

21.5.23 am

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning. It's good to see all of you and it's good to see a few visitors with us today as well. So if you're able to stay behind, there's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service.

And we had a pudding and praise night last night, so I think there's probably some puddings left over as well. So it's well worth a stay behind at the end if you're able to. The evening service is at 6pm and we're continuing through the life of Abraham.

We're coming to the love story of Isaac and Rebecca tonight. And then, keep going Amman, I don't have a sheet in front of me. Is there a community lunch tomorrow? Yeah?

A week on Monday, I've just been corrected. Okay, the community lunch is not on tomorrow, it's on a week on Monday. So we can just note that. Ladies' fellowship as usual.

And Little Fish is as usual on Tuesday morning and Road to Recovery on Tuesday evening. Continue to pray for these ministries. Prayer meeting is on Wednesday, but before that, the family music session for parents and toddlers is on Wednesday at the time they are.

[1 : 1 7] The prayer meeting will be taken this week by Angus McKellar. I'm away tomorrow and I'm back on Thursday for the General Assembly. I've got to present a report on Tuesday, so I'll be away from Monday through Thursday, back Thursday.

The Friday clubs for young people, we don't have Jam and Connect anymore. That breaks until the new term, but we have routed still from 6.30 to 8.30, so please take note of that.

The service next Sunday, morning service will be taken by myself, God willing. And the evening service is a Gaelic service with Kenny Ferguson back with us.

Also, just to say a couple of things. Those who helped last night with the jam, not the jam, but there was jam there last night. The praise and the pudding.

Thank you for those who came. Thank you for those who baked and who made puddings and who gave money. There's still the opportunity to give to free church camps.

[2 : 1 6] There's quite a number of our, I didn't count last night, but there must have been over 10 of the young ones anyway, who are signed up to go to free church camps. And it's probably the highest cost item in the free church, but it's a good ministry.

And so if you're able to give to that, there's still a box out at the vestibule. And you can put a donation in this morning or this evening. The last thing is just a date for your diary.

The 16th to the 18th of June, the session have agreed to have an evangelistic weekend. So we'll have events over the weekend, Friday, Saturday, and evangelistic service on Sunday morning.

And then we'll meet on Sunday evening for communion. And over the course of that weekend, Neil Lachlan MacDonald from Ullipoo, Mary's brother, will be with us over that weekend.

So 16th to 18th of June, you can be praying for that. Also, I know there are some people who know the Lord and trust the Lord, but haven't yet professed their faith and who may want to come forward at that weekend or before that weekend.

[3 : 25] So please be encouraged to come and speak to me or one of the elders in advance of that. These, I think, are all the notices. So let's begin this time of worship and we'll sing to God's praise.

We sing from Psalm 51. Psalm 51, verses 7 to verse 13. Probably my favourite psalm in the Bible.

Sometimes we feel a weight of sin on us and we struggle to find the words to know how to seek forgiveness.

And in this psalm, David the psalmist, having sinned spectacularly, he comes back to the Lord and he prays for forgiveness.

So it's a great thing to have this psalm and to know that if we come in this morning with a weight of sin on us, if we're aware of things that are sticking to us from last week, we can seek forgiveness and be assured of it as we sing these words.

[4 : 31] And for those who perhaps have never asked for forgiveness and who know that they are not trusting the Lord, then this is a psalm that guides us to know how to seek forgiveness and how to enter into a relationship with the Lord.

So we'll stand to sing. We'll sing from verses 7 to verse 13. Do thou with hyssop sprinkle me? I shall be cleansed so ye wash thou me. And then I shall be whiter than the snow.

So let's stand to sing. Let's sing to God's praise. Amen. Be whiter than the snow.

Of gladness and of joyfulness. Make me to hear the voice That so these very books Which thou hast broken may rejoice All mine iniquities blot out Thy faith hide from my sin Create a clean heart, Lord, renew Arise, let me within

Cast me not from thy sight Nor take thy holy spirit away Restore me thy salvation Joy with thy spirit me sing Then will I teach thy ways unto Those that transgressors be And those that sinners are Shall then be turned unto thee

[7 : 40] Let's unite our hearts in prayer together. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day.

We thank you for the words of the psalm that we've been singing. We thank you for how precious these words are to us. We thank you that they are relevant to each one of us Because we know, because you have told us That we are all sinners. There is none righteous, not one.

We all are sinners in our natures. We sin in the things that we do and we say and we think. And so what the psalmist felt as he penned these words We recognize that we can enter into.

We thank you, Lord, that in your love And in your mercy you show to us the fact that we are sinners. We thank you for the guilt sometimes that Presses down in our hearts And robs us of joy.

[8 : 57] And we thank you that when we feel that guilt When we are aware of sin We are given direction as to where we are to go And we thank you that we are to come to you We thank you for the call of the gospel We thank you for the voice of Jesus That calls us to come And find forgiveness Of our sin And find rest for our souls And find purpose in this life And find an eternal home If we are trusting in him So we ask, Lord, that You would work in our hearts That we would see That we would hear That we would come To the Lord Jesus And we thank you that all who come Are received We thank you that as we hear the voices of the wee ones We're reminded of the words of Jesus

Who said Let the little children come to me Don't hold them back But let them come to me
So that they may find blessing And we thank you that you've taught us Through the little
children That we are to come With that childlike faith If we are to be saved If we are to
know The Lord Jesus as our saviour So enable us, we come To come this day We pray
Whether it's for the first time that we come Or whether we come For the first time today
We ask, Lord, that you would draw us We recognise that we need To come for grace The
saving grace That is offered to us in the Gospel And we come and we receive salvation
The first day That we make our approach But we recognise also That we need sustaining
grace That every day We are in need of fresh supplies Of grace

In order that we would be Able to follow you So help us to come, we pray Help us to stay
close to you Help us to remain In Jesus That we would be That we would be alive In our
hearts And that we would be fruitful That we wouldn't waste our lives But that we would
use our lives To walk with you And to serve you We ask, Lord, that you would Help us to
do that Even here In this place We know that there are Many people around us In these
communities That we are part of Who don't yet know Jesus Who don't understand the
cross And we ask that you would Give us the courage And the opportunity To reach out to
them Help us in our conversations Help us in the different clubs That are on the notice
sheets And we ask that in every day That you give us That we would look for And take
opportunities To speak to people about Jesus

Help us through our words And help us through our lives To show people that Jesus Is
real Enable us We pray To be those who Who show forth The kindness And the
gentleness And the humility And the love And the grace Of the Lord Help us to be salt And
to be light In this community And we pray, Lord For the nation We pray for The
denomination As we would seek To reach out We think of the Free Church camps And the
SU camps And every other Camp that Will go on Over the summer months We pray for
the young ones Who will attend That you would open Their hearts And that through these
Different events They would see Jesus They would see Their need of Jesus And that they
would come To the Lord Jesus We pray for the The General Assembly This coming week
And we ask, Lord That even in that

Although there is So much detail And so many things That sometimes In all honesty We
can find tiresome We pray that You would work In the details To bring glory To the name
of Jesus Help us Whatever we are doing Whatever we are doing it To do all things As
unto the Lord We pray for those Who are struggling Just now We pray for those Who are
sick Some who have been In hospital this week And who are recovering And we commit
them To you And ask that you Would increase Their strength Some, Lord Who have been
with us For many, many years In the fellowship But who don't have The strength now To
be with us physically And we ask, Lord That in their homes Even as they Listen at this
time That you would bless them And that you would Keep them close To yourself We pray
for those Who are battling In hospital with illness We bring them to you We think
especially

[13 : 59] Of Ruth Jordan's Brother John And as he struggles To recover after surgery We pray That
he would be Aware of your presence And the whole family Would be aware Of your
presence Through this difficult time Bless them, Lord We pray Give to them That grace
That's sufficient To take them through The days ahead And we pray on, Lord For those
who grieve Week by week We are conscious of them And we ask, Lord That you would
comfort them And that you would Give them to know Your presence That even when they
walk Through the dark valleys You are with them And Father, we pray For those who are
Who are healthy Those who are Wealthy and material Things Those who have no cares
In terms of The things of this world But who Are careless About their souls Who have no
thought Of eternity Who have no sense Of need Of Jesus

Who see no beauty In Christ And we ask, Lord That you would awaken Their souls We don't look down On any such person Because all of us Have been in that position And without the work Of your spirit We would have remained In that position So we ask, Lord That you would move In the power Of the Holy Spirit In this community Across the nation And across all nations That the name Of Jesus Would be lifted up And many Would be drawn to him So hear our prayers Take away our sin Lead us and guide us In worship We pray And bless us together As we seek to worship you And we ask this In Jesus' name And for his sake Amen Boys and girls Would you like To come forward Please Are you coming forward Michael

Or are you on Special duties today Special mission I think Michael's A trainee Computer technician Expert This morning So you can supervise Over there From our distance Have you had a good week Come round a bit Callum Henry So I can see you It's been a good week Is it What's been happening In school Just the usual Kind of stuff Or was there Any special events This week Lily Sports day Did you enjoy Sports day I was never that Good at sports I never made Never won any badges Or anything like that But it was nice Not to do maths For a couple hours Did you get any badges Anybody won any races Did you What did you get Shani Two first One third What were they in Good job Willie She came first

In all of our races Yeah Callum For those of you Didn't hear that We had a We had a celebration And we had a confession He won the sack race So congratulations on that And he pushed Shani To the ground So I'm sure You can sort that out In Sunday school Well I'm hoping It's not going to be online For those who are watching online But I'm hoping Yep we've got it on the screen So do you want to come round So you can Maybe sit a wee bit back So you can see the screen properly And this is our race From Friday And what we're looking for Is Lois and Ailey Good job

What race was that Pardon Two legged race The three legged race Yeah It was the three legged race I couldn't properly see girls But did you win a Prize for that one No Did you not come first Second or third No No What did you come Anyway Did you think they did well They did well Didn't they I didn't notice At the beginning But apparently There was a face plant At the beginning And that's what we didn't see So the The shot went off Or however they started the races And I think they did a face plant And then they recovered And then they just Steamrolled through Into sixth place Or whatever it was So What was it that made them Run well there What do you think What do you think Lewis Fraser sorry What do you think Not sure

[19:14] What do you think Made them run well Go on Henry Teamwork Teamwork Because you could see it Shawnee Their feet were moving At the same time Lois was doing The big windmill action As well I'm not sure What that was about But their feet Were moving At the same time So You took a while To get started And they fell At the beginning But then they helped Each other up And when they did run They ran well Because they were running Together They were They were moving Together In unity They were moving In harmony And That's the way That we're supposed To be As Christians As Christians We're bound Together Ailey and Lois How were you Bound together

What was it that Was binding you Together Because your legs Were stuck together How was that There was a There was a band Around their ankles That bound them Together Now if we're Christians What is it Or who is it That binds us Together Jesus And how strong Is Jesus Is he stronger Than a velcro band He's very Very Very Strong And so When Jesus Is the one Who binds us Together We're not just Bind together For 40 seconds In a race But how long Are we bound Together for If we're If we're Bound together By Jesus Shawnee Forever Forever For all of this World When we're Christians And then after This world Forever And it's Paul In his letters And he Compares the Christian life

To a race And the Christian life Isn't a race That we run Alone We run it Together And so we're To move Together We're to Have harmony We're to have Unity We're to love Each other And we're to Work together For Jesus Sake And when That's the Way we Are Then we Run well Now if Lois and Ailey said To each Other Well I Want to I want to Go in This Direction And Ailey Said I Want to Go in That Direction And if They were Having a Bit of a Debate at The start Like maybe They were Maybe that's Where they Fell What would Happen Do you think They would Move fast Together They'd be all Over the Place Tripping Over And the Way that We're to Run the Christian Life Is we're To run Together We're to Love each Other We're to Be in Harmony We're to Be in Unity That's what

The sermon Is about Today so You can Test the Older ones At lunch Peter Remember Peter the Disciple Peter Sometimes He had a Bit of a Temper Sometimes he Would fall Out with People But he Learned The importance Of harmony And unity And Peter Said to Christians In a Letter That he Wrote About 30 Years after Jesus died And rose And Peter Said Live in Harmony With one Another Be sympathetic Love as Brothers Be compassionate And be Humble And when we Run that way When we live That way When that's What marks Us as a Church Then we Follow Jesus Well So let's Ask the Lord Jesus To help Us in These Things Let's Pray Lord Jesus We thank You that You love Us And we Thank you That we Can be Bound Together With you And with

Each other Forever If we're Trusting in You We thank You that When we Are trusting In Jesus We have Friends We have Family Even That we Can be Close with And we Can care For and We can Be cared For by We thank You that Even when Those that We love Die When they're Trusting in Jesus We're still Connected to Them Through Jesus And we thank You for the Promise That we will Be with them Forever If we're Trusting in The Lord We pray that You would Help us In this World To be To be In harmony To be Those who Love each Other Who are Patient with Each other And who Are humble We know That heaven Will be The place Where that's All perfect But in This world We struggle To be Like that And so We ask That you Would help Us To be Like Jesus And to be Caring And to be Compassionate In the way

[24 : 16] That we are Towards each Other Help us To run The race Well And help Us to Keep on Going For Jesus Sake Amen Thank you boys And girls For listening We're going to Sing now And we're going to Sing a Children's hymn We haven't sung This one for a While But I think you Know it Don't you So we're going To stand Together And we're going To sing the Words of this Hymn Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together With chords That cannot Be broken Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together Bind us Together With love Let's stand And sing To God's Praise Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together With chords That cannot Be broken Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together Oh Bind us Together With love God

There's There's Only One God There's Only One King There's Only One Body That Is Why We Sing Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together With chords That cannot Be broken Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together Oh Bind us Together With love In the glory Of God Purchased By his Worship Son God Or With the Right To Be Gained For Jesus The victory Has

Won Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together With chords That cannot Be Broken Bind us Together Lord Bind us Together Together With love You Are The Family Of God You Are The Promise Divine You Are God's Chosen Desire You Are The Glorious New Wine Bind Us Together Lord Bind us Together With Corns That Cannot Be Broken Bind Us Together Lord Bind Us

Together Oh Bind Us Together With Love Okay boys and girls have you had to Sunday school And Remember to pray for them as they go and if you could turn now in your Bibles please to 1st Peter chapter 3 1st Peter chapter 3 and we are reading from verse 8 1st

Peter chapter 3 and verse 8 this is God's word 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 for whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech he must turn from evil and do good he must seek peace and pursue it for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil amen and may God bless that reading of his word to us we're going to sing again now from psalm 34 the the quote there from verse 10 through to verse 12 is from psalm 34 and we're going to sing part of that psalm psalm 34 verses 12 12 to 15 two stanzas and

[29 : 59] I'll just read the verses what man is he that life desires to see good would live long thy lips refrain from speaking guile and from ill words thy tongue depart from ill do good seek peace pursue it earnestly God's eyes are on the just his ears are open to their cry these two stanzas we sing we sing in gallic and we remain seated to sing in gallic to God's praise damn okay you should do you did you

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 15] Thank you.

We pray this week as we do each week for the help of the Holy Spirit that our minds would be illuminated, that our ears would be unstopped, that our eyes would be able to see clearly the truth that you would have us take hold of by faith.

We ask, Lord, that you would help us give us concentration, help us to focus on what you are saying and give us that sense of expectation that you will speak into our lives and into the fellowship here.

So help us, Lord, we pray.

We pray for the congregations around us as well, different denominations, wherever the gospel of Jesus is preached. We ask, Lord, that you would add your blessing to the word read and preached, that you would build your church, that you would bless your people.

[35 : 12] We pray for the congregations that we pray for the congregations that we're connected with. We pray that you would bless the congregations that we pray that you would bless the congregations that they've come from and give them refreshment in the time that they're in Harris.

And we pray, Lord, for those of us. And we pray, Lord, for those of our people who are away as well this weekend in different places, that you would bless them and make them a blessing where they are. Whatever the gospel is preached, Lord, we pray that you would be at work.

And we think of those who would desire to meet as we meet together today. We think of places where it's impossible to do so.

We think of countries like Iran and Afghanistan and parts of India, North Korea. We pray for these many different places where it's not possible to come together and to lift high the name of Jesus.

And yet we know that your people are gathered together, risking their lives in rooms, in secret places. And we ask that you would bless them, that you would build them up, that you would protect them.

[36 : 27] As Adam, the missionary, asked us to pray, we ask, Lord, that you would make them invisible to those who are hunting them down. And that you would make them very visible to those around them who need Jesus.

So be at work, Lord, we pray, here across the nation and across all nations. Speak to us through your word, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. I wonder, have you ever had someone walk into your home or into your place of work in order to carry out an inspection?

I mean, teachers, and there's a few teachers here, and they know all about this kind of thing every now and again. It's at the HMI, I think they're called, the inspectors, they come in. And they'll review everything.

They'll scrutinise the performance and the procedures within a school. And then there are those who are in cafes and restaurants. And they have to be alert to this as well.

Environmental health, I don't know, do they just land or do they announce their landing before they arrive? But we know that there are inspectors who will come in. They'll check out the premises.

[37 : 44] They'll go through the kitchens. They'll see how everything has been prepared. And even those living in houses that they rent, we know that too.

That, you know, at any time a property manager or an owner may want to come in and just see what the property is like. There are inspections, reviews that we are subject to in different parts of our lives.

And in a way, Peter, the disciple, with the authority of God, he's doing that kind of thing in this letter. The letter begins, as we said some weeks ago now, with encouragement.

Peter, he addresses Christians who are struggling in a hostile environment. And he reminds them of what it means to be saved. He encourages them by taking them back to the core of salvation.

He says to them, remember, you are those who are chosen by God the Father. You are those who have been cleansed by God the Son. And then Peter asks the question, how are you being changed by God the Holy Spirit?

[39 : 07] He asks that question of the individuals and the churches that are gathered in all these different places. How is God working in our lives?

That's the question. And Peter, he takes a wander through our lives. He asks us all kind of awkward questions.

He has, as we said a few weeks ago, it's as if Jesus has given him an access-all area, areas pass. And in 1 Peter chapter 2, he looks at what kind of citizens we are.

He looks at how we respond to civil authority and authority of any kind, whether it's in government or whether it's on a sports field. And he challenges us as to how we respond to authority.

And then Peter goes from there and he wanders into our workplaces. And he asks us what kind of employees we are and what kind of employers we might be. And how good we are as witnesses to Jesus in the way that we work and in the place that we work.

[40 : 18] And then Peter steps into our marriages. And he starts to ask questions about the kind of wives and husbands that we are.

And now, in the verses that we've got in front of us today, Peter, he opens up the door of the church we attend. He picks up the notice sheet.

Well, we don't have one. He looks at the notices that come up on the screen before the service and takes a few notes. See what's happening. And he looks around at the tea and the coffee time and he tries to get a grasp of who's speaking to who.

And whether there's cliques or whether there's a unity that binds everyone together in the way that we sang of. I can imagine he picks up the deacon's court book and he sees where we spend our money.

He looks through the minutes of the session meeting and tries to get a feel for the spiritual health and temperature of the church.

[41 : 28] And Peter, as a disciple of Jesus, he's looking in at the church of Jesus that we attend. Just to get a feel for what this church actually looks like.

And in verses 8 to 12, Peter makes some comments. And these comments were relevant to the believers who were meeting in Turkey.

Modern day Turkey as we know it now. And these different areas that he notes. Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia. And the comments that he makes, they were relevant to them, but they are equally relevant to us.

Not in Turkey, but in Tarbert. In Harris. Many, many years after they were first written. So I want to take a few minutes this morning and step through these verses as we, in a way, are being inspected as a congregation.

The first thing we can say is that this is a, it's a word of significance because it's a final word. And at verse 8, it begins with just that singular word, finally.

[42 : 47] Finally. And this is a word that Peter is using to tell us that he's summing up some of what he said already.

And he's trying to focus our minds on a series of lessons that we need to take on board. This is an in-conclusion word from Peter. And it's significant that it's a final word because our final words tend to have a bit of weight to them.

Whether it's at a deathbed with a loved one. Or whether it's as we prepare to say goodbye to a loved one who's leaving for a long while. Our final words are not trivial words.

We don't waste our words at a deathbed. We don't just talk about the weather. When somebody is preparing to leave home for a series of months.

When we are speaking out our final words, we measure them carefully. Because we want them to make an impact.

[43 : 54] And Peter prefaces this paragraph by saying, this is my final word to you as believers. So take note. If you've been drifting, if you've been dozing, Peter says, it's time to wake up.

I want you to get your notebooks out. And I want you to take this in. So it's a final word. That's the first thing to note. The second thing to note is this.

That this is an all-inclusive word. He says in verse 8, finally, all of you. He wants us all to hear this.

Because Peter knows that we are the kind of people who are very good at hearing a sermon. And saying, this is a great word for them. But I don't know what it's got to do with me.

And we are guilty of that, aren't we? We hear lots of things. And we think, if only this person or that person was here to listen to this. If I'm preparing, there can be times when I'm preparing a message.

[45 : 08] And as we come to a passage, my mind might go to a particular family or a person or a situation that I'm aware of. And I may think as I'm preparing, this is an encouraging, this is an instructive word for that situation.

But almost every time when Sunday comes, the people who were in my mind are not on the chairs. And I think it's the Lord's way of saying, you need to hear this more than they need to hear this.

So listen up, MacLeod. And Peter is saying, this is a word for all of you. Those in Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, and the Bays of Aris, and Cyloscalqui, and Tarbert, and Lusk and Tyre, and Shillabost, and everywhere.

This is a word for everyone. No one gets to switch off today and say, this isn't a word for me.

But I hope there are people who are listening and who find this interesting. Peter is saying, this is a word for all of you. This is an all-inclusive word. It's a final word, so it comes with impact.

[46 : 33] It's an all-inclusive word. It's for all of you. It's for everyone. And the third thing that we can note is that this is an internal memo. It's an internal message.

And I'm probably shown my age when I use terms like internal memos, because it takes me back to a workplace, I suppose, 20 years ago now. We used to get and we used to send internal memos in the place I worked.

And it would be a note from a line manager, maybe. Or it would be a note from a co-worker. And it was a message that needed to be recorded. It needed to be filed. And it needed to be acted on.

An internal memo was something that had to be more than a conversation. It was something that had to be done. And so somebody would write you a memo.

Stick it on your desk. It was an awful thing. Because you had to act on it. But internal memos were just for those who were inside the company.

[47 : 36] Inside the organization. I suppose the equivalent today would be internal emails. These emails that go out to all the employees of the council. Or all the employees in the school.

Or all the employees in the hospital. It's a message for everybody inside. But it's not to go outside. And Peter, as he writes this message, he's writing, first of all, to those who are inside the church.

He's writing to those who, as Paul would say, are in Christ. They're Christians. He's talking to people in the first instance here who have believed in Jesus.

And he's addressing the church fellowship. And it makes sense that Peter should begin there. Because if we, as a church, are going to be effective in the world.

Then, first of all, things must be right inside the church. If we're going to have an impact out there. Then things must first be right in here.

[48 : 51] Now, go back to the time of writing. And the early church, just a few years after Jesus died and rose. The early church had massive impact.

And we can read about that in the book of Acts. And we can read about that in church history. The church in the early days had huge impact in the world.

And it wasn't because of programs and rallies and special events. The reason the church had impact was because the world looked in and said, see how they love each other.

They were like a society, a group of people that were from another world. Because the unity and the love that was shared amongst them.

It was from another world. Tertullian, the historian, that was the famous quote. He looked down in the church. And he said, see how they love each other.

[49 : 59] See how unified they are. So that's how things were at first. But now, 30 years after the resurrection, we can assume from the way that Peter is writing that there wasn't perfect unity in these fellowships.

There wasn't always uninterrupted harmony. And so Peter writes to address that. And the first thing he says in this internal memo is, verse 8, live in harmony with one another.

The literal translation is, have the same way of thinking. Have minds that are transformed. Minds. Have minds that are full of the Bible. And not your own ideas and preferences and prejudices and positions. And so Peter, as the Holy Spirit leads them, he says, live in harmony.

Have one mind. As you gather together. And we might listen to this and say, you know, how depressing. That only 30 years after the resurrection, Peter's having to write a note telling these quarreling believers to live in harmony.

[51 : 27] I mean, we could respond that way and say, you know, how depressing to read this. Actually, the way I read this is, how encouraging. How encouraging to read that the believers, 30 years after the resurrection, struggled with harmony and unity back then. and had to receive a word from God. Because we struggle with harmony and unity today. And so we also need this, this word from, from God. So I don't think, I read this and say, how depressing. I read this and I say, how encouraging, that the same issues back then we can learn from today.

And when we think about it, of course we're going to struggle with harmony. And of course we're going to struggle at times with unity because, because we're family. For in Christ, we're family.

And if you look into any family unit, brothers and sisters can, can love each other deeply and just annoy each other continuously. There's illustrations flashing through my mind from our own family unit, which I'll leave to one side just now.

[52 : 48] But siblings can love each other deeply and just really annoy each other. And parents often will have to say, well, you're not just living in harmony.

And that's what Jesus, our elder brother, says to these congregations back there and to this congregation here. This is what God the Father was saying and is still saying.

He looks in at his children and he says, live in harmony with one another. All of you. See, the thing is, and we must never lose sight of this, if we are Christians, we are family.

We are united in Christ eternally if we believe in him. And that's a biblical truth that is absolutely unmistakable, undoable.

Sinclair Ferguson says, blood is thicker than water when it's Jesus' blood that covers our sins and brings us forgiveness and leads us to embrace all those whom the Lord Jesus has embraced.

[54 : 09] I'm going to read that again. Blood is thicker than water when it's Jesus' blood that covers our sins and brings us forgiveness and leads us to embrace all those whom the Lord Jesus Christ has embraced.

to every Christian. To every Christian. The Lord Jesus has embraced them. And that's a helpful thing for us to remember.

There may be people that we don't find easy to love. In every family, there are clashes. And there can be seasons in our lives when we may clash with people and for a season we don't find them easy to love.

But if they are Christians, Jesus has embraced them. And if Jesus has embraced them, we don't get to push them away.

We are called to live in harmony with them. So how do we do that? Well, the semicolon in verse 8a tells us that 8a is connected to 8b.

[55 : 24] So we live in harmony with one another. How do we do that? Well, we have to be sympathetic. That's the next thing that Peter says. And what does that mean? Well, that means that we have to feel for each other.

We share the same feelings. So when one person rejoices, we rejoice with them. And when one part of the body suffers, we suffer with them.

We get alongside them. We feel for each other. We share life with each other. And to be sympathetic, as Peter instructs us to hear, it's not so much about the words that we say to each other.

It's just about being with each other through all the different seasons and events of life. Remember Job's comforters.

They gave comfort when they were silent and when they were present. But the more they spoke, the less comfort they gave. So our being sympathetic isn't our words so much.

[56 : 37] It's just actually being with each other. Especially when somebody's struggling. We live in harmony with one another. We are to be sympathetic.

The next thing Peter says in this memo is, he says, love as brothers. Love as brothers. He doesn't say love as second cousins and uncles and distant relatives and acquaintances.

He says love as brothers. Peter is talking about close family here. And so our love for each other should be more than just a passing hello on a Sunday morning.

Brotherly love causes us to open up our homes and our hearts and our lives to each other. Because that's what they did when the world was looking in and saying, see how they love each other.

Live in harmony. Be sympathetic. Love as brothers. The next thing Peter says is be compassionate. And the word in the Greek is a word, it's a strange word, *spagnos*.

[57 : 59] It sounds Russian. But it's a word that sounds kind of what it means. It's a word that refers to the bowels, to the guts. And Peter is saying, be compassionate, be tender hearted.

There should be a compassion that wells up from deep, deep inside us. As we care for each other. You know, sometimes we say to somebody who's courageous, you know, he's got guts.

And that's kind of what Peter is saying here. He's saying, in the way that you love each other, in the way that you care for each other, in the way that you pursue harmony, you have to have guts.

This is going to require courage. This is going to require hard work and determination. And the last thing Peter says in this internal memo is, be humble.

And if we are Christians, how can we, how can we be anything but humble? Because if we are Christians, we are sinners who are saved by grace.

[59 : 22] We're Christians, we've, we've recognized that there's, there's nothing in our hearts, nothing in our lives that we can be proud of. Because everything, even the best things we do, it's stained with all kinds of sin and mixed motives.

And so, when we see ourselves in the way that God sees us, we know that we can't be proud, we have to be humble. Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9 says, For it's by grace you've been saved through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

Paul can see, just as Peter can see, that if there is pride, if there is boasting within a fellowship, everything goes to pot. And so Peter says, be humble.

And as we keep our eyes on the cross, as we see what it took for our sin to be dealt with, as we see what Jesus did for us at Calvary, then we are humbled.

And that shared humility brings unity and it brings harmony and it brings sympathy. and it brings love because we're all gathered around the cross where our sins have been dealt with, where our pride is crushed and where the grace and the love and the compassion of Jesus flows through his blood into our lives.

[61 : 16] And so Peter, as he carries out his inspection, he says, these are the things I'm looking for in North Harris Free Church. These are the things that I'm checking on my list to see where we are with it.

I'm looking for brotherly love, looking for that courageous, gutsy compassion.

I'm looking for humility, no one swaggering around the place, lording over somebody else. I'm looking for sympathy, shared lives, and I'm looking for harmony, that one-mindedness as we all gather around the one book and focus on the one Lord.

Lord. This is what we're called to. And these are the kind of people that we should be.

And the summary of this is we should be like Jesus. Because if we want to see a perfect, lived-out example of all these things, we see it in Christ.

[62 : 50] He was the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And he humbled himself. He came down from heaven, down to this world, down to the cross.

He became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross for us. This is pure humility.

We want to see perfect compassion. We see it in Jesus as he poured out his life day after day, caring for the needs of crowds who wouldn't even pause to say thank you.

He constantly reached out in compassion to those who were like sheep without a shepherd. And we see the sympathy of Jesus. He rejoices with those who rejoice as he's there at the wedding feast.

He weeps with those who weep as he's standing at the graveside. as we think about the love of Jesus we see it most spectacularly on the cross but even as Peter reflects on this word Peter's mind would be going to the love of Jesus that love as the hymn goes that would not let him go even though Peter denied and deserted Jesus Jesus pursued him with that love that pulled him back.

[64 : 42] So what will make the church here more effective? effective not more events as much as events are important and they're encouraging it's not about events it's not about filling up our diaries it's not about endless activities the thing that will make the church more effective here and in Turkey and in every other place is more holiness in my life and yours.

more Christ likeness more harmony and more sympathy and more compassion and more love and a deeper humility.

See as the world sees that they see Jesus in us and when the world sees Jesus there's impact.

So it's an internal memo and it leads then to an external mission. I'm not going to go there today time's gone but Peter he shows us what the foundation must be within the church.

If we're going to go out there as we must and as we're called to before we go out there every day before we go out there we must look in here in our own hearts and in our own fellowship and ask God to work in a way that will make us aligned with the character traits that Peter lists in this inspection and that Peter saw in Christ.

[66 : 54] So let's pray and ask for God's help in this. Heavenly Father we thank you for your word and we confess that your word is searching and your word is convicting because as we look at our own hearts we see how far we fall and fail we see how short we come as we consider these things that Peter lists in this inspection and we confess Lord that we are sinners we confess that we fall short we ask that you would forgive us for the things that we are guilty of as we come under the scrutiny of your word and we pray that you would help us that by the power of your spirit you would make us those who live in harmony help us to be one minded to be governed in our thoughts by your word to have the one desire in our lives not to have our own preferences met but to see

Jesus glorified and help us we pray in a world that is increasingly individualistic to seek to live in harmony with one another to be sympathetic to actually take the time and sometimes the inconvenience of sharing our lives with those that we recognise to be brothers and sisters in Christ help us to love each other we pray help us to be those who are compassionate who work hard at caring for each other and help us always to be humble to recognise that we cannot boast in ourselves but we are those who have been shown grace we are those who have received grace and we are those who are called to share that grace with each other so help us Lord we pray as we come to you and we pray all these things in Jesus name and for

Jesus sake Amen we're going to sing the final hymn the words are on the screen and maybe Rachel if you're okay with that we can hear the introduction played and then once it's been played we'll stand and we'll sing to God's praise so if all grace is Jesus my Redeemer there is No more for heaven now to give.

He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom. My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus. For my life is only bound to His.

[70 : 36] Oh, how strange and divine I can say. God is mine, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

The night is dark, but I am not forsaken. For by my side the Savior He will stay.

I labor on in weakness and rejoicing. For in my need His power is to stay.

To this I hold, my shepherd will defend me. Through the deep, the slimy He will be.

Oh, the night has been won, and I shall overcome. God is not mine, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

[71 : 42] No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven. The future's sure, the price it has been paid.

For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon. And He was raised to overthrow the grave.

To this I hold, my sin has been defeated. Jesus now and heaven is my peace.

Oh, the chains are released. I can say I am free, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

With every breath I long to follow Jesus. For He has said that He will bring me home.

[72 : 47] And day by day I know He will renew me. Until I stand with joy before the throne.

To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus. All the glory evermore to Him.

When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat. Yet not I, but through Christ in me.

Just as we finish, I'm just going to say to anybody who is outside of Christ, won't you come to Him?

We're talking here about what a church looks like. And a church that is beautiful is full of Jesus. And so I don't want our focus as we go out the door to be on an organization or on struggling people.

[74 : 01] Because we're all struggling with this. Look to Jesus. He is the one who loves us with a love like no other love.

He is the one who in compassion and sympathy came from heaven to this world to live, to die for us. He rose from the dead.

And He calls us to believe in Him. And if we believe in Him, we have Christ in us. We have nothing to fear. And we have everything to sing about.

So anybody who's on the outside of this today, there's no need to be. Trust in Jesus. Ask Him to come into your life and to give you that grace.

So let's pray as we close. Father, we thank you for your love for us. We thank you for your Son. And we thank you for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us, we pray, to be those who receive it.

[75 : 07] And who share it. And who rejoice in it. In our lives. And now, may that grace of the Lord Jesus. And the love of God the Father. And the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit.

Be with us all. Now and forevermore. Amen.