

## 3.12.23 am

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Date: 03 December 2023

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning, a special welcome to those who are visiting with us. There's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service, if you're able to stay behind, it would be good to get the chance to enjoy fellowship together.

The evening service will be taken by myself, God willing, at six o'clock. A few notices, I'll just run through them quickly. The elders prayer meeting is on tomorrow night, that's the monthly prayer meeting at seven o'clock at Grose Bay.

Ladies Fellowship tomorrow night also, I ate Little Fishes on Tuesday morning and Road to Recovery on Tuesday evening. Prayer meeting on Wednesday, at half past seven here and on Zoom.

And the Gaelic Playgroup is on Thursday. When I said quick, I didn't mean that quick, am I? I can't quite read that quick. Next one was the Kids Clubs, I think, on Friday.

So we've got Jam and Connect and Rooted on Friday. So please note that and pray for that as that ministry continues. The services next Sunday will be taken by the Reverend Ian Morrison.

[ 1 : 08 ] In case Ian thinks he's just received a demotion, he can fear not. Peggy's brother, Chrissie's son Ian, is going to be home over the weekend.

And I'm taking my shift over in North Uist as part of the supply that the Presbytery has to cover. So that's next weekend. And the church cleaning rota.

Mary and I are to blame if the church is not clean. For the record, the record is available. What we're doing just now is kind of hit and reset.

Some people have it. I don't think they really want it. Some people may want it and they don't have it. So there's a sheet out there. The record is basically the magazine for the denomination.

So if you want it, there's a sheet out in the hall. Please put your name on the sheet. Those who put their name on the sheet will get the record. Those who don't, won't. And that will be nice and straightforward from here.

[ 2 : 05 ] Stuart and Cammy are on Deacon's duty. So anything that's practical, that's required that you see, maybe contact them in the first instance. And the Free Church Youth Camp's registration is now live.

And so please note that. And as the Deacons Court made help available last year, again, help will be made available this year. So those who may be thinking about booking and wondering whether they can afford it or not, that will hopefully give encouragement to folks to go.

And the Youth Conference also, you've got the note there. And I think these are all the notices. So now let's worship God and let's sing to his praise the words of Psalm 95, which will be on the screen in just a moment.

Psalm 95, verses 1 to verse 6. Down to the end of verse 6 to God's praise.

Oh come let us sing to the Lord.

[ 3 : 19 ] Come let us everyone. A joyful noise made to the rock of our salvation.

Let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice.

Let us sing sound to him with grace. And make a joyful noise.

For God and a good God and a good King. Above all God's He is.

Deaths of the earth are in His wrath. The strength of His name. The strength of His name.

[ 4 : 40 ] To Him the spacious He belongs. For He the strength of His name. For He the strength of His name.

The throne and also from His hands. Its form at first it take.

O come and let us worship him, let us bow down with all.

And all our deeds before the Lord, our maker lets us fall.

Let's close our eyes and let's speak to God in prayer.

[ 5 : 53 ] Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Let's pray.

Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

[ 7 : 31 ] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.

knowing that we will be received knowing that we will be heard knowing that we will be listened to and that you answer our prayers we thank you that as we come to you we come in response to the call of Jesus and the gospel that we come as those who have weary souls who are burdened who are in great need and we come to Jesus Christ the one who can give us rest for our souls the rock of our salvation our saviour and Lord we pray as we do each week that you would cleanse us from our sin that you would save us from that guilt that comes from the offences that stack up against us as we grieve you we confess Lord that we are sinners in our natures we are sinners in the things that we do the things that we leave undone and even as we think back over the past few days as we do week by week we would confess that we are sinners and we pray that you would cleanse us in the blood of Jesus we thank you for the cross we thank you that the saviour died to save us from our sins but we thank you also that the grave in which he was laid was opened the tomb was empty and that we have the promise that because Jesus lives we too shall live forever if we believe in him so give us faith we pray from the youngest to the oldest that we would be believing in Jesus that we would be forgiven of our sin that we would have the promise of a friend that sticks closer than a brother all the way through this world and the promise of eternal life a place prepared in heaven in the hereafter we thank you that all of this is of grace none of this is to do with what we have done ourselves or what we hope to do or who we are but it's all because of Jesus and who he is and the finished work of salvation that he has won on the cross and through the resurrection so Lord we pray that you would help us to look to Jesus to trust in Jesus and we pray that he would be lifted up in our worship this morning and that each one of us would be drawn to him we pray Lord for all that we've even read of on the screen this morning we see the different clubs all those people who will come in through the door of the church in the course of these days from mothers with young children to those who are going through different stages of life the children the young people on Fridays and those who gather on Wednesday to pray those who gather on Monday night to read your word and to study it those who come together on Tuesdays to seek encouragement and support with the battles that they have all of us Lord have battles but we think especially of those who battle with addictions and we ask Lord for them as we ask for each person that comes through the door of the church in this week we pray that each person would be directed to Jesus and even the texts on the wall that they may read we pray that they would be pressed into the heart of each person in the power of the Holy Spirit we pray for the youth camps that have been advertised we thank you for them and for the many young people who have come to faith through these camps we pray

Lord that as they continue that you would be seeking and saving those who are young and who are called to remember their creator and come to know Jesus as saviour in the days of their youth we pray for them we pray for those who are up in years as well those who may be listening this morning in their own homes those who are in Harris House those who are in Leverborough we pray for them and we ask Lord that although they may feel the weight of the years we pray that they would know that inward renewing from being close with Jesus we pray for those who are in hospital those who have come out of hospital those who are at home struggling with illness we ask Lord that your hand would be upon each one we pray especially for Nurse Margaret we thank you for the procedure that she had this week and we ask Lord that you would fight off any infection that there may be or anything that would slow down or complicate the recovery process we continue to pray for her we ask

Lord that you would increase her health and that before long we would see her back here with us we pray for John Mitchell as well in hospital this week now home and yet still struggling and we ask Lord that your hand would be upon him that your hand of healing would be upon him and that he and all those who are wrestling with illness and infirmity we know that you are with them on this day we pray Lord for this month we thank you for the month of December we thank you for this time of the year when we remember the coming of Jesus into the world and we ask Lord through all the

services and the events even through the lights that light up Tarbert night by night we pray that many people would be caused to think upon Jesus the light of the world and we pray that you would give us those who are believing in Jesus the courage and the opportunity to share that he is the saviour and he is the one who calls all to look to him and to believe in him so hear our prayers take away our sin empty us of self fill us with the holy spirit and lead us and guide us in worship we pray in Jesus name amen boys and girls would you like to come forward please how's everyone today good good looking forward to the whole month of

December with all these exciting things that are happening yeah yeah you don't sound overly enthusiastic you looking forward to it okay maybe it'll build as the month goes on something to show you today this do you know what that is it's a thing that's in your door a thing that's in your door so it's a key there yeah so you can see the key recognize the key and there's a thing a key fob it's not a key fob no so this is the key do you know what that bit is there the lock the lock so yeah you've got a key you can see there this is the bit that's usually hidden from us so you've got a key on that side and it'll be the same key that works on that side and why am I showing you this this side seems to work but the other side more jammed now do you know where this came from not from

[16:01] Michael's house so this came from Angus Alex house a few weeks ago and I went over to visit one day and he was out with a toolbox and he had all kinds of tools out and he was banging away at the door and he was trying to get this to unlock and to loosen off did you manage Angus Alex no he didn't because I've got it here it's the wrong answer no what did you have to do you had to replace the you had to put a new lock in because this lock was totally jammed now do you know why it was jammed do you know what was wrong with it a little bit of grit got stuck inside that's what he thinks a little bit of grit not the grit on the road but just a wee bit of you know dust and stew or a wee stone or something it got stuck inside the thing and because of that the whole lock jammed and Angus

Alex was on the other side of the door door was locked couldn't get in so you had to get a whole new lock not a whole new door did you get a whole new door not a whole new door but a whole new lock because of because of this problem can you see the grit do you want to take a look can you see the grit no can you anybody see it no it's just a tiny tiny wee bit of grit and it's way deep inside that lock and because of that one tiny wee bit of grit that we can't even see the door was locked it was jammed and it couldn't be opened now Henry I have a question how did you know there was a piece of grit if you couldn't see it ask you ask you your great uncle just a tiny bit of grit I think it is enough to jam the whole door and you know our hearts what is it that happens in our hearts that causes God to be unhappy Miriam sin in our hearts there's sin and some lives look as if they're very clean and they're very orderly on the outside and you might look at a life and you'd say I can't see anything really that's wrong there but is there anybody put your hand up this morning will I make it so it's not just you put your hand up this morning if there's somebody here who's got no sin anybody here there's nobody is there that's got no sin some lives there might be sins that you can see maybe people get really really angry and you can see that because they're blowing up every day or maybe in school people are always using bad words and you know that they're not the right things to say so you can hear these things every day there's other lives and they look very clean from the outside but every single one of us in this world has sin and sin locks the door to heaven doesn't it if we have sin in our hearts and it's not taken away is heaven's door going to open for us no that's the sad news so who is it that is able to come and fix this problem for us it's not Angus Alec it can only work on the doors who can fix our hearts who can take the grit and the sin out of our hearts Finley Jesus and Jesus came into this world and he came to take our sin away and he promises that if we pray to him he'll take the sin from our hearts and what will he do with our hearts will he just take the sin away and then leave us no he'll actually come in won't he because when we become Christians our sin is taken away and God comes into our hearts and when Jesus is in our hearts when we die where will we go Finley heaven heaven good job is that what you were going to say come heaven we're going to sing in just a minute and at the end of the hymn that we sing it's a song a hymn about

Jesus and about the cross it says there is a green hill far away without a city wall where the dear Lord was crucified who died to save us all and it says at the end of the hymn there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin you listening he only Jesus only could unlock the gate the door of heaven and let us in so let's be asking Jesus to take the sin the grit of sin out of our hearts and to unlock the door of heaven for us as we trust in him any because I was going to use it for a children's

talk let's pray Lord we thank you for this day and we thank you for all that you have done for us Lord Jesus we thank you that you've told us the truth about our hearts you've loved us enough not to hide that from us but you've shown us that even the small sins that other people maybe even we can't see are enough to lock the door of heaven but we thank you that you didn't leave us on the outside of that door you didn't lock us out forever we thank you Lord

[ 22 : 44 ] Jesus that you came into this world to seek and to save sinners like us we thank you Lord Jesus that you promise that when we believe in you and when we ask you for forgiveness you will take our hearts and you will take every sin out of our hearts and you will come into our hearts and live with us in this world each day and then take us to be with you in heaven we thank you that Jesus is the way he is the truth he is the life and he is the one who opens the door of heaven when we're believing in him so help the boys and girls and help all of us as well to be believing in Jesus and to have a place in heaven and we ask this in Jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to sing now and we'll sing 674 on mission praise the words on the screen there is a green hill far away without a city wall where the dear lord was crucified who died to save us all and■

It's a green hill far away without a city wall.

Where the dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.

He may not know, we cannot tell, what things He had to bear.

But He believed in what's for us, He hung and suffered there.

[ 24 : 45 ] He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good.

But we might know a loss to have, saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us pay.

O dearly, dearly, has He loved, and we must love Him too.

[ 25 : 47 ] And trust in His redeeming blood, and try His works to do.

O dearly, dearly, has He loved, and we must love Him too. Okay boys and girls, you head to Sunday school. I pray for them as they go. If we could turn in our Bibles please to 1 John chapter 5. And hopefully we'll come to the end of this book this morning.

We'll read the whole chapter 2 of this letter. 1 John chapter 5 and from verse 1. 1 John chapter 5 and from verse 1.

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[ 28 : 00 ] 1 John chapter 5 and from verse 1.

1 John chapter 5 and from verse 1.

1 John chapter 5 and from verse 1. anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. This is a sin, there is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin and there is sin that does not lead to death. We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin. The one who was born of God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We're going to sing again now to God's praise again from Psalm 95 verses 7 and 8 of the Psalm 2, two stanzas.

For he's our God, the people we of his own pasture are, and of his hand the sheep today, if he his voice were here, then harden not your hearts as in the provocation, as in the desert on the day of the temptation. These two verses of Psalm 95 we sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing.

Paula? Yeah. La?

[ 30 : 51 ] La? I love that you can only leave Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 33 : 44 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'll explore that.

Amen. Let's know. would be at work amongst us for your glory, for our salvation, and for the encouragement of all of your people. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

I'm going to share with you to start some instructions I read the other day. And these instructions are instructions on how to draw a particular object. Maybe as you're listening you can think about what object it is that we're being instructed on how to draw. So this is the quote and it goes like this. This geometric drawing can be made by drawing a four inch circle. Draw the horizontal and vertical diameter AB and CD. Mark the point of intersection E. Bisect EB and mark the point of intersection F. With F as a centre and CF as a radius, describe an arc cutting AE. Mark the point of intersection G. With GC as a radius and C as a centre, describe two arcs cutting the circumference at H and J. With H and J as

[ 37 : 20 ] C and K. With H and K. And here ends the instructions. Do you know what these instructions were for?

how to draw a star? How to draw a star? These are the instructions for how to draw a star. And we could have got any of the children from the Sunday school to come up here and tell us how to draw a star. And they would have given us instructions that were far simpler and far more effective.

As the years go on and as the letters are added to our names sometimes, we have the ability to make something that is really simple, extremely complicated.

And we often do that not only when it comes to geometric drawings, but when it comes to bigger issues, the most important issues of how can I become a Christian?

Ask the children. And they will give us a clear, concise answer on how we become Christians. And yet, if I was to get an adult up here and ask the same questions about how we can become Christians, how we can have eternal life, how we can know that we have a place in heaven, we would tend to make much worse a job of it.

[ 39 : 03 ] We can make simple things, clear things, very confusing. And that was a problem that isn't limited just to our day and our age, but it was a problem that John was facing back in AD 90 or 85, round about when this was written.

And so John writes consistently through this book, and he writes again in this chapter today, to address our confusion, to help us to know, to know how we can have eternal life.

So he asks four more questions, four more diagnostic questions for us to answer as we think through this question of whether or not we have eternal life.

And the first question that John asks today in this final chapter is, do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe in Jesus? Look at verses 1 to 5.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God, by loving God and carrying out his commands.

[ 40 : 20 ] This is love for God, to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Now for the person here who is wrestling with assurance, and there are always people in every place who are wrestling with that issue of assurance and seeking to know certainly whether they are saved.

For that person who is wrestling with assurance, we might get frustrated with this kind of a question from John. Because it just seems so simple.

We might be looking for more than this from John, because this question here, do you believe in Jesus? This is Sunday school stuff. You know, we've heard it from when we were tiny.

So there's probably somebody in here who's saying, surely it has to be more than just believing in Jesus.

[ 41 : 41 ] But that's the double emphasis in this section. John asks in verse 1, do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe that Jesus, verse 1, is the Christ, that he's the Messiah?

Do you believe that Jesus is the Savior, the one who was promised from Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, all the way through the prophets as the promised Messiah?

Do you believe that Jesus is that Messiah? He's that promised one. He's the Savior. And then in verse 5, John asks the question, do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

Do you believe that Jesus is the Savior, the Messiah, the promised one, verse 1? And do you believe, says John, that Jesus is the Son of God? Not just a good man, but the God man.

Not just another prophet in a line of prophets, but the Son of God. God the Son, who came to be the propitiation, the one who would lay down his life, the one who would take the punishment, the one who would go to the cross in our place to make an end of our sins.

[ 43 : 05 ] Do you believe in Jesus, asks John? Because that's how you become a Christian. That's how you receive eternal life.

It's about believing in Jesus. And we might be thinking in our minds just now, surely there's more than that.

Surely there's got to be more than that. Surely there's some kind of work that I have to do to become a Christian. Surely there's some effort that I have to put into this.

Surely there's some work that I have to do personally in order to get my place in heaven and have that assurance of eternal life. That's the question that goes through the minds of many people.

As we overcomplicate this. And we're doing it today. And people were doing it 2,000 years ago.

John chapter 6 and at verse 28, John records a conversation for us.

[ 44 : 12 ] John chapter 6, verse 28. You don't know to go there. I'll just read it out. And it says there, Then they, that's the crowds, asked Jesus, What must we do to do the work God requires?

Jesus answered, The work of God is this, To believe in the one he has sent.

So do you believe in Jesus? Asks John. If you want to have a place in heaven, if you want to know that you have eternal life, if you want to have your sins forgiven, you need to believe in Jesus.

That he's the Messiah. The Savior. That he's the Son of God. And of course, if we believe, there will be evidence in the way that we live.

We'll want to keep God's commands. That's verses 2 and 3. You can just note it. We'll look different to the world. Verse 4. But the key to unlocking the door to eternal life is believing in Jesus.

[ 45 : 29 ] So the message that the children grasp so readily is the message that goes out to all of us. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin.

He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. And he lets us in when we believe in him. So do you believe in Jesus?

Asks John. It's question number one. Question number two is do you believe the testimony of God? Do you believe the testimony of God?

Now, we love testimonies. If there's a testimony, you can guarantee that a big crowd of people will come. People who wouldn't normally come to church will come because we love a testimony. Stick a testimony up on YouTube.

It will go to 1.6, 1.7, 1.8 views. People are interested in hearing the story of how God works in a life. And John in this next section talks about the testimony of God.

[ 46 : 40 ] And when we hear a testimony, we tend to hear about the way that God works in a life. We hear about certain events that happen in the lives of particular people.

So Helen Pickett was here last Sunday night, was she? She shared a testimony. And she spoke about particular events that were significant in our life where God was working.

And John here, from verse 6 onwards, he speaks about particular events in the life of Jesus. He uses a kind of code and he speaks about the water and the blood, which is a bit cryptic.

And the commentators spill a lot of ink speculating as to what that means. So it's in verses 6 to 8. Let's just read the verses together.

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.

[ 47 : 47 ] For there are three that testify. The Spirit, the water, and the blood and the three are in agreement. So what does all this mean?

Well, if we go back in time to that context, in that place, at that time, in the courtroom, for a case to be heard, there needed to be the testimony of three witnesses.

And these three witnesses would have to be fully agreed or that testimony wouldn't stand. The case wouldn't proceed. And so John, picking up on that context, he calls for these three testimonies in this case that he's presenting to us of who Jesus is and how we can have eternal life.

There's the testimony of the water, first of all. And that marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. You could rewind back to Mark chapter 1.

And in Mark chapter 1, we see that John is preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. So John is out there and he's baptizing people and it's a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

[ 49 : 09 ] And lots of people are coming to John and they're being baptized and then Jesus comes and he wants this baptism, this baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

And John can recognize that Jesus has no sin. There's nothing to repent of, so why should he baptize? And yet Jesus insists that he must have that baptism.

So why did he need to have that baptism? Why does there need to be the testimony of the water? Well, it's because Jesus was standing in our place.

Jesus was standing in the place of the sinner. So at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, there's the testimony of the water. Jesus stands in the place of the sinner.

And then if we go to the end of Jesus' ministry, we have the testimony of the blood. And that takes us to the cross where the blood of Jesus was shed to take away the sin of the world.

[ 50 : 20 ] So there's the testimony of the water. Speaking of the baptism, Jesus stands in our place, the place of sinners who need to repent. Then there's the testimony of the blood where Jesus goes to the cross.

So his blood is shed to pay the price for our sin. And the testimony of the Holy Spirit is such that he's the one who opens our eyes. He's the one who wakes us up.

He's the one who illuminates our minds so we can understand these things. He's the one who shows us and convinces us that Jesus was standing in our place in that Jordan River all these years ago.

It's the testimony of the Holy Spirit to cause our eyes to fix on the cross where Jesus died for us.

And so John asks, do you believe the testimony of God? Do you believe the testimony of God?

[ 51 : 28 ] And then he makes this simple powerful argument. He says to us, you believe the testimony of lots of other people.

Why would you not believe the testimony of God? And that's the truth. Look at verses 9 through to 12.

John says, we accept man's testimony testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which he has given us about his son. Anyone who believes in the son of God has this testimony in his heart.

Anyone who does not believe God has made him, anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar because he has not believed in the testimony God has given about his son.

And this is the testimony God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son. He who has the son has life. He who does not have the son of God does not have life.

[ 52 : 39 ] It's a very simple argument, isn't it? I mean, we believe people every day. Andrew Brownie will come round to our house. He'll tell us our phone line is broken.

The internet's not working for that reason. And we listen and we believe. We can go to the surgery, we can go to the dentist, and we'll let people look at us, we'll let people speak to us, we listen and we believe.

We pick up a tin from the shelf in the shop, and it's a tin with a picture of chopped tomatoes on it. And we take it home, we buy it, we open it, and when we open the tin, we expect that that tin with the picture of the tomatoes on it will have tomatoes in it.

We believe the bridge, the scalpy bridge, when we drive over it, because the engineers report all these years ago said it was strong enough to take our car and ourselves over on it. We believe the testimony of people every day.

But do you believe the testimony of God? Asks John. Because if you're not believing the testimony of God, you're calling God a liar, says John.

[ 53 : 58 ] Verse 10. It's a serious thing though. To week by week sit in these chairs and call God a liar.

To dismiss the testimony of God. And John says, if you don't believe the testimony of God, you're calling God a liar, you'll have to answer for that.

Believe, verse 11, says John, and you'll have life. That's the good news. If you don't believe, verse 12, says John, you won't have life.

It's crystal clear. nothing here is complicated. We could take the Sunday school class through from the double doors there and they would understand every part of this.

Nothing here is complicated and this is so clear and it's so simple because it's so important. This is a matter of eternal life and death.

[ 55 : 12 ] I write these things to you, says John, verse 13, who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

So do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe in the testimony of God? And the third point that we come to hear, the third question that John asks is, do you pray?

Do you pray? Verse 14, this is the confidence we have in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him.

So John here is talking about approaching God, verse 14. John is speaking about coming to the God who is powerful, the God that we sang of, the God that we sang praise to, the almighty God, the creator God.

And John is speaking about making our approach to the God who is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. And John is encouraging us in these verses.

[ 56 : 38 ] He's asking us the questions, do you pray? Do you approach this God? Do you speak to him? Do you ask him to do things?

It's a really simple question. But truth be told, when we think through our Christian lives, and it would be very possible that somebody is in this season just now, there are times, there are seasons when prayer dries up and we stop speaking.

We stop asking for things, we start leaning on our own understanding. Our souls start to shrivel up. So John here is asking those who profess to believe a really simple, straightforward, challenging, direct question.

He says, do you pray? It's a reasonable question. Even when we think about our own congregation, it's a reasonable question.

You can have 130 people on a Sunday morning, you can have 25 on a Wednesday evening, who gather to pray. if that reflects the private life, I don't know.

[ 57 : 59 ] Only you know and God knows. John is asking the question, do you pray? Do you ask him to do things? Do you ask him to do things that will bring glory to his name? Do you ask him to do things that will bring blessing to his people?

And then having prayed, he says, do you believe that he will act, that he's heard your prayer? verse 15. Then John gives us that encouragement that we can pray with confidence, verse 14.

Because we pray in Jesus' name. We don't come to God in prayer and put our hand up and say, it's me. I want you to listen to me. I want you to look at my life.

I want you to accept me on the basis of who I am and what I am doing. Because if we ever come that way, we'll never get a hearing. That's not how we pray. We pray in Jesus' name.

And we pray on the basis of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. He's opened up the way for us into the place of prayer.

[ 59 : 09 ] And we can pray for ourselves and we must. We can take all our sins and griefs to the Lord in prayer. prayer. We can take all our struggles, even our wee worries.

We can take them to the Lord in prayer. And we know that he'll hear us. He won't swat us away. He'll hear us as a loving father will hear his child.

God. So we can pray for ourselves but we can also pray and we must also pray for other people. We can intercede.

You know there are people that we never see here on a Sunday morning or a Sunday evening or a Wednesday evening. Some who are in homes.

Some who are in their own homes. some who may be in hospital. Some who have been housebound for years. And they're intercessors.

[ 60 : 17 ] We don't see them. We don't see what they're doing. But they're praying for us. They're praying for ministry.

They may be more powerful servants of God than all of us who are charging around at high speed and with great visibility. It's a ministry that we're called to.

We can pray for other people. Verse 16, if anyone sees his brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life.

Refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I'm not saying he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin and there is a sin that does not lead to death.

So what's all this about? What is this about sin leading to death and sin not leading to death? Well, there's big debates about this.

[ 61 : 22 ] I haven't got the time to go into. You can catch me and ask me about it afterwards if you want. But I think the most likely thing is that John is thinking about these false teachers these Gnostics and he's identifying the sin that they were characterized by.

So what sin were the Gnostics characterized by? What sin was it that they were carrying out that led to death? Was it robbing banks?

was it sort of crypto robbery? Was it murders? Was it rapes? Was it high profile criminal acts? No, the sin that they were committing that led to death was a persistent denial of the truth about Jesus. It was the sin of week by week unbelief.

It was the sin of that determined hardening of the heart. That's the sin that leads to death. Jesus, remember, referred to the sin that was categorized as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

[ 62 : 45 ] What is that? What's this? It's the persistent rejection of the testimony of God about the truth of Jesus.

That's the sin that leads to death. That's the sin that took so many of these Gnostics into hell. And that's the sin that can take many Presbyterian church-going people into hell. You know, it's a dangerous thing.

Let me say it again. It's a dangerous thing to hear God speak to you each week. It's a dangerous thing to hear Jesus saying to you, week by week, month by month, year by year, come to me.

Trust me. and to say no. Not today. Not this week.

[ 63 : 54 ] Not this year, because there's a lot going on this year. That's the sin that leads the greatest number of people to death.

That quiet, determined, unbelief. That week by week determination to say no to Jesus.

And John is saying, don't be one of these people that sins in this way that leads to death. Call upon the name of the Lord.

Pray. And like the dying thief of it, you can have the promise of eternal life.

Those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Those who don't, won't. How can we escape if we neglect such great salvation?

[ 65 : 06 ] It says in Hebrews. The truth is we won't. God will be saved. But there is escape. There is a way to heaven in Jesus. We have to believe in him.

We have to trust him. We have to confess our sin. We have to ask him to be our saviour. God. Final question very briefly that John asks and John finishes this book with is are you getting to know Jesus better?

That takes us from 18 down to the end. John says we know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin. John actually says quite a lot of things in this section which he's already said.

And he's emphasising the truth of these things. He's not saying in verse 18 that if we're Christians we'll be sinless. What he's saying is that if we're Christians we won't make sin a habit.

For Christians we will struggle continually against sin. Still in verse 18 he says the one who is born of God that's Jesus keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him.

[ 66 : 19 ] So there's a great word of encouragement there for us in our struggle against sin. We have the promise that Jesus keeps us safe. He is the one who leads us not into temptation.

He is the one who delivers us from evil. And even if you think about that over the last few days think about your struggles Christian. Think about the temptations that get a grip on you as they get a grip on me.

How often have we experienced in the heat of temptation in that moment of decision something happens that takes us out of the way of harm.

Something happens that breaks that force of temptation and takes us back onto the right path and what we're seeing there is Jesus keeping us safe. Thank God for these moments when the phone rings or somebody walks in or our thoughts get taken off somewhere else.

We're taken from the path of sin to the path of righteousness. It's the work of Jesus. We know verse 19 that we are children of God and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

[ 67 : 32 ] We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true even in his Son Jesus Christ.

He is the true God and eternal life. And there's a lot in these verses to unpack. I'm not going to unpack it. John is bedding in much of what he's already said but I think the key phrase in this last section is found in verse 20.

And that is so that we may know him. We may know him. And that's the definition of what it means to be a Christian.

It's to know Jesus. It's to have a relationship with Jesus. John, the old 90 something year old apostle of love, he knew Jesus.

He could think back to the day when Jesus called him from mending his nets. That's where it all began. That day when he first followed. And since that day his life was full of adventure and rich experience, there were good days, there were bad days, there were days of peace, there were days of trouble, there were days when he was calm, there were days when he was terrified.

[ 69 : 16 ] But now 60 years after that first call of Jesus to follow him, he's still following. he knows Jesus.

And he knows Jesus better now than he did at first. As an old man, he's still walking with Jesus. And he asks us, are you still walking with Jesus?

Do you know Jesus? And are you getting to know Jesus better? Because that's what our assurance is.

You might be able to think back to a day where you put your hand up at some Billy Graham conference or some faith mission tent meeting and say, that's how I know. John says, that's not how you know.

Because I've met people who put their hand up 20 years ago. They're nowhere near Jesus today. They're still talking about 20 years ago. John says, that's not how you know.

[ 70 : 31 ] Some of us might be able to think back to a session meeting. We sat before elders and we would ask questions and we say, well, that's how I know. It's not how you know.

The way that we know that we have eternal life, the place where we get assurance is in a day-by-day relationship with Jesus where day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year, we get to know him better.

we should be able to look back on last year and the year before and the year before that and say, I know Jesus better today.

closer to him than I was back then. That's how we know. So John asks the question of you and of me, are you getting to know Jesus better?

There's one verse left. Some think that verse 21 is a kind of PS. You know how you can write a letter and you finished it and you go and make a cup of coffee and you think, oh, there's something I forgot.

[ 71 : 50 ] So you write PS, by the way, there's this one thing I should have put in. Some people think that John says, well, I should have said something about idols, I better put a line in there about idols, but I don't think that's true.

I mean, the reality is when you think about it, what is it that stops you and I from getting to know Jesus better? What is it that halts our progress? What is it that causes us to drift?

What is it that brings decay into our souls? It's usually idols. It's usually things, friendships, activities, work, even family dynamics.

It's usually good things actually that we allow to be elevated to the place of God thing. And they take the place of Jesus and they spoil our walk with him.

And they get in between us and Jesus. And they stop us from getting to know him better. And so John finishes this letter with verse 21.

[ 73 : 16 ] Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. and we can respond in just a moment as we finish with the hymn, Oh, for a closer walk with God that says, the dearest idol I have known, whatever the idol be, help me to tear it from my throne and worship only thee.

Are you getting to know Jesus better? Are you praying? Are you and I believing the testimony of God?

Do we believe in Jesus? We'll pray. Lord, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the simplicity of these verses.

We thank you for the directness of John the apostle of love. We thank you that he wrote so that we can know that we have eternal life. And we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would search us, that you would show us what you would have us see.

We pray that if there are idols that are delaying us or bringing decay into our souls, causing us to drift, we ask, Lord, that you would help us to have the courage and the obedience to smash them, that there would be nothing that gets in between us and our walk with Jesus.

[ 74 : 55 ] We pray that you would help us in our prayer life, that we would be day by day confessing our sin, spending time in your presence, praying for the people that you put around us.

And we pray that you would open our eyes, each one of us, that we would see and that we would believe in Jesus, and that we would know that we have eternal life.

We pray finally for anybody here today who has come to know over these weeks that they don't have eternal life. we pray for anybody who is week by week pushing back against the striving of the Holy Spirit and saying to Jesus, not today, not this week, maybe someday, but not now.

Lord, would you have mercy upon those in that place. We ask that there would be none who would harden our hearts again today and find that ultimately that they are locked out of heaven.

But today as we hear your voice, may each one of us listen, believe, and know the joy of your salvation. We ask it in Jesus' name.

[ 76 : 15 ] Amen. We'll sing to finish 494 in mission praise. Oh, for a closer walk with God. O Father, Father, a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame, a light to shine upon the road that leads me to the love.

When is the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord?

When is that soul refreshing view of Jesus and His word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet the memory still, but they have left an aching void the world can never fill.

Return, O holy dove, return, sweet messenger of rest.

[ 78 : 23 ] I hate the that made the Lord and drove thee from my rest.

The dearest side of I have known, what e'er the tide of me, help me to tune it from thy throne and worship only thee.

So shall my all be close with God, come and set thee my thing.

so pure their life shall mark the Lord that leads me to the land.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Now and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.