

AM 1 John 1:1-10 The Word of Life

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[0 : 0 0] And I was led to this because I think it's to get, and if you have time today, there's only five chapters, if you have time today, go home and read what we don't cover.

And then if you come back this evening, we can open the Word of God again at chapter 5, verse 13. So here we are at 1 John chapter 1, verse 1, entitled in the Bible, The Word Became Flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. Oh, sorry, that's me for later. That's the gospel. Very similar beginning to 1 John, okay? Bear with me.

There we go. See how similar it is to the beginning of John's gospel. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the Word of life.

The life was made manifest, and we have seen it and testified to it, and proclaimed to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

[1 : 2 5] That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that God is light. So that you too may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

[3 : 1 0] We thank you for your word inspired by your spirit, and I pray that the same spirit would wing your word to our hearts and minds today, to the glory of your name. Amen.

In the NIV, this passage is entitled The Word of Life. In the RSV, it's entitled The Word of Life also.

So that's what we're thinking about today, the word of life. But I'd like to give a bit of a context to the letter that John's written to us before we get into the detail.

I think context is very important. Why was John writing this letter to believers in the first century? And what does this letter say to us here in Scotland today?

Well, scholars believe that the letter was written to first century Christians to challenge a group of teachers who were advocating an understanding of Christianity that was different from the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was handed down to us by the apostles.

- [4 : 23] I think there's a challenge today that we, like believers of old, are to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.
- That's Jude 1, verse 4. I don't know if any of you knew Jeffrey Grogan. Do any of you know Jeffrey Grogan? Good and Godly Man.
- And I found myself when I was at college, there was discussion about some of the things which we need to be aware of and contend against in relation to the gospel.
- We'll be touching on one of those this morning. This evening, rather. It's called Open Theism. But the book that Jeffrey Grogan wrote, the last book he wrote before he died, was The Faith Once Entrusted to the Saints.
- And I do recommend it to you because it's very helpful to know what's happening today in relation to the theology that some are purporting to be truth.
- [5 : 33] So these teachers are thought to have been foreigners of Gnosticism, believing that there's a sharp dualism between spirit and matter.
- They regarded the spiritual as divine and good, while the material was created and evil. Therefore, these false teachers did not believe the following.
- They did not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They denied that Jesus came in the flesh. Therefore, they denied that his death had any significance.
- They appear to have claimed that they were sinless. Therefore, it follows that they felt no need for forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ. They did not accept the validity of any of the commands given by Jesus.
- And it appears they had at one time been part of this Christian community, but it split away and they were leading true believers away with them.
- [6 : 37] And that's still happening today. Hence, we see in this letter, John seeks to challenge these false teachings by affirming the true Lord and the true gospel.
- So that's context. How many of you remember a television program that actually ran from 1955 to 2007 in which people were presented with a big red book at the end of it?
- Does anybody remember that? Yeah, Eamon Andrews. Very good. And what was the show called? This is your life. This is your life. That's right. Well-known people were taken on a journey through their own lives and various people were invited to share their memories about this person at different stages of their life journey.
- And all the information was gathered in a large red book which was presented to the celebrity at the end of the program. Just keep that in the back of your minds.
- In this morning's Bible passage, the Apostle John tells us about someone who he personally encountered. He seeks to convey the mysterious and mystical nature of this encounter with the one he describes as the word of life.
- [8 : 05] And the word of life is Jesus. So that got me thinking, well, what is life? The Bible teaches that life is that vital force that comes from God.
- Genesis 1 tells us that in the beginning God made human beings, man and woman. He breathed into them and they became living beings.
- All living creatures are animated by the life of God. 1 Timothy 6.13 who gives life to everything. But as glorious and as precious as human life is, John, in this morning's Bible passage, is describing something even more glorious.
- He's not describing a derivative of life from God. Not a created being, but life itself.
- life himself. The word of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the essence of life, the source of life, which is God himself.

[9 : 16] And God has revealed himself to us in three special ways and we thought about that already this morning. He's revealed himself to us through the creation. We love to travel around Scotland and climb the mountains of Scotland and this is a stunningly beautiful country.

And it's just a real privilege to live here having come from south of the border, which I'm sure you'll forgive me. But it is. And there's such beauty and complexity in creation.

And Paul writes in at the beginning of Romans, how can people not see that this has been created? This didn't happen by chance. My great, great, great, great, great, great, whatever grandfather did not at one time crawl out of a chemical soup and evolve into who I am today.

I find that it takes more faith to believe that than to believe that God created us and wonder at that. And then he reveals himself of course through his word and thank God we have we have God's word.

We have it freely available. We can meet together. We can share God's word with one another. And hopefully with the Spirit's help folks come to a saving knowledge themselves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 32] And then of course we have the Son, the Lord Jesus, who is the complete revelation of God. Jesus said of himself, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

John 14 verse 9. So God appeared and was manifest and dwelt among us. Life appeared and with that life came light.

I love verse 5 of this morning's passage. God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. And John proclaims in the beginning of his gospel which is why I had it turned to the beginning of John's gospel.

Just to read these few verses. John's gospel verse 1. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was with God in the beginning. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

[11 : 44] The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. And then he goes on to speak about John the Baptist. And what did John the Baptist say of the Lord Jesus Christ when he saw him?

He said, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So Jesus came to impart life and light to people like ourselves.

who were, as the hymn writer puts it, bound in sin and nature's night. This word of life that took on flesh appeared to John and to the other disciples.

The word was looked at, studied, observed, actually touched. John touched and experienced life himself. And in these opening verses of 1 John we find four clauses which describe what John and others experienced concerning the word of life and we've already touched on them with the children.

Which was heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched. Verses 1, 2, 3. So in these verses we see an increase in intimacy with the Son of God who is not just spirit as the false teachers claimed.

[13 : 05] See where the link is there to what these Gnostics were teaching? Not just spirit as these teachers were claiming but flesh and blood. God in human form.

And the experience moves from being something that John heard about to something he himself has seen and of which he has become an eyewitness. How could he not want to tell others about this?

John describes himself in the gospel that bears his name as the disciple that Jesus loved. In 1 John 13, 23 we read that the disciple Jesus loves were reclining next to him at the table.

So in those days it would be a low table and in some cultures today that still happens and people would lie around the table. John was there throughout Jesus' earthly ministry.

He was called to be a disciple with his brother James. He heard Jesus' teaching. He witnessed the many miracles, the healings, the exorcisms. He was there at the transfiguration and he was the only disciple who was there at the crucifixion.

[14 : 24] I asked myself why was it that John was able to be there where the others weren't? And an answer that I found was that John was quite young at the time pulling no beard and therefore not seen as a threat by the Roman authorities and therefore was able to gather with the women at the foot of the cross.

And then we read the wonderful words of Jesus in 1 John 19. Sorry, in John's Gospel 19 verses 26 and 27.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son.

Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. our personal study this morning before coming to church was honour your father and mother.

And to the very end the Lord Jesus Christ honoured his mother, even from the cross, made provision to make sure that his mother was cared for.

[15 : 48] I just think those are just wonderful. It's an indication of the character of our Lord. On that first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons, went to the tomb where Jesus' dead body was slayed and noticed that the stone guarding the tomb had been removed from the entrance.

John 20 verse 1 following. So what did she do? She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, that is John. And on hearing this news, John and Peter ran to the tomb to see what had happened.

John, being younger, outran the older man, Peter, and arrived first. I think I've shared before when I've been here that I did some training in 2015-16 with the health service here, Dunfry St.

Galloway Health Service, for something called chaplaincy listening. And the way that works, the way that works, did work until COVID, was that doctors, people would go to see the doctor and the doctor felt that that person would benefit from telling their story rather than being given medication for, for, yeah, sort of, you know, when depression, so that the, what tends to happen is that doctors are so busy that people come in, they're feeling down, there are circumstances behind it, the fact that they're feeling down, and so they're given antidepressants, and this was a way of allowing, doctors have 10 minutes, they see you for 10 minutes, that's all you've got, that's your max, and it was felt that if people had time to tell their story to someone who listened to them, then they'd perhaps begin to work through their own problems themselves, it wasn't, it's not counselling, it was just simply listening to someone, someone listening to them, and so they felt valued, and they could begin to work through their own, and what we were taught when we were trained for this is there are three kinds of seeing, and it was interesting, it was interesting to me anyway, that these three kinds of seeing are here in this passage, because Mary

Magdalene noticed that the stone had been moved away, Peter wondered what had happened when he arrived at the tomb, and so only the grave closed, but John realised, and believed, John realised that Jesus had risen from the dead, and that's the way we encounter other people, first of all we notice them, something about them, and begin to wonder what the story is, and then suddenly we might realise something deeper about that person, I just think that progression is really interesting, John saw and believed, and God in his infinite love and grace sent his son, his one and only son, into the world to save sinners like ourselves, and after the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, they remembered Jesus' words, it must have been so brilliant to get together in a group and begin to remember the things that

[19 : 12] Jesus said and did, he said, I've come that they may have life and have it to the full, John 10, he said, I've come to seek and save the lost, who were dead in their sin, and destined for a godless eternity, if you want to know what love is, then look at Jesus, in sending Jesus to die for us, the Father sent the most glorious gift imaginable, God gave the very best gift that heaven could afford, and that we could receive, can receive, God is holy and righteous and just, and sin separates us from God, so in volunteering to take our place and bear God's wrath for us, Jesus made the most extraordinary sacrifice imaginable, Jesus, look at him, look at Jesus, look at Jesus, broken and battered, hanging on a cross in your place instead, and condemned by God so that you could be free, punished so that you could be ransomed and healed and restored and forgiven, the word of life brought light and life, he exposed the darkness of people's minds and souls, and still by

God's grace does the same today, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sinfulness and their need of a saviour. If you're feeling burdened and weighed down by your sin this morning, then it's possibly the Holy Spirit at work, but if you're feeling condemned by your sin, then you've really not heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit convicts, the devil condemns, the devil simply wants to hold you under his control.

Please know that God is far more powerful than the devil, and the blood of Jesus can cleanse any sinner from their sin.

Freedom from sin can only be found through faith in Jesus. Jesus challenged the religious leaders of his day. He had no time for cold, graceless legalism.

So what we're talking about here is not religion. People have said to me, I'm the eldest of seven and some family members, I've got religion. It'll wear off.

[21 : 52] Well, it was 1986 when I came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and it hasn't worn off. I'm even more passionate about the message now than I was at the beginning. It's not worn off.

It's not about religion. It's about a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. But people saw, people were challenged by this light, the light of God shining in the word of life.

and hard hearted people plotted to put the light out because they were not willing to respond to the love and grace of God that was demonstrated in Jesus.

They were not willing to accept the truth that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ. They failed to heed the warning that without a saviour, they were doomed to everlasting damnation.

This is a wonderful quote. The indestructible and unimaginable had happened. Life itself had appeared in the world and men plotted to crucify him because their deeds were evil.

[23 : 07] They had the word of life arrested on Trump took charges, they had him scourged and mocked, they placed a crown of thorns on his head, they beat and whipped him so that he was disfigured and then they nailed him to a cross and hurled insults at him.

And how did the word of life respond? How did Jesus respond? He responded by saying, Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing.

What grace, what love, what mercy. If these people had turned and asked for forgiveness, they would have been forgiven.

The thief on the cross is a great example. against this barrage of evil, the sinless son of God offered love and reconciliation to those who persecuted him.

Our sins were placed on him. The father turned his face away in judgment against his perfect son. The sinless son, who always pleased his father by doing his will, was nailed to a cross and suffered the punishment that we deserve, that I deserve.

[24 : 17] he drank the cup of God's wrath on our behalf, on my behalf, because we couldn't drink it and live. Jesus' death propitiates the father.

It satisfies the father's justice and turns away his wrath. And Jesus takes our place so that we might know forgiveness and freedom from the penalty and guilt of sin, past, present, and future.

And John's desire in writing his gospel and this letter is to proclaim what he has seen and heard concerning the word of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we also might have fellowship with God through him.

Verse 4. So how can we enter this spiritual fellowship with God and with one another? We can do so by placing our faith and trust in the finished sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Something else that Jesus said from the cross. It is finished. All that is necessary to save any soul has been achieved on the cross of Christ.

[25 : 34] Paula and I last year worked through a book written by Oswald Chambers which you may be familiar with. It's called My Utmost for his highest. Is anyone familiar with that? It's a lovely devotional and well worth spending a year working your way through it.

And concerning these words of Jesus, it is finished, Oswald Chambers wrote, the greatest note of triumph ever sounded in the ears of a startled universe was that sound on the cross of Christ.

It is finished. finished. It's the final word in the redemption of humankind. And all that's required for my salvation and yours was accomplished on the cross by the word of life, by the source of life who willingly gave his life to redeem sinners like ourselves.

Jesus in John's gospel, we have the lovely passage in chapter 3 where Jesus speaks about being born again. It's being born again of the Holy Spirit of God.

I remember my own conversion, I went to a meeting in Moffat and a man called Sandy Thompson who worked with Messianic Jews in Israel and he spoke about the love of God in a way that I've never heard anyone speak of the love of God before.

[27 : 04] And my heart was captivated. I knew that I was a sinner. I didn't deserve anything from God and yet the Lord Jesus Christ died there for me.

So in this Bible passage this morning we read there in 1 John in verse 4 and we have written these things so that our joy may be complete.

what does that mean? So that also you may have fellowship with us making our joy complete. John's desire is that people would respond to the word of life and would come into fellowship with other believers.

And Bruce Mill makes a really interesting point in a recent book that when we come into fellowship with Jesus we're not linked to a single man. And I read that and I thought surely surely but he goes on to write but a married man who has a bride.

And then it dawned the bride of Christ is the church. That bride of Jesus Christ is called the church and we're to be part of the church not just universally but also expressed locally.

[28 : 31] And I thought well in this individualistic age we need to grasp that we're saved to be part of the body of Christ saved to be part of the bride of Christ. And the gospel good news is not primarily about you and me as individuals it's about we together manifesting the life of God in this locality and beyond.

How are people going to know unless we speak to them about our own experience? We need to be accountable to one another as those who have been redeemed by the shed blood of Christ.

Those who are bought from sin and the judgment of God. to be made into a new royal priesthood. A holy nation. A people belonging to God.

Peter writes in 1 Peter 2 9. So the goal of this fellowship with God is joy holiness both individually and collectively. We're born again of the spirit of God.

We have this life of God living in us and John writes that this spiritual fellowship makes our joy complete. joy. It's hard to comprehend.

[29 : 44] I think people mistake joy for happiness. Happiness can be a very fleeting thing. We all have moments where we feel happy and we feel fulfilled.

But the joy that comes from God is not dependent on the circumstances we're living through. it's hard to comprehend that the word of life the son of God entered our world to be so horribly bruised and crucified for a sinner's joy.

Jesus endured the agony of the cross for the joy set before him we read in Hebrews. For his joy in redeeming us and for our joy in knowing him.

And that joy was one day final consummation when we see Jesus face to face. I'm looking forward to that. I don't know about you. What a wonderful day that will be.

And this joy that we have in Christ is not temporary. It's not momentary. It's not fleeting. It's not easily crushed by the hardships of life. This is the kind of joy that looks right at suffering.

[30 : 51] Acts 5.41 And rejoices to be counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. This joy which was won for us on the cross of Calvary is indestructible joy because it flows from the indestructible life of God living in our hearts by faith.

So let's bring these thoughts to a conclusion. Amen. One day the metaphorical big red book of your life will be opened as you stand before the throne of God in heaven.

You will be called to give an account for the way that you lived your life here and now. You'll not be able to stand on that day in your own self righteousness.

I have a brother that says he doesn't need Jesus because he's a good person. A lot of people think that. You can't claim that you deserve to be there based on the good deeds that you've done.

The only way to enter into heaven is to cast yourself on the love and mercy of God. And today is the day of salvation. Repent and accept the finished work of Christ.

[32 : 13] Know that your sins are cleansed by the shed blood of the Lamb of God. A Lamb without blemish who died in your place instead. And don't put this off till tomorrow because none of us are guaranteed that there'll be a tomorrow.

The word of life appeared and sacrificed his own life for the sin of the world. For your sin and mine. And sin is serious. John writes in as we read on in this passage even of believers we must keep sought accounts with God.

Tonight we're thinking about how can we be assured of our faith? How can we be sure that we're saved? But John was writing to believers when he wrote this letter.

And he writes, If you say that you're without sin, you make God out to be a liar. And his word has no place in your life. But if we confess our sins, he that is God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Those verses are my favourite verses in the whole Bible because we all know we mess up. We do. It doesn't change the fact that we're loved by God and we're saved by grace through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[33 : 27] But we need to keep short accounts with God because the devil for sure will try and get in there where he can to convict us and condemn us once again that we're not the people that God has saved.

I've known it in my own life, especially when we're low. It's when you hear this voice in your ear. Who do you think you are? Look at this. Look at this.

Look at this. Look at this in your life. The very best gift that any of us can receive in this life is Jesus.

The word of life. Made flesh. Loving Carnot. The saviour of our souls. Thank God for Jesus.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this glorious message of salvation. We thank you that it is a gift.

[34 : 28] Your gift to us by grace through faith. And even faith itself is a gift. Thank you that sinners like ourselves are loved by you and can know that our sins are forgiven and can live a life that pleases you in fellowship with others.

Help us, Lord, to be good witnesses to your grace, to those around us and further afield. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.