

Loving One Another and The Word

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[0 : 00] Let's begin our worship by singing to God's praise. We're going to sing in Psalm 100, the Scottish Psalter, the first version of the psalm. Psalm 100, singing the whole of this psalm.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, himself with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, him said with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is not indeed. Without doubt he did us make. We are his lucky, doth us be. And for his sheep he doth us take. O enter then his gates with praise. Approach with joy his words and two. Praise Lord and bless his name always. For it is simply so to do. For why the Lord our God is good. His mercy is forever sure. His truth at all times firmly stood. And shall from age to the word that he should lay the Lord. And shall from age to be. And shall from age to the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, let's join together in prayer. Let us pray. Amen. Our Father in heaven, as we come before you anew today, we thank you, Lord, to be able to join together in singing praise to you, calling upon your name in this way, and joining in with many people all over the world.

[3 : 19] with many people all over the world who come together to worship and praise your name. Even at this very hour and at this very moment, we know we join in with praise that is being offered up to you in heaven. And we thank you for the multitude of your people far and wide who sing your praise and recognize that you are the God of heaven and earth, the one who has made us, the one who has sustained us to this point, and the one who goes before us in all things. So may we come truly with a sense of praise and worship in our hearts and to offer up that singing from the very bottom of our hearts, expressing our thanksgiving and our delight in you.

And we know, Lord, that there are times too when as we worship, we worship with much sorrow in our hearts. We can have much sadness in our lives, but yet we thank you that you are a God who remembers us in this as well. You remember individuals and families. You remember us as a congregation and as a people far and wide. And we thank you for your great love towards us. We thank you for every way you do remember us, in every way you bless us. We thank you for every gift that is ours on a day-to-day basis, even getting up anew this morning and being able to dress and to come together in worship, to be able to have food on our tables and to be able to go on in your strength. Lord, we thank you for every blessing that is ours. And we do pray, Lord, that you will help those in need, help those who find the way difficult, help those who are struggling in different ways. We pray, Lord, that you will surround them and draw near to them. And we do pray the blessing of your Spirit upon us as a people today, that your Word, as we read it and share it together, at our time of worship and our times of fellowship today, will be blessed and touched by you. We thank you that we come to share together, and we look forward, God willing, this evening to hearing a testimony of one of your own. We pray for Jack as he will be speaking this evening, and we pray for all who will gather and hear what he has to say, Lord, that truly you would be with us in it, and it would be a blessed time to us all. We thank you for the means we have to share your Word. We thank you for everyone tuning in online, whether it's live or later on. We thank you that your Word goes out far and wide, and we do pray your blessing on it to all of us together as a people, young and old alike. May we know the blessing and the power of your Spirit. Remember our young ones, Lord. We pray for them. We thank you for our Sunday school and creche and tweenies and all that is done. And we do pray, Lord, that you will protect them and keep them and watch over them each and every day. We thank you for all who help in leading and teaching in these things and for all that goes on through the week as well, both in our day schools and in events that take place with youth clubs and all kinds of activities, the explorers and all of these things. We pray, Lord, your hand of good and blessing upon us in all of these. So continue with us now, guide us and keep us. And we ask all with forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen.

It's good to have the young ones here today and to see you both upstairs and downstairs. And I just want to ask you a question. And you maybe put your hand up if your answer is yes. Did you all have breakfast this morning? Did everybody have breakfast this morning? Hands up if you had breakfast this morning? Yeah, I'm seeing lots of hands going up. Seems like most of you had your breakfast this morning. That's good. And what did you have for your breakfast? Did you all have maybe something you like to have on a regular basis? Maybe cereal or toast or something like that, was it? Yeah? And what do you put on your toast or what do you put on cereal when you're having it? There's some things that just, they go together quite naturally, isn't there? So you maybe have a slice of toast and you put maybe butter and jam on it. That just, it just goes together quite well, doesn't it? Or maybe you had cereal.

And if you had cereal, what do you put on that? You put maybe milk on your cereal because these two things, they just go together, don't they? Did any of you get up this morning and have a slice of toast with a bit of gugh on it? Probably not. It just, just doesn't work, does it? Or did you get your bowl of cereal and pour orange juice or coke on it? Or maybe poured your cup or tea on it? No, it just, it doesn't work, does it? There's just certain things that they just go together. Last night we had chips. And when you have chips, very often you get asked, do you want salt and vinegar on it? And again, they just, they go together. You don't get asked, do you want sugar and vinegar on it? Because it just, it just wouldn't work, would it? So there's certain things that just, they go with each other.

And today we're going to be thinking about Christians and the kind of things that goes together with the idea of what it is to be a Christian. And there's certain things that they just go together when you think of being a Christian. So if you're a Christian, you go to church and you come and praise God. It just, they go together. Because you love the Lord, you want to come together with all his people and praise God together. If you're a Christian, you read your Bible and you study the word and you serve the Lord. Again, these things, they just go together. You don't, as a Christian, say to yourself, I just really don't want to go to church. I really don't want to see God's people. That's not what it is to be a Christian. We're to have a hunger and a thirst for coming to church and being with God's people. What we're going to be thinking especially about today is, as Christians, we're to love God and love one another. And again, that's just something that should go together. It should be quite natural. But sadly, it's not always the case. But God tells us that this is something we are to be like as a people.

[10 : 07] So in the same way as we have our breakfast, we have our cereal with milk because they go together, we have our toast with butter and jam because they go together. To be a Christian is to love the Lord and to love each other because that is what goes together. The Bible tells us you can't be a Christian and hate your brothers and your sisters in Christ. That doesn't work. To be Christians is to love God with all our hearts and to love one another too. So that's what we want to see going together with us young and old alike. That we come together as Christians with things that just go together, loving God and loving one another. So may God bless these thoughts to us. We're going to share the Lord's prayer together now. So we'll say the Lord's prayer together. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Well, let's again sing to God's praise. This time we're singing in Psalm 86 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 86. This is on page 340. We're singing from verse 5 to verse 11. For thou art gracious, O Lord, and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to relieve. We'll sing from verse 5 to verse 11. Psalm 86, to God's praise.

O Lord, and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive.

O Lord, and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive. O Lord, and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive.

[12 : 43] Hear, O Lord, and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive. Hear, O Lord, my prayer unto the voice of my request, and rich in mercy all that call upon thee to forgive.

And godless times I'll call on thee, for no will I suspend.

Lord, there is none among the gods that deal with thee from here.

And like the words which thou hast done, not any word is there.

All nations whom thou made shall come and worship reverently.

[14 : 16] Before thy face and thee, O Lord, thy name shall glorify.

Because thou art exceeding great, and words by thee are gone.

Where it's hard to be admired, and thou art for thyself alone.

Teach me thy ways, and in thy truth. O Lord, then what will I unite my heart?

That thy, thy name may fit continually.

[15 : 55] Well, we'll turn and read God's word together. Two readings. First of all, we're going to read in 1 John, chapter 3. 1 John, chapter 3.

We take up our reading at verse 11. And then we'll turn back a few pages to 1 Peter, chapter 1. 1 John, chapter 3, at verse 11.

And again, this is the theme of our service this morning, as we're looking at 1 Peter's loving one another, loving one another earnestly. For this is a message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

We should not be like Cain, who was the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brothers righteous.

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

[17 : 02] Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

By this we know, love, that he laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth, and we assure our heart before him.

For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

And whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

[18 : 18] Whoever keeps his commandments, abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know, that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Then we'll turn back to 1 Peter chapter 1. I'm just reading the last few verses of chapter 1. 1 Peter chapter 1, and at verse 22.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

And this word is the good news that was preached to you. Amen. And may God bless these readings from his word. Let's again join our hearts together in a word of prayer.

[19 : 35] Amen. Our gracious and eternal God, as we look to you at this time, we do thank you that there is the promise of your presence always, that you as our God and Lord and as our Father in heaven has given us so many promises.

They are so abundant in number and yet so fulfilled in Christ Jesus as our Lord. We thank you for the promise that you will never leave us or forsake us.

What a wonderful truth that is for us to keep a hold of, especially in our times of great need, our times of difficulty. There may be others who aren't there to help us because of a variety of reasons, being unable to do it or the timing being all wrong or even when we're alone, even through the watches of the night and there seems to be no one to call out to.

We thank you that those promises of your word can come to us then, that you will hear our cry, that you are near to us because you are near to all who call upon your name.

And so, Lord, may you be that to us today and always, the God who is near and the God of all comfort, the God of all grace. We do thank you, Lord, that you have done much for us and as we come to your word, we are assured that it is a word that lasts forever.

[21 : 10] All that changes around us, you know, as we have been reminded of the flowers and the grass that grow, their glory is temporary. The grass withers and the flower falls, but we know that the word of the Lord remains forever.

And we thank you that this word is unchanging and unchangeable. It is your truth to your people for every generation. And how we need your truth, how we need your spirit to come in a day of your power, to bring healing to our nation, to bring healing to our world, to bring glory, the glory of your name to all ends of the earth.

Oh, Lord, we pray that even as the sun rises and sets today, that the glory of your name will rise with it and that there will be many people touched by the promises of your truth throughout the world this day.

We pray that even for ourselves here today, that as we join in worship throughout this day, your truth will minister to our hearts, that it will reach deeply into our souls, that it will bring us out of darkness into the marvelous light of your truth and the wonder and the joy of salvation in Jesus Christ.

So we do pray, Lord, your continuing blessing upon your church as you build it up. You have promised that nothing will break it down. And we pray, Lord, that even here in our town and throughout our islands, your kingdom will come in power.

[22 : 46] We thank you for every home and family who belong to us as a people. We thank you for every home and family represented here in our midst and all who tune in online as well.

And we do pray, Lord, that you will minister to us, that you will draw near to us even in this hour of worship. You know our needs and you know that there are many in our midst at this time with sorrow and sadness around, with ill health and infirmity all around us, with so many things that are uncertain in our lives.

We thank you, Lord, that each of us is known unto you. And so we pray for one another. And even as we're here today, help us to love one another and to do so earnestly, to remember one another in our different needs and to be there for each other.

Help us, Lord, not just to think that someone else will deal with it, but to ask, what can we do for each other? Lord, we pray that you will build us up in our faith and strengthen us in it and help us to recognize all the wonderful commands that are there for us.

Commands not to burden us, not like they once did with the law in the days of the Pharisees when there were commandments that they could never keep for they were so many, but to recognize the greatest commandments that you have given to us, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourself.

[24 : 17] These are not there to burden us, but to build us up in the faith and to help one another. So we pray that you will encourage us and help us to that end. We do remember our leaders today, Lord, in every aspect of it.

We pray for our King who rules over us now and as he continues to mourn the passing of his mother, as he continues to seek to guide his family and as he takes up his responsibilities as King, we pray that you will uphold him and strengthen him and above all, Lord, that your word will minister to him.

We pray, Lord, your blessing on him and his family and all the royal family, Lord. May you be with them and help them to rule well. We pray for our governments, O Lord.

We pray for our new Prime Minister and First Minister. We pray, O Lord, for all who lead us and guide us in the ways of our day-to-day lives. Lord, help us that we would see a ruling by your power, a ruling by your agenda, not just our own agendas.

We pray, Lord, for your turning as towards you as a people. Remember your church far and wide. Remember all your missionaries who go out to all ends of the earth, sometimes in large groups, sometimes individually.

[25 : 40] But we thank you for those you have called to take the word to many different parts of the world. We pray your blessing on them and upon the ministry of your word and in every challenge that they face, that again, they will be confident that you are with them.

Remember your persecuted people. We do thank you for the strength of faith you give in the midst of persecution. And we thank you for the blessings that there are in it, something that sounds so strange as they do not seem to go together.

But your word reminds us that blessed are those who are persecuted. And we ask that for all your people far and wide. So continue with us now, Lord. Lord, lead us into your word and into your truth and help us to continue to praise your name as we acknowledge all our sin before you.

Pardon us, we pray, from all our iniquity. Cleanse us anew for all we ask. We ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for his sake and glory.

Amen. Let us again sing to God's praise in Psalm 18, on page 21. Let's sing Psalm's version.

[26 : 52] Psalm 18. And we're going to sing from verse 27. Psalm 18 at verse 27, page 21 of the Psalm books.

You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height. You, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light.

We'll sing from verse 27 down to verse 36 to God's praise. Amen. You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

You, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light.

With help from God, I can advance against the truth and rout them all.

[28 : 03] And with the aid my God will give. I can't leap over any wall.

I can't leap over any wall. For perfect is the way of God.

No flaw is found within His word. To all who put their trust in Him, as shield and refuge is the Lord.

For who is God except the Lord? Besides our God who is a rock, He is the God who gives me strength, and He perfects the path I walk, and He perfects the path I walk.

He makes my feet like feet of deer, upon the heights He makes me stand.

[29 : 23] My hands can bend My hands can bend a bow of bronze In skills of one He plays my hand.

His right hand, Your right hand Your right hand gives me victory You stood down low to make me great so that my footsteps Do not turn You smooth the pathway for my feet You smooth the pathway for my feet IMPUSH Well we can turn together now to a reading in 1 Peter and again at verse 22.

1 Peter chapter 1 at verse 22 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart and so on. As we continue to move through this letter of Peter, we're coming to the end of here of chapter 1 today, and we've seen already how the people of God, they have been scattered far and wide throughout the region we know today as modern-day Turkey. So there are pockets of God's people scattered all around, congregations, if you like, of God's people scattered all around, and they are suffering greatly for their faith. In many different ways, they are suffering persecution. And Peter has written to them to remind them of the many great truths that they have from God. He's reminded them of the hope that they have in God, the inheritance that is theirs to be brought to them eventually, what their faith means in their day-to-day life, and the salvation that they have through faith in Jesus Christ. There have been all these wonderful promises and truths that he reminds them of at the start of the chapter. But then we saw last week how in verse 13, as we move through, we begin to see how these truths will work themselves out in the day-to-day lives of the people. There's a word in verse 13 that shows this movement. It says, therefore. And that word, therefore, moves us on. It's about remembering all the promises that God has given to us, but then seeing how these truths apply on a day-to-day basis and the great instructions that they give to us.

And last week, we were looking at how Peter was showing us the initial part of that is focused on our relationship with God. That as a people, we are to seek to be holy. We are to set our minds on God, fixing our minds on God, girding up our minds as we thought about last week, preparing for all the challenges that we'll come our way by our focus being on God and pursuing holiness because God himself is holy. And our faith and our hope are in God. And that's where we finished last week in verse 21. There you see there's how it says, through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God. So, there was very much an upward-looking people there. They were looking upwards toward God, seeking to live a holy life. Now, in verse 22, it follows again, there's a shift. So, going from this upward look when we're looking to God and seeking to be holy because he is holy, it's shifting from a relationship with God but taking that with it and looking into a relationship with one another and a relationship with the word of God.

So, from upward looking, we're now going to be more outward looking. How is our lives of seeking to live holy lives for God? How is it going to now look as we look outwards? What impact is it going to have on our lives? And that gets expanded on throughout the letter here now. You may have heard the phrase at some point, you're so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good. You may have heard that phrase said.

[34 : 19] It's attributed to a man from America originally, a man called Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was a poet and he is said to have penned these words first of all, you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good.

If you're into your music, perhaps these words resonate with you too. They're words from a song by Johnny Cash called No Earthly Good. So, these words have been put out there on a number of different occasions but are they true? Is it true to say that we're so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good?

Is it a fair thing to say? It's meant in these cases as a criticism, an accusation put against Christians who just seem to be just so focused on heaven or maybe on the future or just looking to God all the time but actually doing no earthly good. Is it a fair statement? Christians being accused of not paying attention to earthly matters and to what's going on around us. I mean, there are many different ways that Christians do receive criticism and rightly so at times but this one, it just doesn't seem to add up. There may be the odd occasion where you think that may be true but then you have to ask well maybe there's problems there but on the whole it shouldn't be true of any Christian. To be so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good, these things, just like we were saying with the children, they're just not things that go together because the more heavenly minded we are, the more earthly good we should see as a people. And to be heavenly minded is something very scriptural. It is based in God's truth, what we're seeing here and what we see in other parts of Scripture. For example, Colossians chapter 3 verse 2 says, set your minds on things that are above, not things that are on earth.

So our faith begins first and foremost by setting our minds on the things that are above, just as Peter has been doing in this letter. But never is it left there. Never does the Scripture tell us just do that and stay there with that focus. You read through Colossians chapter 3 where it says that, set your minds on things that are above, not on things of earth. But later on in that chapter in verse 12 and 13 it says, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience bearing with one another. So the more heavenly minded you are, the more earthly good you should do. And so Peter moves on here from the upward holiness that we are to have and it leads us to the outward good that we are to see being put in practice. And that's what we're going to start looking at today. And there's three things from these last verses of chapter 1 I want to take. From verse 22 to 25, the truth going outward. And the first thing is obeying the truth.

And secondly we'll see practicing the truth. And then thirdly, very briefly, just trusting the unchanging truth. So the first thing is obeying the truth. To be heavenly minded and to be of earthly good is grounded in obedience to the truth. It would have been easy perhaps for those in Peter's day who he was writing to to try and avoid all the problems that surrounded them by hiding away from the truth. We've thought about this before us well. They were persecuted for their faith. So if they were to hide their faith, to bury their faith and not make it evident to those around them, perhaps that would spare them then from the persecution that they were facing. Perhaps that was the answer to their problems. Just put away our faith.

[38 : 58] But Peter knew that that was not the answer. Peter knew that that was not for their good. And the growth they needed as a people was to obey the truth. Not just to know the promises of God, but to live by them.

Not just to know the truth. Not just to know the truth. Not just having their minds fixed on their heavenly things, but on the earthly good as well that they were to do. And this comes from obedience to God's Word.

Having, it says in verse 22, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth. Your obedience to the truth.

What is obedience to the truth? And are you being obedient to the truth yourself? Well, it's coming back to this pattern that we see here. The pattern that we see throughout Scripture.

The commands that God gives to us. To love the Lord our God with all our heart. But not just to stop there, but to love our neighbor as ourselves. And that's the pattern you see with godly men and women down through the generations. Can you do good apart from God? It's often a challenging question. And people will say, yes, there's many ways that we can do good apart from God. We don't need God to do good.

[40 : 37] And there are many people who do good in this world who have no thought of God and no thought of Christ. But our ultimate good and the ultimate good for this world is always with our focus on God.

And that's what you see when you look at godly men and women down through the generation. They did good but focused on God and His truth. Because the Lord Himself says, apart from me, you can do nothing.

And so if you go through the Scriptures and you look at the characters that you see in the Scriptures, you see many people who did good. Imperfect people. People who had all of their faults, but who were heavenly minded, but also with earthly good in their mind as well.

So many of them are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11, the great passage of faith. Just to touch on a few of them. Think of Noah. Was he so heavenly minded that he did no earthly good?

Well, his faith and his focus on God, by faith, what did he do? He built the ark. Noah was described as a righteous man, a good man. But that goodness led to action.

[42 : 00] David, another described by God as the apple of his eye. Again, very much a man who was heavenly minded. But he did earthly good. He did much good. And still his goodness speaks to us in so many different ways.

You think of some of the women you see in Scripture in the Old Testament. Ruth and Esther, to name but two. You see them too with God's grace in their lives being focused heavenwards, but yet so much earthly good as well. And so it goes on down through the generation.

You think of Peter himself and all that went on in his own experience and how, yes, he was heavenly minded, but earthly good. Paul, the apostles. You just look through the Scriptures.

The two go together hand in hand. Heavenly minded leading to earthly good. You think of some of the great Christians down through the years, from Lutheran, Calvin, John Newton, William Wilberforce, Corrie ten Boom, Joni Erikson Tadda, Ann Judson. All of these people and all the good that they did in this world as Christians. It came from being heavenly minded to being earthly good.

And that is what we see with Peter here. That is what he is telling God's people then. That's what he is saying to ourselves today as well. Obey the truth. Set your mind on the things above, but show it in how you live your lives out as well. It comes back to this thought of what Peter wanted for his people.

[44 : 09] It wasn't just to survive, but to thrive. And to thrive, the foundation of thriving, and this doesn't just mean, oh, everything's going to go well for us now. They were still going to suffer for their faith in many ways, but they were to know God's blessing. It was to obey the truth. And so what does that mean for them? And what does that mean for us? Well, the basis is to listen to God and to heed his commands, to listen to his word and to seek to live by his truth in every aspect of our lives. Heavenly minded and seeking earthly good. It was a man who once told a story about a lesson he learned, a lesson he learned from his father and a dog that his father had. He said, my father used to put a bit of meat or a biscuit on the floor near the dog and say to the dog, no. And the dog wouldn't touch it. He knew he wasn't to touch it. His master had given him a command and he was to be obedient to it. And what the dog did was never to look at the biscuit or the meat, but always to keep his eyes on his master. The man who was telling the story said this, it's a great lesson for the Christian life to fix our eyes on our master, to look to the Lord.

Otherwise, if we start looking around us too much and the temptations that are around us, we could so easily drift away. But our first and foremost calling is obedience to God and his word.

And the more we are fixed on him, the more then it will lead to right good works going out as well. As somebody once said, when Christians have their eyes on Christ, they gain an eternal perspective and they are of great earthly good as their faith impacts their lives and the lives of others.

There is a danger that these people of God would be of no earthly good in Peter's days, same as it is for ourselves. And so the warning and challenge here is for us to be obedient obedient to the word of God. Obedience to the truth is the foundation here as we think of going outwards.

The second thing we see then is practice the truth. As we move on, we see how this looks and it begins with a wonderful word, but a very challenging word to us. A call to obedience in this truth. And what is disobedience? What's it start with? Well, verse 22 continues, for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

[47 : 23] And let's■■■■■ for Brooks.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[49 : 40] Thank you. Thank you. Peter's day was a time of great persecution, a great suffering for them as a people.

and the people that he was addressing they would have been saying to themselves you know what's this all about why is this happening and when these things are happening it's so easy for them the people to turn on each other so instead of loving one another as God's word commands instead it leads to personality clashes things going wrong at a time selfish interests instead of selfless interests and so it goes on and the devil can often become so active in the midst of this you may have heard of the the strategy divide and conquer it's when an enemy seeks to divide a people and make them turn against themselves so then they are of no good in any way because they're fighting amongst themselves and it's one of the devil's great tactics especially among God's people he would love nothing better than all of God's people just to turn on each other backbiting and snapping at one another saying the wrong things about each other gossiping about each other all of these things that just divide a people the devil would like nothing better but what we see throughout scripture is the call to be on our guard against that and we all have our part to play in this it's what we see in this verse as verse 22 says love one another earnestly it's this call to of Peter towards the people then to come together to unite their hearts together to be looking out for each other and it's a command to repeat first Peter chapter 3 verse 8 he says finally all of you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and a humble mind he says it again in chapter 4 verse 8 above all keep loving one another earnestly since love covers over a multitude of sin it's something Peter himself has known in his own experience he was with Jesus on the night before his crucifixion when Jesus said a new command I give to you to all the disciples who are there love one another just as I have loved you you also are to love one another and the importance of it is said by what he says after by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another the witness of the church is based on this loving one another our reading in first john again a powerful message there love one another for this is a message that you have heard from the beginning that we should love one another and Peter knows that he cannot make them love one another earnestly just as I know today it's not something I can do myself for you or force upon you but I can say as Peter said too this is a command this is something we are to strive for and to earnestly pursue love one another earnestly from a pure heart in Peter's day as he wrote these there were many needs but Peter knew all these needs could be met by loving God and loving each other loving God and loving each other and you ask yourself well how did Peter know this

well because he had experienced it so personally himself he'd experienced it with the Lord Jesus Christ coming to him and asking Peter Peter do you love me and Peter's response was Lord you know I love you and how did then Peter see it in action among others well you go into the book of Acts Acts chapter 2 and you have Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost what did he see after that as the spirit was poured out it says in verse 43 and awe came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles and all who believed were together and had all things in common it's a word there that's used 10 times in the book of Acts having all things in common being of one accord and it belongs it's unique to the

Christian community community and this is what Peter is longing for them to have here all these Christians Christians who are scattered to have this bond of love and unity in their midst to have all things in common do we have that today you know in many ways there's much we are to be thankful for but are we of one accord do we of one accord do we of one accord do we of one accord do we of one accord if we're honest we don't not to this degree not to this extent to love one another as Christ has loved us and so that is the challenge for us to pray and long for this unity and this love more and more in our midst to love one another earnestly it's something we must work on it's something we are to strive towards to be able to trust one another fully to be able to share in one another more openly to be able to comfortably come together individually in twos or threes small groups and pray earnestly together to be able to share our burdens with one another to help one another in practical ways not just to leave it at somebody else we'll do that but to ask what can i help how can we help one another and the the challenge often comes we maybe say but i don't have much in common with that person i just don't seem to click with that person and we are all different in that sense every one of us is different and there are people we will get on with better than others that's just natural but here it's talking about the community of god's people and how in every way we are to love one another so do we have something in common well the clue is in the name christian we have christ in common that is our common nature when we are god's people that we see the christ in each other and whatever our differences are surely they can be overcome the more heavenly minded we are and the more we see christ in each other just as paul wrote to the philippians he was saying complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and one mind doing nothing out of rivalry or conceit but counting others more significant than yourselves what was the foundation of that having this mind among yourselves which is yours in christ jesus to have the mind of christ that is what peter is praying for and seeking for the people here to have this love of christ to love one another in all our differences in all our unique attributes that we all have different from each other but to see christ in each other and to love one another in a week when we will remember the great sacrifices made for us in times of conflict that passage we read in john it speaks about that love that would lay down our life for our friends as we remember the many who gave their life in conflicts past this week the great sacrifices

made it's a reminder to us too that all of the loss and difficulties wasn't just in the battlefields but how many suffered at home as well how many lost people they loved how many lives were just changed in a blink so much tragedy and sorrow we remember at this time there's a story i read just this week it was about a young christian couple and it was just before world war one and they had become engaged engaged and shortly after they became engaged the man was called up to service he was called up to the army and he was sent away to the battlefields sent away into this awful conflict but they were writing regularly to each other letters were going back and forth but then all of a sudden the letter from the young man stopped no letters were coming and the fiancée was getting worried and a good number of weeks passed and then she received a letter in strange handwriting she didn't recognize the handwriting but as she began to read the letter she recognized who it was from she recognized the words it was from her fiancée he had managed to get someone else to write a letter to her and the reason was that he was now in hospital and he explained that he was in hospital in england having ended up in the middle of the battlefield and having lost both his arms seriously wounded and here he was now in hospital writing to her and he said in his letter now i won't be able to help you i won't be able to give you all the things that i hoped i'd be able to give to you our lives have changed and he said i think the engagement should be off the young woman didn't reply to the letter at least not in writing instead she jumped on the first train and made her way to the hospital where he was lying and surprised him by appearing by his bedside and with tears in their eyes they looked at one another and she said i will never leave you these hands of mine will work for you and we will live our life of love together what wonderful love that was and that's the love that christ had for us how we think of how our lives are so ruined by sin and yet christ didn't cast us away he called us to himself and we're told in his word to look to his hands those hands that were pierced for us all that he did for us he showed his love for us and so the more we set our minds on heaven and on christ and what he has done for us surely the more that we should look to each other and earnestly love one another we are to love one another because that is the command of god's word and as you see at the end of this section this is a word that is an abiding word an unchanging word a word that will never change for all eternity we are to listen to this word because what it says is this word is the good news that was preached to you it is the good news that we hear today kevin de young in his book the whole now holiness says

[63 : 04] good works should always be rooted in the good news and so may we seek to be heavenly minded our focus on god the lord but also to put this into practice by being earthly good as well and especially as we see here by loving one another earnestly it's a great challenge but something we are all to work towards that we would love one another as he has loved us let us pray our father in heaven we know how far short we so often fall when we think of these words that we are to love one another but we pray your help to us lord as a people that we would seek to do this earnestly by being obedient to your truth by listening to your word by seeing christ in it the hope of glory for us as your people but by seeing christ and those we look upon us well and to love them with all our hearts build us up lord to this end we ask in jesus name amen we conclude by singing to god's praise in psalm 71 in the scottish psalter page 311 psalm 71 at verse 15 thy justice and salvation my mouth abroad shall show even all the day for either of the numbers do not know we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 18 to god's praise by justice and salvation by justice and salvation my mouth abroad shall show even all the day for i thereof the numbers do not know and i will constantly go on in strength of god the lord and thine own righteousness righteousness even thine own righteousness alone i will record for even from my youth oh god for even from my youth oh god and my i have been taught i have been taught and hitherto i have declared the wonder song has come and now lord we may not be taught i have been taught and hitherto i have declared the wonder song has come the wonder song has come and now lord we may not when i hold and great headed through till to this age my strength and power to all to come i show now may grace mercy and peace from god father son and holy spirit rest upon and abide with us all now and forevermore amen amen so and so