

1 Peter 3.⁸-4.¹⁹

Background

The sermon on 1 Pet.3.18-4.6, highlighting how central the cross is to the gospel, is a 'stand-alone' message, not integral to the present series on the church.

Yet there's a sense in which, if not 'integral', its thrust is certainly very closely related to these studies on the significance of the church: for the life of Christ's church is firmly anchored in the cross of Christ and anticipates, however imperfectly, the coming of the kingdom of God.

The three core 'values' of the kingdom of God are consistently set forth for us as submission, sacrifice and service: and it's the theme of 'submission' which Peter is expounding at length in 1 Pet.2.13-4.19.

He sets out the general exhortation in 2.13 ("*submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men*"). That's then followed by a series of specific applications in 2.1-3.7 – namely, in the context of citizenship, the workplace, and marriage. And he then addresses more fully one more particular type of situation which the Christian will commonly face to explain what 'submission' will look like there – namely suffering for doing good. Or, more bluntly, persecution.

For the early church, and indeed throughout the first centuries of the Christian church, this was manifestly the norm. The New Testament consistently takes it as read that this will be the norm: and in so doing, of course, the New Testament writers were simply following the teaching of Jesus Himself to the effect that "*in this world you will have trouble*" (by which He meant an hostility directed against His church).

We have become accustomed here in Scotland over many centuries to a context which is in New Testament terms is *abnormal*: and it has become too easy for believers here to take such a context for granted. It may well be that the Lord is now equipping believers here in the 'western world' for a very different sort of setting in which their faith and faithfulness is to find expression – more 'exile', than land of promise; more persecution than appreciation.

The cross lies very much at the heart of the church's message. And it should come as no surprise, therefore, when the cross becomes of necessity the hallmark of the church's life and ministry.

There's benefit as always in reading all the passages listed over the seven Bible readings: but if you're wanting to home in on a smaller number of questions I suggest you concentrate on days **(1)**, **(3)**, and **(6)**, where in each case there's an additional question which may be more appropriate in a Community Group setting.

1) Monday 4th October – submissive

Read [1 Peter 2.13-17](#)

“.. submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men ..” (1 Pet.2.13)

This week’s Bible readings all centre around this theme of *submission*. It is always “for the Lord’s sake” that you submit, that is, as an expression of your submission to Jesus as Lord: note the balance – live in the freedom of Christ, but as a servant of God!

Submission is one of the core values of the kingdom of God, as evidenced in the ministry of Jesus: when and how did you submit your life to Jesus as Lord?

‘Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king:’ which of these exhortations to submission do you find most difficult to follow?

How are you as a believer most challenged by the fourfold exhortation of v.17?

Prayer: *You have shown me, Lord Jesus, by Your life and by Your death, just what this submission means: help me daily to live in a way that is truly and fully submissive.*

2) Tuesday 5th October – righteous

Read [1 Peter 3.8-12](#)

“.. the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer” (1 Pet.3.12)

Submission has a very positive thrust to it: it involves making your own needs and desires secondary to the needs of those around you – living in such a way that you bring and become a blessing to others through your words and actions.

Why are you to avoid repaying evil with evil and insult with insult?

How do these verses urge you to respond in the face of wrongs done to you?

Prayer: *Lord, I can be quick to fly off the handle and to react in kind when I find myself maligned or wronged: grant me grace to restrain my baser instincts.*

3) Wednesday 6th October – ready

Read [1 Peter 3.13-17](#)

“.. In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord ..” (1 Pet.3.15)

Jesus’ lordship in your life will entail a life which will often prompt questions. Some will be annoyed, some embarrassed, some angered: and some will be attracted, bemused, intrigued enough to start asking questions. Be ready to answer rightly!

The alternative reading in v.14 of *'do not fear what they fear'* is taken directly from Isaiah 8.11-12: in these days of global pandemic, when fear has been widely cultivated, how will believers be distinctive in their perspective and why will that prompt questions?

In what respects, and in what contexts, has the lordship of Jesus in your life prompted questions on the part of those around you?

Why does the way you answer matter as much as the actual answer you give?

Prayer: Day by day I bow before Your throne, Lord Jesus, and crown You afresh as King: give me wisdom in knowing what to say to those around me, and grace in speaking.

4) Thursday 7th October – patient

Read [1 Peter 3.17-22](#)

".. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God .." (1 Pet.3.18)

These verses have spawned a range of different interpretations! Accept that some details are complicated and concentrate rather on what is clear. Christ's death on the cross informs the way we respond when we ourselves suffer injustices.

What significance does Peter indicate the death of Jesus has in terms of how you respond when you 'suffer for doing good'?

How does God's patience (v.[20](#)), and not least His patience towards you, shape your response to others who speak or act maliciously against you (v.[16](#))?

Prayer: You bore my sin, Lord Jesus, and show to me a patience I can never earn. Help me to do as You did, entrusting myself in my sufferings to the One who judges justly.

5) Friday 8th October – self-denying

Read [1 Peter 4.1-6](#)

".. since Christ suffered in the body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude .." (1 Pet.4.1)

The cross re-configures the believer's life. As Christ did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made Himself nothing ([Phil.2.5-11](#)), so the believer now lives 'for the will of God'. You're under new management: you've broken with sin.

To a self-indulgent culture, the self-denial inherent in the submissiveness of a believer seems 'strange': in what ways are you aware of 'abuse' being heaped upon believers today (v.4)?

In what sense is the person who has suffered in the body 'done with sin'?

Prayer: *You have granted to us, Your people, Lord – You have granted to us the cross, with all its shame and with all its grace. Help me gladly to take up my cross today.*

6) Saturday 9th October – praising

Read [1 Peter 4.7-11](#)

“.. each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve other ..” (1 Pet.4.10)

Submission is a core value of the kingdom of God: it finds expression in the way we relate to others – loving deeply, extending hospitality eagerly, serving faithfully – and to the end that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ

How does Peter envisage that an awareness of the proximity of ‘the end’ (v.7) will stir believers to embrace this kingdom value?

‘Offer hospitality’ in v.9 is more literally ‘love the stranger’: what might that look like in the life of our life as Christ’s church, not least (but not exclusively) in regard to the influx to our shores of refugees?

What are the gifts you’ve received to serve others, and what will it mean for you today faithfully to be ‘administering God’s grace’?

Prayer: *God of peace, sanctify me through and through that my whole spirit, soul and body may be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*

7) Sunday 10th October – overjoyed

Read [1 Peter 4.12-19](#)

“.. rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed ..” (1 Pet.4.13)

The faithful Creator God (v.19) is also the mighty resurrecting God! Good Friday was therefore followed by Easter Sunday: and the suffering believers may experience now will be followed by a glory still to come. It’s well worth waiting for!

Why may believers rejoice that they have been “counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name’ ([Acts 5.41](#))?”

What does it mean for ‘judgment to begin with the family of God’ and why does Peter state that here?

Prayer: *I will enter Your gates with thanksgiving, and Your courts with praise: for You, O Lord, are good, Your love endures forever, Your faithfulness through all generations!*