of child pornography and other types of pornography and how you balance that. Once again, there's not a recipe for that. We can disagree on that, but we need to have a prayerful discernment working towards that. Third, 2C, do what is truly morally good. That's what we should always be pursuing.

And finally, 2D, grow into true freedom, which is the freedom to love and to serve. Grow into true freedom, which is the freedom to love and to serve.

You know, this is, we can all say, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, we, we understand that. But if you put those last two things together, here's the difference between our culture. Our, our culture says to you, uh, listen, you're making enough money. Um, you, you deserve a Lexus.

You deserve a Lexus. And, uh, you know, you should put your money into that. You should buy that Lexus. And, and in fact, actually, it might even be more than that because you, you go to, to think about buying the Lexus because you have the money. And then you realize that, you know, those Porsches are really good or those Audis are really good. And that, you know, actually, you could afford the interest payments to up your car to get something like that. You know?

Uh, and, and, and the freedom of Canada is that that's a perfect sense of our freedom is that I'm making the money. It's my money. I want to be free. And free means what's good for me. It means exalting me.

[29 : 30] It means being able to do what I want and have the prestige that I want and have the envy of others towards me that I want. And I can serve my own desires and I can serve me and I can serve me and I can serve me.

But the gospel is saying, maybe you should buy a Toyota Corolla and be generous to the work of the church and to the relief of poverty and the spread of the gospel.

You see, if you think about it for a second, who's more free? Ones who merely indulge their passions or ones who say, you know what?

That Corolla or that Prius, that's, that's, that's fine. And I, I can really be financially generous. Now, having said all that, we'll go on to the next thing about slavery because I don't want people to think I'm trying to just talk this through and say, oh, dang it all. I didn't have enough time to talk about the slavery text.

You know, just read and figure out for yourself. I really think Charles, I think it was John or Charles Wesley had a lot of very good advice. He said people, Christians should strive to be able to save 10% of their income, give 10% of their income away and enjoy the 80% without feeling guilty. Like enjoy it.

[30 : 50] And if God calls you to be more generous, to be more generous. But now slavery. Whoa. On one level, slavery isn't a thing that most of us think about. I mean, just by the way, if you're watching this and you're a slave, contact the church. We'll do it here in North America.

It's illegal here. We'll do what we can to help you get out of slavery. We'll call the police. If you're watching this and you own slaves, you need to repent immediately and set them all free. But generally, it's not an issue that Canadians are struggling with in terms of slavery. But it is an issue that is often used as a defeater as to why people can't be Christians. It's a very common thing to say, well, you know, Christians support oppressing women and they, you know, were in favor of slavery. And I can't even consider Christianity because of these types of things. Go on the internet, you'll see lots of stuff around that. And to be honest, if you look at verse 19, verse 18, we are, our, our spirits sag a little bit. And we actually say, maybe this isn't a Sunday I'd want to have my neighbor hear the Bible text, because I'm not sure what I'd say about that when it says, verse 18, slaves, because that's really what it's referring to. Slaves, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

And we go, oh my, I sure wish, I mean, that was a teachable moment that God missed. He really needed me to help him edit that part of 1 Peter. That's just not what I was hoping or expecting he would say. So how do we deal with it? Here's a couple of things. The first is that often when our friends and neighbors say things about the Bible and about slavery, they have the mistaken view that they live in Switzerland rather than where they live. And what I mean in that is Switzerland's a country that's been neutral forever. And people think they can talk about this issue from a position of neutrality. But nobody's neutral. Everybody's coming out of some type of thought process or system.

Most people, it's completely unconscious. But it's coming out of somewhere. Might be a bit more Hindu influenced, Buddhist influenced, Muslim influenced. And at the end of the day, even though people aren't atheist type of influence, those are the four big ones, some combination of all of those things.

And so we look at it from our point of view, not realizing we have a point of view and a tradition, and we say, oh, look at that Bible. It's just so completely and utterly terrible. Well, one moment. Buddha owned slaves.

[33 : 35] Do you know that? Gautama Buddha owned slaves. Now, we're going to talk about this next week when we talk about Buddhist understandings of marriage.

It is true. Did you know that Buddha, to pursue enlightenment, abandoned his wife and children? Well, they don't teach you that, by the way, in the posters.

He abandoned his wife and children. He abandoned his slaves. Never spoke against slavery. What about Hinduism? Well, India did stop the selling and all of slavery in 1833, but they didn't stop it because of Hinduism.

The British colonial masters stopped slavery in India in 1833. What about Islam?

Did you know that Muhammad bought and sold and owned slaves? The truth. He was a slave owner. He sold them, bought them.

[34 : 42] Had them. What about people who don't believe there is a God? Who are agnostic about it? Well, I mean, one of the things about this particular text, if you want to go hunting in the internet, I'll see if I can find it.

There's a very interesting YouTube video by Peter Williams, who's an academic at Cambridge, who talks about what the slavery laws were at the time that Peter was written.

And when Peter wrote his letter, there was, in fact, the idea of slavery just seemed to be the most natural thing in the world. Everybody believed that slavery was just natural.

And they couldn't conceive of a society without slavery. But, you know, what about our atheist friends? By, well, at least the 19th century, it'd become common knowledge in the educated world, influenced by Christianity, that slavery was wrong.

So, within a couple of years of the first atheist state, in the 1920s, they reintroduced slavery. Soviet Union.

[35 : 52] China continues to have slavery. Another atheist state. Now, I'm not, we're going to look at the text again, but we don't have to take guff from people.

Why is it that people in Canada, good secular people in Canada, think that slavery is wrong? They learned it from Christianity. They didn't learn it from atheist systems of thought, Buddhist, Hindu, or Muslim systems of thought.

They learned it from Christianity. Christianity. Now, let's look at this text again. Now, the first thing I need to say about this text is the way that it's spoken.

And I'll give you an illustration. Let's say all of a sudden, I started talking about women. And I say, you know, women are like this, and women do this, and women do that.

And then at some point in time, Andrea puts her hand up and says, you do realize that, like, there's at least one woman here? You know, you can't talk about women as if we're objects.

[36 : 53] Like, you know, the way we talk about chairs, that chairs are just objects. And I can talk about chairs, and they don't care, they're just an object. But if I talk about women as if they're just objects, it's profoundly dehumanizing to them.

Right? In the underlying original language, what Peter's going to talk about in verses 18 and following is he's not talking about slaves like that.

He's talking to a congregation where there are slaves in the room. And in a sense, he's now saying, I'll just sort of look at you guys because you're close, slaves. He's talking to the slaves.

Like people. With dignity and autonomy. And just listen to verse 18 and 19. Just listen to verse 18 and 19, or look on the screen, and ask when you hear this text, is it promoting slavery? Slaves, 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 endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

[38 : 08] He's talking to slaves. You're enduring sorrows while suffering unjustly. This is the opposite of a pro-slavery text.

It undermines the institution. And it's even deeper. And remember all those earlier things about God wanting you to grow into freedom? And listen to how he now grounds these things.

He says he's taking a pause from all of these things to ground what he's saying. Listen to how it continues. For what credit is it if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure?

But if when you do good, this is verse 20, and you suffer for it, sorry, if you do good and suffer for it, you endure.

I'm sorry, Neb, well, sorry. This is a gracious thing in the sight of God. It's a whole other thing which he's going to be looking at later about the fact that, you know, there is a way that all of us are going to have times in our lives when we suffer unjustly.

[39 : 11] And for secular Canadians, there's no category for that. It's completely meaningless and absurd and just tragic. But the Bible is saying, we're going to see why in a moment, that for those in Christ, there is a possibility that there's something, can be something, even though it's always sorrowful and it's always hard and it's always wrong, but there is something about it that can be redeemable, that you can maintain your dignity and hold your head high in the midst of it.

It gives you hope. Verse 21, For 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 entrusting 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 as you were strained like sheep, for you were strained like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

[40 : 45] I mean, one of the other things which so profoundly undermines the whole institution of slavery as economics develop and as these ideas percolate into a mind that always wants to return to slavery.

ISIS has returned slavery. The Taliban have returned slavery. Mauritania only stopped having slavery as a result of international pressure in 2011.

There is still slavery in China. There is something perennial about returning to slavery, and that is because at heart, there is that part within every human being that wants a freedom from, it wants a freedom to lord over, a freedom to have control, a freedom to be exalted, a freedom to have no consequences, a freedom to have no responsibilities, a freedom to do whatever you dang well please, whenever you dang well please to do it.

And when these senses of freedom control us and empower us, slavery fits as neatly as the most perfect glove designed to fit your hand. And the Bible says we worship one who died a slave's death.

And our life and the story of our life is modeled on one who is completely and utterly different, who died a slave's death that we might be freed and redeemed and made it one with the almighty God.

[42 : 21] And he is to be the example for how we live. Brothers and sisters, as I've shared with you many times, Peter, within a year or two of this, he's going to die a martyr's death because he refused to recant of the truth that Jesus actually did die on the cross, he actually did rise from the dead.

And why did Peter not want to give that up? Why didn't he just say, oh, whatever? Like a couple of years ago, I was talking to a barista in a Starbucks, and I mentioned something about, you know, paper coming from trees, and you keep, you know, planting new trees.

And the person just said to me, they don't plant trees in Canada. I said, my son was hired as a tree planter for seven years. He said, no, no, no. They don't plant trees in Canada. Yeah. I just said, well, whatever.

Like, what do you say to somebody who's so dumb? Like, whatever, you know? I didn't say whatever out loud. And weirdly, I went, okay, yeah, whatever. So why didn't Peter just say, you know, whatever?

Why did he not say whatever? Why did he want to say, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Jesus actually did die. He actually did rise on the dead. Why did he not want to say whatever? He didn't want to say whatever because he said, that he understood that he committed no sin.

[43 : 39] 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 entrusting 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 strained like lost sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. It's because of the truth of that, he would not give up on the truth that Jesus rose from the dead after dying a slave's death on the cross.

And he is both a savior for us and an example of how we are to live and how we are to understand power and sexuality and family and friendships and civic authority and economics.

That is a story to form our lives. And it's a story that if you haven't given your life to Christ, you need to give your life to Christ. That's such a wonderful truth.

So beautiful. Let's stand. Bow our heads in prayer.

[44 : 51] Father, you know in our hearts, we wish you'd said a different thing, but we now look at it more closely. You said very wise things, Father. And Father, and some of us are maybe really just fascinated to understand how it is that actually there might be a way that even when we suffer deeply and suffer unjustly, that there is something about it that can have meaning and that it can be a means of grace.

And Father, we wish you made it really easy for us to know how to relate to the government of Canada and our country. But Father, we know that you knew better than what we want.

And you have called us to meditate on your word and to study your word and to pray to you and to have earnest conversation in local churches, whether in small groups or with friendships and with mentors to sort out how to live well for your glory and for the true good of this city and this country while we're here in Canada.

And so, Father, we ask that you help us to trust your Son and to embark on this path and make us a congregation that is a congregation of truth, a congregation of life, a congregation of beauty, a congregation, Father, of justice, that loves this city and loves this country and has a love for the whole world.

Father, do that work of ongoing renewal and reformation in us. And we ask these things in Jesus' precious name. Amen.