

Jesus is Enough, So Live Selflessly and Sacrificially at Home

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our Typhoon Sunday family worship service. I hope you are warm and cozy, safe and secure at home.

Thanks for joining us today, even if via the internet. It was Elizabeth Elliot who said, The secular world looks for happiness through self-assertion.

The Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment. Elizabeth Elliot was a missionary in the jungles of Ecuador amongst Indian tribespeople in the 1950s, along with her husband Jim Elliot. They had met at university and gone to the mission field in Ecuador independently of each other. But there they met again, they had married and they had their first child there. Soon afterwards, Elizabeth's husband Jim, along with four friends, decided to try and meet the Hurani Indians face to face.

In order to get to know them, to love them, to tell them about Jesus. It was a risk as these Indians were known by neighboring tribes to be savages. A few hours after these five men left, news came back to the camp.

[1 : 12] Jim and the other four missionaries had been found speared to death, lying on the beaches near the Hurani tribe. Jim and Elizabeth Elliot's daughter was just 10 months old.

But rather than returning to America to pursue a life of comfort and convenience, she decided to stay in Ecuador to continue to live and work amongst the tribe's people. And two years later, she and her daughter moved to live amongst the Hurani people, the very tribe who had killed her husband just a few years before.

Elizabeth Elliot writes, The secular world looks for happiness through self-assertion and self-preservation. The Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment.

Today's passage of scripture is 1 Peter 3, verse 1-7. But we're going to start by looking at chapter 2, verse 21. It's a passage of scripture which has caused more heat than light.

And yet because these are the words of a good God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, and because Jesus really is who he said he is, the passage of scripture we look at today are words of good news.

[2 : 25] Good news for our own hearts. Good news for our marriages. Good news for our homes. If Elizabeth Elliot is right, if Jesus Christ is right, that true joy is found in self-abandonment, not self-assertion, today's passage is a call to true joy.

This morning's passage really is part two of the arguments Chris unpacked for us last week. These two passages together are one unit of thought with three applications.

And last week Chris looked at the first two applications. Today's passage of scripture looks at the third. So let's recap the flow of thought. Remember the whole book of 1 Peter is a call for Christians to live lives that are distinctive and devoted.

Because this world is not our home, because we belong to Jesus, and therefore we live with a different hope. We walk to a different tune. So in chapter 2 verse 11 to 20, Peter encourages the Christians to live distinctively in an unjust society.

The people to whom Peter is writing are being ostracized and criticized. They are being marginalized and discriminated against because they are Christians. They are regarded as bad news for society because they would not worship the cultural gods.

[3 : 38] They are persecuted because they are followers of Jesus. And yet rather than fighting back or protesting against this abuse or standing up for their rights or even being passive aggressive, disrespecting their bosses behind their backs, Peter says don't do that.

That's how you live if your hope is tied up to this world. But you are born again to a living hope. A hope which cannot perish, spoil or fade.

And so live distinctively. Live devoted to Jesus. And the reason he says this is because, verse 21, because of Jesus. The main point there was that Jesus Christ is the most perfect example of someone who did not demand his rights.

But he submitted himself to what was unworthy of him, being treated unjustly. But he did so because this world was not his home, because his identity is found in God.

And as verse 23 said, he entrusted himself to God the Father. That's the key. Jesus entrusted himself to God the Father. He trusted in God even as he approached the cross.

[4 : 46] He trusted that his life and his hope were not found in the hands of those who tied him up. His life was not in the hands of those who bound him or beat him. But even in the midst of what seemed as if it was not right, he trusted in God as Father.

And therefore, he could lay down his life. He could forego what he was legitimately entitled to, to live selflessly and sacrificially, saying, not my will, but your will be done.

Throughout this letter, Peter has been telling us that being a Christian is not just about praying a prayer, or knowing Bible stories. It's about a changed life, a different way of seeing the world.

Being a Christian means everything is different, because we have a new hope, and a new purpose in Jesus. And this has been Peter's plea to his readers the whole time. That because your life is found in Jesus, you have a different view of suffering.

Because your life is found in Jesus, you can handle injustice. Because of Jesus, although you are treated like the rubbish of the earth, you are in fact a royal priesthood, a holy people.

[5 : 51] Because of Jesus, you don't need to fight for your rights. You don't need to demand what you think you're entitled to. You don't need to go about life feeling like a victim when things don't go your way.

Because what you have in Jesus, and what you have in the gospel, is more than sufficient to cover any shame you may suffer, for being a follower of Jesus. Because Jesus Christ is enough.

Friends, do you know this? Do you know in your heart that Jesus Christ is more than enough?

Because otherwise, when pressure comes, and life gets difficult, and persecution comes, or people don't treat you fairly, you may feel tempted to feel sorry for yourself, and when things get really bad, you will shake your fists in the air at God, and say, why is this happening to me?

I thought you were meant to be a good God. Friends, we have to know this, that Jesus Christ is enough. Robert Murray McShane was a Scottish minister, and he actually died at the very young age of 29, from a sickness he contracted.

He said this, And so this has been Peter's plea, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, because he's more than enough.

[7 : 18] And so as we saw last week, because Jesus is enough, you don't need to insist on your rights, and your privileges, but you can live distinctively like Jesus, in both society, and the workplace, even when you're being treated unfairly.

And now Peter gives us a third application, live distinctively like Jesus, at home. Peter's going to, first address the married woman, and then married men.

And show how this gospel, speaks to our marriages. Now for those of you, who are not yet married, don't dial out just yet, because what Peter's going to say, to us actually addresses our hearts, not just our behavior.

And in some ways, this will be applicable to all of us. So firstly, wives be distinctive, in your womanhood. Let's look at chapter 3, verse 1 to 2 together.

Peter says, Likewise, wives be subject, to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word, by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful, and pure conduct.

[8 : 21] Now in order to understand this, we need to notice a few things. First, notice the first word. What does it say? It says likewise. Well, like what? Well, like he said in chapter 2, verse 13, Christians be subject, to human institutions.

And in verse 18, servants be subject, to your masters. And now he says, likewise, wives be subject, to your husbands. So let's think about this. If you are a Christian, who is your highest authority?

That's right. It's King Jesus. That's what it means, to be a Christian. It means you've turned away, from a life, where you are your own master. You acknowledge your sin, and you surrender to Jesus.

You hand over the throne, of your life, to King Jesus.

Now he is your Lord, and master. He is your king. And now you live a life, of faith in him, obeying him, trusting him, and loving him, as Lord. So, in chapter 2, verse 13, when the Roman rulers, were threatening the Christians, or giving them a hard time, they might have been tempted, to say, well I'm not under your authority, I'm under Jesus' authority.

Or they could have said, we have a higher authority, than you. I don't need to listen to you, I only listen to Jesus. But actually, Peter says something, counterintuitive. He says, because Jesus is your Lord, follow his example.

[9 : 37] Lay down your rights, choose to submit to the emperor, as part of your worship, to King Jesus. And then he says the same thing, in chapter 2, verse 18. If a Christian's boss, or master, was giving them a hard time, they might have been tempted, to say, well I'm not under your authority, I'm under Jesus' authority.

Or they could have said, I have a higher authority, than you. I won't listen to you, I only listen to Jesus. But what does Peter say? As part of your worship, and your submission to King Jesus, follow his example, by laying down your rights, and choose to submit to your boss.

And now he says the same thing. Likewise, in the same way, wives submit to your husbands. In other words, as part of your worship, as part of your submission, to King Jesus, follow his example, by laying down your rights, and choose to follow your husband.

Another way of saying it is, because your life is found in Jesus, and because Jesus is more than enough, live selflessly, live sacrificially, not insisting on your own rights, or demanding your own way.

Now why does Peter say this? What's going on here, that makes Peter say this? Well the next part of the sentence tells us, look what it says, it says, likewise, wives be subject to your own husbands, so that, even if some do not obey God's word, they may be won without a word, by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

[11 : 04] You see, what's going on here, is that some of these ladies in the church, had become Christians, but their husbands weren't believers. Or they, maybe were Christians, but they didn't take God's word very seriously.

Now the custom in, Greek or Roman world at the time, was that a husband's position, and honor in society, was very much dependent, on how his wife and children were, and whether they honored him, as the head of the home.

In fact, in this society, it was expected, that a man's wife, would have no friends of her own, because all her social relationships, were tied to that of her own husbands.

And certainly a wife, would not worship a God, foreign to her husband's gods. And so if a woman became a Christian, this was a big deal. This would put massive pressure on the family, and the marriage, because firstly, it would automatically be considered rebellion, which would bring shame, and loss of face to her husband.

But additionally, if she joined the community of believers, and joined the church, developing friends, outside of her husband's circle of friends, this would be received, as being shameful for her husband.

[12 : 07] And so what should a Christian wife do? Should she honor her husband's desires, which might mean not going to church? Or should she insist on her own rights, and freedoms that her newfound faith in Jesus gave her?

Peter doesn't tell these women, to do this or that. But he goes after the heart. And this is what he says, You see, friends, this is the very opposite of the world's understanding of freedom.

In the secular world's understanding of freedom, freedom means having no constraints, being able to live as I want, how I want, to pursue my own dreams and my own desires unhindered.

In the world's understanding of freedom, I get to do what I want, when I want, how I want. But actually, in the end, we become slaves to our own desires. But Peter says that Jesus gives you a freedom to live selflessly, sacrificially, to say no to your own desires for the benefit of another.

And the reason is simple, because the spirit of Jesus, the most selfless, sacrificial man who ever lived, now lives inside of us, because you've been mastered by him. What is astonishing is that in Peter's day, the secular philosophers would never address women or slaves.

[13 : 34] That was a prerogative of the husbands or the head of the home. Women and slaves were considered second class citizens. And so no religious leader would dare address them. But Peter does address them.

And so on the one hand, Peter is cutting across the culture of his day by affirming the value and the dignity of these women. And the fact that they're not just objects in a man's household, but responsible human beings, capable of making their own choices and choosing their own behavior. So Peter gives them a dignity and a respect, which is unprecedented in Greek thought. But at the same time, no husband could ever complain that Peter's encouraging rebellion or undermining his own authority, because Peter explicitly affirms the husband's leadership and position in the home. And what is his rationale for this submission? It's not the expectations of Greek or Roman society. It's the authority and the example of Jesus. Because Jesus is enough. Because in Jesus, you have such a depth of freedom that you can freely deny your own desires for the sake of another. That in Jesus, you have a treasure deep enough that you don't need to fight for your individuality and your rights.

[14:42] Jesus Christ is enough. You see, this freedom to serve rather than to be served, this freedom to give love rather than demand love, this freedom to give of yourself rather than thinking of yourself is what characterized New Testament Christianity.

And the reason is because this is the heart of Jesus. New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce sums this up in a remarkable way. He says, Do you see that?

Peter is so free, he's not even enslaved to the idea of being free. He's so free, he could give up his independence when it benefited others for him to do so. Because Jesus Christ was enough.

Now, what do you think happens when a Roman or Greek wife responds to her husband like this? Well, Peter gives us two consequences. First, a wordless sermon.

Look at what he says here. He says, Wives, be subject to your husbands so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

[15:55] Last week, Chris quoted that amazing statement by Bill Clinton after Mother Teresa had just challenged his views on abortion. Bill Clinton stood up, not knowing what to say.

He simply said, It's difficult to argue with a life well lived. And this is what Peter is saying. Your unbelieving husband may not agree with you. He may not even like Christianity, but it's going to be hard for him to argue with a well lived life.

Your life will preach the gospel and testify to the beauty of Jesus. But then there's a second consequence of this. It's an untouchable beauty. Look at verse 3 to 5 with me.

He says, Wives, An untouchable beauty.

In Hong Kong, we spend an inordinate amount of money on beauty and cosmetic products. The beauty and cosmetic products industry in Hong Kong is worth billions of dollars and is projected to grow by almost 50% in the next three years.

[17:22] Just think of how many billboards advertising products and treatment filled the corridors of our NTR stations. But what is devastating about this industry is that so many of the people who really do spend thousands and thousands of dollars feel no more worthwhile, no more lovely, no more lovable for all the investment in the industry.

A few years ago, a 19-year-old Australian model, Essena O'Neill, had half a million Instagram followers and she decided to quit social media and to be honest about her life striving to look beautiful on social media.

This is what she writes, I would spend hours looking at everybody else's perfect lives and I strived to make mine look just as good. I had half a million followers and I was famous but I still felt average.

I'm just a girl. It suffocated me. I was lonely and I was miserable. Now friends, is it wrong to want to look beautiful or attractive? Should Christian women be banned from wearing makeup or wearing good clothing?

Does Peter say, Now I don't want women to look attractive but rather make yourselves as ordinary and as boring as possible? Is that what Peter is saying? Of course not. But he does call us to a much higher calling.

[18:40] He says, Let your adorning, your beautification, be the hidden person of the heart. So what's Peter saying here? He's calling Christian women to be so stunningly beautiful, so exquisitely attractive and so spectacularly gorgeous that others cannot help but stop and take notice of you.

But not because of your expensive clothing, not because of your fashionable accessories, but because of the stunning beauty of your character, because of the beauty of your security in Jesus,

and because of the attractiveness of your unshakable hope and confidence in the living God. He says, This is how holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves. Friends, if you are a teenager, let me ask you to sit up and listen for just a second. Every day, you are being lied to and you are being disrespected by social media and by advertising companies which lie to you, telling you that your value and your dignity are found in your physical appearance or how socially acceptable you are.

How you look, where you shop, who's interested in you, what clothes you are wearing or accessories you have. Friends, it's a lie. And for some of you, it's already become a rope around your neck.

You're a slave to other people's opinions and it's killing you. There is a way to be free from that. It's to be adorned with the beauty that comes from a rock solid security and confidence in Jesus.

[20 : 05] Friends, if you don't want to be ordinary, if you want to glow with a beauty that takes people's breath away. Friends, if you want to glow with a beauty that neither age nor changing fashion can steal from you, if you want to be free from the cruelty and the tyranny of wondering about your appearance and what people think about you or whether you look good enough, follow the footsteps of the godly women who have gone before you.

They may never make it on the cover of magazines, but their lives have radiated with a beauty and a magnificence that very few others have ever known. Friends, Jesus Christ is enough and therefore you can live lives of self-sacrifice, finding your hope and your identity in him.

Well, what about the men? Does Peter have anything to say to them? Well, secondly, husbands, be distinctive in your manhood. Let's look at verse 7 together.

Peter writes this, Likewise, husbands, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Up until now, Peter has spoken to citizens to submit to the emperor and governors. He's spoken to slaves to submit to their bosses. He's spoken to wives to submit to their husbands.

[21 : 25] And now he speaks to those who have all the power and all the authority in the Greek and Roman world, the men. Peter's going to show how the gospel cuts right across male privilege and he calls these men to display the distinctiveness of the gospel by also living lives of selfless and sacrificial love.

Look at what he says. He starts off saying, Likewise, in the same way. In other words, the very attitude he has just called these Christian women to display is the exact same attitude he calls these Christian men to display, which is to follow Jesus and to live lives of selflessness and sacrificial love, knowing that Jesus is enough.

Now it's going to look different for wives, their distinctiveness was displayed in selfless and sacrificial surrender. For husbands, their distinctiveness is going to be displayed in selfless, servant-hearted leadership.

So what does Peter say to these Christian men? Well, he says three things. He says, Be selfless by loving your wives with understanding. Earlier this year, Claire and I went through one of those times in marriage when we weren't quite seeing eye to eye.

We weren't fighting, but there was a certain coldness, a certain tension between us. And what was frustrating for me was that because I knew this, I tried to go the extra mile.

[22 : 43] I tried to be around more. I tried to serve more. I tried to wash more dishes. I tried to help around the house more in order to ease the tension. But it didn't seem to help. There was still this coldness, this distance between us.

And so one day, I had the day off. The kids were at school and we went for a walk around the peak and we both knew it was coming. So eventually, we said, okay, what's going on between us? Why the distance?

I can't really remember what I said, but I do remember what Claire said. She said, I can see you're trying and you're doing all the right things, but you're not showing any tenderness towards me.

You see, I was trying to do the right things. I was doing what I thought was a good idea, what seemed like the right thing, but it wasn't what she needed. It wasn't what made her feel loved or appreciated. What Claire didn't need was more service or more flowers.

What she needed was an apology. Men, do our wives feel understood? Do our wives feel heard? Do we demonstrate thoughtfulness to our wives?

[23 : 45] Peter calls us to honor the women in our lives by loving them with thoughtfulness, with understanding, knowing what makes them feel loved and appreciated. Secondly, he says, be selfless, not only by loving your wives with understanding, but loving your wives with your strength.

Look what he says here. He says, live with your wives in understanding, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel. Now, when Peter talks about being weaker, it doesn't mean weaker emotionally or spiritually or psychologically, as if women are just fragile rose petals.

It literally just means physically weaker. In Peter's day, no one would have contested that, generally speaking, men, many of whom were soldiers or farmers, were more physical than women.

But what's Peter's point? What's he saying? He's saying, husbands, use your strength not to serve yourself, but to selflessly and sacrificially serve the woman in your life.

His point is that because you, husband, are stronger physically, don't use that to your advantage.

Don't take advantage of your wife, but in the fear of God, use your strength to honor her, to encourage her, to make much of her, to see your wife flourish.

[24 : 54] One of the greatest tragedies of the fall of humanity and the deceitfulness of sin in our hearts is that as men, we tend to use our strength to dominate, to manipulate, and to control women rather than serving the women in our lives.

The recent hashtag MeToo movement around the world has thankfully exposed and highlighted some of the ways that we as men do this, exploit and harass women.

But the tragedy is that even in the church we're not immune from this. And so while very few of us will have our names written in headlines or plastered across the internet, the truth is that the same sin and the same tendency to exploit rather than to serve is not far from our own hearts and therefore not far from our own homes.

And while this is applicable to both men and women, for women are stronger than men in other areas, I want to address the men for a second and I want to ask you if the women in your life, that may be your wife, your daughters, your girlfriend, your colleague, or even just female friends, do they feel like you use the strengths God has given you to their advantage or to your own advantage?

When you have a disagreement with your wife, does she feel scared or does she feel safe? Peter says that one of the ways we demonstrate the distinctiveness of the gospel is the way that we use the strength God has given us to selflessly and sacrificially serve and love our wives.

[26 : 16] And then thirdly, Peter says this, be selfless not only by loving your wives with understanding, not only by loving your wives with your strength, be selfless by loving your wife as your equal.

Look what he says here, he says, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are joint heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

In a culture which elevated masculinity and looked down upon femininity, in a culture which undeniably favored men and not women, in a culture which honored and advantaged men over women, the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks radically and counter-culturally when it says both men and women, both husbands and wives, both sons and daughters, both singles and married, both rich and poor, both educated and uneducated, are completely and utterly equal and worthy of honor because both men and women, boys and girls, married and singles, rich and poor, are sinners without hope apart from Jesus.

Our hearts have turned away from God. We've become our own God and yet in Christ both are equally saved and equally loved by God and equally welcomed into his family. You see, in a Roman or Greek culture a woman wasn't really expected to even have her own faith.

Her religion was just assumed to be that of her husband's and if there was a God she would access that God by her husband's devotion. But here Peter reminds us that the ground is equal at the cross.

[27 : 49] He calls husbands to see that in the most important area of life who God is and how you can know Him and how you can be accepted by Him. In this most important area of life he calls husbands to recognize their wives as equals since they are joint heirs with you of the grace of life.

And then look what he says. He says, Do this so that your prayers may be heard. Brothers, it doesn't matter how much we serve, preach, pray, how much money we give to the church or the kingdom of God.

If we do not love the woman in our lives like Jesus selflessly and sacrificially it's meaningless. We know better than the 19 year old supermodel posting photos of herself looking happy and carefree or being miserable and alone inside.

And while the world may be fooled Jesus is not. And so because Jesus is enough husbands live distinctively in your manhood by leading the woman in your lives with servant heart sacrificial love. As we come to close let me land with three very quick practical applications. Firstly, for those of you who are married can I ask you to start today.

[29 : 01] Start today. This passage calls us to follow Jesus and to live lives of selfless and sacrificial love and surrender. Husbands, can you today choose to love your wife in this way?

Can you today choose to lay aside what you may think be your right knowing that Jesus is enough and selflessly and sacrificially serve your wife? Wife, can you surrender to Jesus and sacrificially serve your husband?

You may have been married for 30 years or three weeks. There may be much water under the bridge but start today. It's interesting to note that Peter tells neither husbands nor wives to get their spouses in order to help their spouses see the error in their ways.

He merely calls both husbands and wives to follow Jesus in selflessly laying aside their rights in order to serve and love the other. Maybe it needs to start with an apology asking your spouse to forgive you asking your spouse to gently and graciously help you whatever it takes start today. Secondly for those of you who are not yet married be careful who you date and be extra careful who you marry. No marriage partner is perfect every marriage consists of two sinners whose natural bent is to look after themselves and think about themselves.

[30 : 18] Coming to Jesus doesn't completely eradicate that overnight but Christ does give us a new heart and he does give us an example and the power to live differently. Dating and then marrying someone who's not a follower of Jesus opens the door to many of the difficulties that this passage addresses.

Living with a spouse who doesn't share your ethic or your understanding of marriage or being married to a spouse who doesn't see the importance of selfless and sacrificial love. Being married to a spouse who insists on their own right and their own privilege.

Friends be very careful. Pray about it. Ask God to lead you in Godly and ask God to give you a believing spouse that will help you to love Jesus more.

And finally for all the couples who have children coach your children that should God call them to get married one day coach them what it looks like to be a godly husband or a godly wife.

Teach them now that Christian marriage is patterned after the life of Jesus. Servanthood selflessness sacrificial love. Teach your children to use their strength in order to serve the others.

[31 : 24] Teach your daughters what a godly man looks like and how a godly man treats a woman so she'll recognize a good man. Teach your sons how to be selfless and understanding thoughtful and caring towards the women in their lives.

Teach your daughters to desire to be stunningly beautiful and attractive in character in godliness and confidence and in faith. when Elizabeth Elliot died in 2015 John Piper wrote this of her whether it was the spears of the Ecuadorian jungle or the standards of American glamour Elizabeth Elliot would not be frightened or intimidated she was captured by Christ she was not her own she was supremely mastered not by any ordinary man but by the king of the universe.

Let me close with the words of Elizabeth Elliot herself the missionary to Ecuador who watched her husband getting killed and chose to stay and love the people that killed him she says for the Christian woman and this is also true for Christian men but a Christian's true freedom lies on the other side of a very small gate the gate of humble obedience but that gate leads out into a largeness of life into a freedom undreamed of by those who consider themselves the liberators of our modern world the world looks for happiness through self assertion the Christian knows that true joy is found in self abandonment Watermark because of the beauty and the wonder of Jesus and because of his supremely glorious example because our hope is in him and because in Christ we have found all the treasures that our hearts seek and because no other being in all the world is so beautiful and so worthy of our lives let's trust him let's follow him let us be men and women who follow him living lives of distinction as men and women who have been mastered by Christ and let us know that true joy is found not in self assertion not in self fulfillment but in selfless sacrificial self abandon thanks so much for joining us

I hope you've had a good morning worshipping with your family we look forward to seeing you next Sunday at our family worship service together keep safe keep warm and we look forward to seeing you soon bye bye