

Get Up and Grow: Perseverance

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[0 : 0 0] Can I put a plug in for working bees too? In our last parish, the last parish I was in, we did two a year and working bees were one of the really great fun days of the year because we put the list up like we've got out here.

We'd offer people the opportunity to take responsibility for one job so you didn't have to do everything and you didn't have somebody leaning over your shoulder telling you how to do it. You could just do it, which was really good.

And we'd have a barbecue or something together in the middle to celebrate, but just good fun, lots of good conversations, but really helpful to the overall what's going on around the place.

So I think I know that you'd take a great weight off Dave Lawrence's mind if you're getting in touch with him and saying, I can do this job, I'll do this job and split the day up like that, but I'll have fun as well.

So just great. I'm going to pray. Heavenly Father, as we come to your word now and a passage which in many ways is a difficult passage for us, please speak to us by your spirit.

[1 : 0 1] Speak to our hearts and minds that you would be transforming us in Christ and growing us in his image to your glory. Amen. Darian Klintos took us into 1 Peter 2 last week and the first seven verses of chapter 3 were part of the passage that we were going to deal with and we plan to deal with and anybody in a small group will know it was part of the same study.

And it's 1 Peter 2 is a passage which tells Christians how to live submissively under all sorts of governments and employers, both for good and for bad. Governments and employers that are good for you, governments and employers that maybe are quite difficult for you.

And so we were urged to live lives of faithful submission grounded in the life which Jesus himself lived. Called to patient endurance and we are encouraged that it is actually commendable before God to bear up in the face of unjust suffering.

Now, Darian did a really neat sidestep. He just stepped right away from the one, the third area of submission, family life, wives and husbands. He didn't enter into that, he just left that hanging.

Although, to be fair to him, it was with permission. And he's gone away for the weekend with Vanessa. He and Vanessa were going to be here today but somebody in their family gave them a weekend away up at Terrigal and we think that's just a blessing for them and glad for them to be able to enjoy it.

[2 : 3 2] It begins, verse 1, chapter 3. Wives, in the same way be submissive to your 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 when they see the purity and the reverence of your lives.

We ventured into this passage in Bible study the other week and one of our lovely women said in really quite a lovely way, it's very hard to read this passage without it sounding like sit.

So this is not about men and women generally. You might have a female boss at work. In fact, your wife might have a higher power job than you but this is when you come back into a family.

If you've got a female boss at work, if you work for your wife at work and she's your boss at work, you will submit to her leadership in the workplace on the basis of what Peter says in chapter 2.

But chapter 3 is a journey into family life and this is about submissive lives within the family, husbands and wives. Chapter 2 taught that God is a God of order.

[3 : 49] He brings peace out of chaos. He brings restoration to a broken world. He brings order to society through government. He brings order to the workplace and now in chapter 3, he teaches that God brings order to family life.

He gives us a framework in which to conduct our relationships. Submission is a dirty word for many of us. It sounds even worse when it comes from the mouth of a man.

And there are many unhappy overtones and all sorts of issues for us. But listen to what the Bible says.

Wives, Wives, be submissive, yield, give way to your husbands.

He has two types of husband and wife. A husband who isn't a believer and one who is. And his hope is that a wife with an unbelieving husband will win him to Christ by her behaviour.

[5 : 12] Not by her words, by her behaviour. It's a specific example of chapter 2, verse 12. Living such good lives among the nations that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

I've seen this happen. My best friend was won to Christ because his wife regarded this first. He has become a wonderful Christian leader in his family and church because of his wife's witness to him.

It was a joy for her when her husband came to Christ and grew in him and she deliberately stepped back from spiritual leadership in her family as she encouraged her husband to take up the reins and to lead spiritually because of her...

She did that because of her relationship with Christ. I've seen the opposite. I have seen women in churches disrespecting their husbands in such a way that they completely undermine their witness.

They nag them. They complain about them. They belittle them. And then they wonder and wring their hands when their husbands won't go anywhere near the church.

[6 : 30] Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your 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 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Now, I reckon by about now, there should be a growing underbelly of what if. You know, what about my friend who's in this situation and what about where I've been?

And I just want to say before we go there, let's read the next bit, verse 3. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes.

Instead, 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.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master.

[7 : 3 6] I'm hoping that's not contentious, maybe the last bit, but the bulk of it, because it's all about inner beauty being much more important than outer show. And that's totally consistent with the Gospels, where God always says that what's on the inside matters more than externals.

And to put it crudely, the world's always trying to make, dress up mutton as lamb. You go to the top level of the chase and you buy the branded clothes.

Maybe you don't. Maybe you do. Or you shop a lower level, something like that, a level lower. Designer jeans, accessories, having the right look, having the right label.

In some communities, it's all about having the right set of tattoos and the right set of piercings. In terms of how we present ourselves to one another. But Peter says it's what's on the inside that matters, not the outside.

A friend of mine told me about his university ministry. And this goes back 30 years. And he was discipling a young man and he was preparing him for leadership within the university fellowship.

[8 : 4 4] And the young bloke wanted the old bloke's wisdom about a girl that he was thinking of asking out, who looked pretty good. She was the hot one. And the old bloke said that he thought another woman that they both knew would make a wonderful partner.

And the young bloke said, but she looks pretty ugly. Now, I know that woman.

I know the ugly one. Not my wife. We both know her. And I've got to tell you that she is full of inner beauty.

And her inner beauty makes her outer beauty quite lovely as well. She radiates Christ. And in that conversation, the young bloke went down a lot of notches in the eyes of his mentor.

Because all he could see was outer beauty. He couldn't see the precious beauty and the shine and the witness of the woman that he called ugly. Peter says, inner beauty over outward adornment.

[1 0 : 0 0] And then he says, you are her daughters, speaking about Sarah, if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. And I think that little line gives away something.

I think it gives away the fact that he understands that there is pain in what he is teaching here. Peter understands that a woman might have a whole lot of fears about submitting to her husband.

And he says, do not give way to fear. And I'm confident when I talk to this congregation, just like when I spoke to 8.30 this morning and my wife was sitting there, that there are women here who know how painful it can be submitting to a man who thought that it was all about him.

We've had to sort that out in our marriage sometimes. And I think we'll probably have to do it again. It's not a problem solved forever and ever. I sat with a Christian counsellor a while back and I talked to her about this passage.

I actually said, do I've got to get up and preach this on Sunday? What am I going to say? What are a wife's fears in submitting to her husband? And she said things like having wounded hearts, wives who've been injured mentally, wives who've been abused emotionally, wives who have been mistreated sexually, wives who have lost a sense of self as their marriage becomes all about her husband, the husband.

[1 1 : 5 0] And she said there will be people sitting in your congregation who will be angered and distressed by the word submission because they have been hurt. And she said men and women wrongly interpret submission as being...

I was going hell for leather making notes while she was talking. But she said men and women... ..said men and women wrongly interpret submission as being a doormat, doing whatever he asks.

And it's not about that. We need to be ourselves within our relationship. We need to be able to say when we're tired and when we're hurt and when we're lonely. We need to feel safe with our spouse to be able to reveal deep needs and feelings and longings.

And if your spouse opens up and says things that reflect badly on you, are you able to hear them and still affirm your love for them?

Or do you shut them down because you cannot bear to hear how you impact on them?
And she said husbands and wives' hearts are sinful.

[13 : 10] There's often a struggle over roles and place in a marriage. She said if people would listen to God's word and understand that he is a God of order, marriage can be a delightfully safe place where a husband and a wife can know wonderful security with one another and with God.

A husband who leads and loves, who brings harmony and peace and safety as he submits to Christ and serves his family. It's really interesting but Peter speaks a specific word to husbands.

He doesn't say anything to our governments. He doesn't say anything to employers. But he does speak to husbands. Verse 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.

Husbands, it's not all about you. Be considerate to your other. Treat them with respect. He states the obvious to call wives the weaker partner.

It's men who overpower women in violent crime. Men and women do not compete equally in most sports because of physical difference. Women have a body clock which is attuned to conceiving and bearing children.

[14 : 36] Be considerate. Recognise your wife for who she is. Love her. Find out and understand her needs and her desires and ask her what her fears are.

Regard her. Be considerate. And realise that in spiritual matters we are co-heirs of the gracious gift of life.

We are full equals in terms of God's salvation and place in his kingdom. One of the big fears of this passage for a wife is what her husband might do with this teaching.

So you go home from the sermon this morning and you march into your house and you take control and you rule the roost and demand what you want and when you want it and there are too many stories of husbands reminding the wife of what she should be giving him.

My stomach still churns about the man who said to me, a Christian man or the man at church who said to me he wasn't getting what he was entitled to in his marriage and he was a Christian man and he was talking about sex and he was aggrieved because he saw it as his right.

[15 : 54] You can't take something like that. It has to be given and it's not going to be given in the way that God intended if it is demanded.

Marriage actually happens I don't know if you thought of this but marriage happens when a wife chooses to yield to a man and to accept marriage.

That's one of the reasons why it's very, very important that you be careful about who you say yes to and do not undersell yourself. See, I've got a little bet with myself.

I bet 95% of the women in our church family who are married or who have been married you waited for a goose like me to summon up the courage and take the initiative to ask you.

Is that true? Anybody ask their husband? I'm not going to slam you for doing it. There's nothing wrong with that but did you do it? Who took the initiative? And who responded to the initiator?

[17 : 04] You waited for a man to initiate you wanted him to lead if you are still married I'm sure you would love him to lead with deep consideration of who you are and that may not be so.

And it may be that you live with deep pain because your husband is failing to be considerate to you. And it may also be that you are a man who is struggling to lead in a godly way in your family because you have a wife who doesn't think she should ever give way to you.

My counselling friend said you have to remember that both men and women have sinful hearts when it comes to responding to the word of God and the will of God.

It is a spiritual problem. Submission doesn't come easily to any of us but it can be an incredible witness to Christ and I think you see that throughout the rest of chapter 3.

So verse 8 Finally all of you live in harmony with one another. Be sympathetic love as brothers be compassionate and humble do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult but with blessing because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

[18 : 31] It's actually saying lives of submission bring an overall harmony to relationships. Remember he's summing up submission to government submission in the workplace submission in the family and so we are called to relationships which are driven by love where compassion and humility drive our dealings with each other.

We've been talking a lot about these things when speaking about the core values of our church. we've been talking about things like humble authenticity treasuring Jesus together servant leadership.

The contrast is really ugly revenge evil for evil insult for insult it's all about me with no love or care for you. If we know Christ our faith should lead to a transforming of our relationships.

And 1 Peter 3 goes on to say that there is an even better foundation by loving and submissive relationships. It makes us winsome. It makes us people that other people are drawn to and they want to know why we are like we are.

What is it that's different about you people? Verse 14 Even if you suffer for what is right you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear do not be frightened but in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have but do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

[20 : 09] Don't fear what other people fear don't be frightened when a government official or an employer or a spouse treats you unjustly in a relationship do not fear them. Live with Christ set apart as Lord in your heart.

Whenever we're oppressed or experiencing injustice he's saying there's a bigger reality Jesus Christ is Lord and our experiences are not outside of his rule and they're not outside of his authority and Peter reassures us a number of times that it is commendable to God when we bear up under injustice in fact we walk in the footsteps of Christ himself.

I only noticed it just now as we read the first Bible reading from Psalm 34 Psalm 34 is quoted heaps throughout this passage but in Psalm 34 he's speaking to people who are bearing injustice and he's saying trust God hang in there and Peter's doing exactly the same here verse 15 always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have but do this with gentleness and respect people will notice our hope they will see that we're different when we endure injustice and they will want to know why why aren't we afraid when living in oppressive circumstances enduring difficulty opens up opportunity to confess our faith in Christ how we handle difficulty is a powerful part of our witness in Acts chapter 16 Paul and Silas are unjustly thrown in prison because their preaching's been bad for business the silversmiths aren't able to sell their little trinkets of the temple of Diana and so they're chained to God and they're singing praises to God and singing praises to God in the middle of the night and an earthquake brings the jail down and the jailer's about to do himself in because he thinks they've all shot through and Paul says don't do that we're all here we haven't gone he could have escaped he could have justified himself by thinking well the earthquake's from God's hand

God's tool to release me and I'm out of here but instead he lived such a good life before an unbeliever that the jailer was brought to Christ he came to Christ through Paul and Silas is suffering I read a wonderful little book recently Philip Yancey's you know what good is God that's a fairly new one it's a kurong you'll find all over the place but the first chapter is worth the price of the book he says that Jesus is able to redeem evil so Christ is not thwarted by the circumstances of our lives he's able to redeem evil in your heart set apart Christ as Lord I know a family living a new life in Christ in Queensland I think they've been there for about 12 years so they've got a track record a good track record and the husband lived up to his mother-in-law's hateful expectations and I tell you she was a buzzard and he was unfaithful to his wife can I say that yeah she was a buzzard she was he lived up to the unfaithful expectations of his mother-in-law he was unfaithful to his wife he humiliated his wife in his community by his behaviour and she would have been entirely justified in leaving him but instead she sought to honour

Christ in the oppressive circumstances of her marriage and that man was brought to Christ and he has grown in Christ because of a wife who loved him despite his offences against her by the grace and kindness of God she has modelled love and mercy and forgiveness in such a way that he recommitted his life to Christ and to her and she has brought much hope to other women in circumstances similar to her own but her hope was not in her cheating wreck of a husband her hope was in Christ who redeemed the evil in her life and in the process redeemed her husband as well all glory to the Lord Jesus and that's how this whole passage finishes it finishes in the work of Christ and with a powerful reminder that the whole created order will finish his existence in submission to him verse 18

[24 : 57] Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God he was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built and in it only a few people ate in all were saved through water and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God it saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels authorities and powers in submission to him passages are full of Old Testament understandings particularly Psalm 53 54 and 61 and one line in particular is perhaps or arguably the most difficult passage in the

New Testament verse 19 at face value it sounds like Jesus went and preached to the dead between his death on the cross and resurrection it's a verse that Roman Catholics used to justify their teaching on purgatory a place where people go before the final judgment of God a place that they can still be redeemed from if they get a change of heart and it also seems to fit with the apostles creed which we often recite he descended into hell and on the third day rose from the dead probably a better translation is he descended to the place of the dead sheol and I think I just want to say quickly that I think all those interpretations including the creed are wrong I don't understand everything here and so

I'll tell you what I think I do understand and leave some of the rest unsolved but I can give you afterwards an article which helped me in my thinking for this sermon and maybe it's helpful for you but I think imprisoned spirits are us before we belong to Christ before Christ was revealed in Ephesians chapter 2 Paul says you me and everyone else that's everybody were dead in their trespasses and sins we were imprisoned by death we were captive to the grave and in a sense all the people of the Old Testament went to the place of the dead Sheol without seeing the great work of Christ which was still future for them and so imprisonment is a way of referring to the status of believers in the Old Testament who died without seeing the wonderful work of salvation which

God did in the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ 1 Peter 1 said concerning this salvation the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow they were earnestly looking forward for what God was going to do without actually seeing it Jesus arrives on the scene in Luke chapter 4 he quotes Isaiah 61 he announces his ministry and he says the spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor he sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to release the oppressed to proclaim the year of the

Lord's favour and then in Luke chapter 7 Jesus confirms his ministry to John the Baptist John's getting the wobbles is Jesus the one who was to come he's sitting in his jail cell he's thinking are you the one or should we be expecting another and Jesus sends a message back to him go back and report to John what you have seen and what you have heard the blind receive sight the lame walk those who have leprosy are cured the deaf hear the dead are raised and good news is preached to the poor and in both places Jesus quotes or alludes to Isaiah 61 so the New Testament is telling us in a number of places including here in 1 Peter that the Spirit of Christ proclaimed Jesus in the Old Testament Isaiah 61 is now fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus the hope of the Old Testament believers has now become reality through Jesus the Spirit of Christ empowered Jesus ministry during his time on earth the Spirit of

[30 : 07] Christ raised him from the dead after Calvary Christ has gone into heaven and everything is in submission to him and so Noah pops up and Noah is an example it depends where you put the full stop here but Noah is an example of patient waiting judgment that ark the whole community is hearing the gospel God's judgment is coming save yourself from the wrath to come they all hear the gospel and it's as they will this is stupid is God's word going to be fulfilled but the day comes and eight people are saved God's word is faithful and those who trust in him were absolutely safe chapter three is an incredibly difficult passage you know submission to wives by wives to husband followed by Jesus preaching to imprisoned spirits it's a doozy and

I've rushed across the last bit but I want you to see the big picture again submission is not a dirty word the believers are urged to live wisely and harmoniously in a world in which they do not belong strangers and aliens we belong to the Lord Jesus and our journey here strangers and aliens as we are may experience a peaceable government we may experience a peaceable workplace we may experience a peaceable marriage or we may not we may experience injustice from government injustice in the workplace injustice in marriage and if we do how we handle it is a powerful part of our witness to the Lord Jesus Christ he is the one who powerfully releases us from the captivity of sin and death by his resurrection he is the one who now reigns supreme over all creation including our oppressors strong strong overtones of philippians chapter two at the name of

Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father I think Peter is saying that God knows every difficulty that we live with now he promises that we will be safe with him then and there is every reason for hope and patient endurance even in the most difficult of circumstances now Amen