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And we're going to be And we're going to be And we're going to be

And we're going to be And we're going to be And we're going to be worshipping together but getting to know each other.

[40:11] It's a great time to be together as a family. And when is it? So it's on the 17th and 18th of February. So 17th is the Saturday at the end of half term for those with a kind of school term kind of orientation to your calendar.

So it's the second weekend of half term. We'll be together on the Saturday and then on the Sunday we'll meet together as we normally do but it'll be a special celebration service on the Sunday. And who's going to be there?

Well, I hope all of us will be able to be there. That's my hope. We have some special guests coming as well which is really exciting. So our visiting speakers are John and Alison Ridsbridger.

So John was previously pastor of Above Bar Church in Southampton and he's currently the director of the Catalyst Leadership and Theology course which is a course that I'm doing and I'm really benefiting from his gift in biblical teaching and he's a wonderful guy.

I'm really excited what he's going to share with us. He's going to be teaching on the mission of the church and being together in mission and his wife Alison will be taking part as well.

[41:16] So they're coming and also Synthesis. If you remember we had them at our last weekend at home. It's Joel, our former ministry trainee and his friends, their band. They're going to be leading us with help from some of our musicians here as well.

They're going to be leading us in worship. So that's really exciting as well. Great. Well, tell us about the program. Yeah. So in the morning on the Saturday we're going to have some worship and then a couple of teaching sessions from John on being together in mission.

And during those teaching sessions there's going to be a really exciting program for the children which Jackie's putting together. I've heard some of her ideas and they sound great. So watch this space for that. For young people they can either stay in those sessions or they can go and help with the children for those sessions.

And in the afternoon you can choose from a number of choices of different seminars and different fun activities. Great. And what are those in the afternoon? Yeah. So we've got a list up there.

And I'll tell you about some of them because they might need a bit more explanation. So a couple of seminars there. Bible meditation. This is with Tim Feeney. I don't know if you don't see Tim this morning.

[42:19] He's very passionate about this subject. And this is going to be about what biblical meditation looks like and how it can help us to grow in our relationship with Jesus. The next one is called Reaching the Nations on our Doorstep.

That's with Alison Ridsbridger, John's wife. And she does a lot of work with international students. And it's about how we can reach people in our own community. You know, we're blessed by the diversity we're seeing in this church.

People coming to us from different nations. But we have more and more opportunities to reach people from different nations. Through our job club, through our children's ministry, how can we maximise the impact of those opportunities we have to reach people who are coming to us from all around the world?

She's very passionate about that. Do commend that one to you. And then we've got some other ones. Music workshop with Synthesis. Bring along your instrument. This is just to have a go. So even if you've got an instrument and don't really know how to play it, you can bring it along.

Or if you can maybe sing but not sure, just come along. It's for everyone. We've got a drama workshop that's a popular choice from previous years. We've got a team building challenge. Great opportunity to get to know people through that.

[43:23] There's going to be a walk, a local walk. There's going to be some fun games. Great opportunity to have fun together. Fit for life. Here's an exciting one. Kim, our resident fitness instructor, is going to be leading that.

This is for everyone. It's a wonderful exercise for everyone that you can do without even getting out of your chair. So that's something for everyone. That sounds wonderful. We're also going to have a photo booth here.

So one of those fun ones you can put on the funny glasses and the hats and get a memento from the day, silly photos. Lots more fun stuff as well. Great. Sounds good. And what about food? Yeah, food.

You've got two options. You can either sign up for soup and bread provided by a wonderful hospitality team or you can bring your own picnic lunch. So the choice is yours. Good. So that all sounds really exciting.

How do we sign up? Well, you need to sign up online. You can pick up a leaflet. If you didn't get one of these last week, these are by the doors and downstairs as well. Pick up a leaflet and go to our website, the homepage.

[44:20] There's a link on there. Please sign up as soon as possible. We need you to sign up by the Sunday before. So you've got two weeks to sign up, but please sign up this week. That will really help us. You can also just phone the church office and tell them that you want to come and we'll get you signed up.

Please sign up this week. If you're around next week, we'll have someone with a laptop downstairs that can sign you in if you're around next week to do that. But head to the website as First Port of Call if you're able to do that.

Great. Thank you. Thank you. Terrific. So now's the time for the children and young people and WOW people to go out. Let me pray first.

Father God, we lift up the children and young people as they go to their groups. Bless them during this time.

May they learn something new about you and grow in love for you as their Lord and Savior. Please be with the group leaders also. Fill them with your spirit. Guide them and sustain them.

[45:20] Help them to see each child and young person with your eyes. Listen to them with your ears and love them with your love. Amen. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Let us reflect on these words as we pray together.

[47:28] Our God, full of love, grace and mercy, we thank you. Not only did you create humanity, but you have also given us everything we need for life and godliness.

Wisdom for living a life worthy of the calling that we have received. Courage in the face of opposition. Peace under pressure.

Faith in face of tragedy. Comfort in bereavement. Love when we feel alone. Healing when we are wounded.

Strength when we are overwhelmed. Help us to grow in our knowledge of you and your glory and goodness. Not trusting in the schemes and plans of men, but in the knowledge of you as we learn of you through your word.

Through prayer and through the community of your people. Thank you that we have been called by your glory and goodness. And that we may enter into a relationship with you.

[48:39] That through your promises, we are partakers of your divine nature. And that we are adopted as sons and daughters. Lord, it is with deep sorrow that we acknowledge that we live in a corrupt and fallen world.

Many countries are torn apart by war or are facing serious economic, social and political situations. That the evil desires of mankind seem front and central.

We call upon your mercy and compassion to give us a vision of peace and justice. To create a national consensus. To construct a process of reconciliation.

Lord, we pray for courage to see, hear, speak and stand for justice when it is challenged. Peace in the midst of violence and equality for every generation.

We pray for spiritual transformation on the inside of our government leaders. For those who know and love you and seek to serve you through public office.

[49:55] We pray for strength to stay steadfast on the journey of faith. So that they may hold fast to your teaching and truths. We pray for people across all nations.

Seeking to uphold positions of authority. We pray for honesty and integrity. That they would place all their faith, hope, trust and love in you.

To nurture the ideals of equality and brotherhood. To provide the opportunities of life for all. To value and protect the rights of individuals. To grant justice to all, regardless of race or background.

We look at the world and we see and hear of man-made and natural disasters. Racking the world for so many people. In Palestine, forced displacement and famine risk.

In Ukraine, lives in danger and infrastructure destroyed. In Syria, in Gaza, destruction and disease. In Africa, diseases and disasters and displacement and crisis.

[51:06] And in so many countries, extreme weather, wildfires, earthquakes and floods. Father, we lift them all to you.

Many of these events have taken precious lives and left people in despair. For those who have lost loved ones, we ask for your comfort. For those who have lost their homes and means of livelihood, we ask for your guidance and provision.

And for those that may need to be given assistance, we pray that people would draw alongside them and help in that restoration process. Finally, Heavenly Father, we lift before you all those people who we know are suffering in body, mind or spirit.

We think of those we know and love in our own families, in our congregation and on our front lines. Grant them healing if that is your will.

But above all, grant them your peace and joy, that they may know that you are with them. That they are safe and that nothing can snatch them from your hand or defeat your purposes.

[52:27] And in particular this morning, we lift before you Dave Weston and his family who lost his sister this morning. Father, grant them your comfort and your peace.

And we ask this and all our prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. All I once held dear, built my life upon.

All this world with years and wars too. All I once thought, gain I have counted us.

Spent and deathless now compared to this. Knowing you, Jesus Christ.

[53:58] Knowing you, Jesus. Knowing you, there is no greater thing.

You're my all, you're the best. You're my joy, my righteousness. Lord, I love you, Lord.

Now my heart's desire is to know you more.

To be in you and known as yours to assess my faith.

What I could not do. What I could not do. I was so awesome. Yet, I have done righteousness.

Knowing you, Jesus.

[55:00] Knowing you, there is no greater thing. You're my heart, you're the best.

You're my joy, my righteousness. And I love you, Lord. Oh, to know the power of your risen life.

And to know you in your sufferings, to become like you in your doubt, my Lord.

So with you to live and never die. For in you, Jesus, now in you there is no greater fear.

You're my own, you're the best, you're my joy, my righteousness, and I love you, Lord.

[56:20] Love you, Lord. Please be seated.

Let's pray for the reading and the sermon. Father God, we thank you for your word. You say that it will not return to you empty, but will accomplish what you desire and achieve the purpose for which you sent it.

Let it be so today, Lord. Open our hearts and our minds to your word. Let it achieve your purpose. We lift up Andrew. We thank you for his gift of teaching.

Fill him with your spirit as he brings us your message today. Help us to understand your message and apply it to our lives. Amen. Amen. We are so blessed to have God's word in our own language so we can understand it and hear it well.

The reading this morning is taken from the book of 2 Peter, chapter 1. It's almost at the end of the Bible. You'll find it on these brown burgundy Bibles.

[57:47] You'll find it on page 1222. It's a letter from Peter, who was one of Jesus' disciples, so knew him well, to some of the churches that were forming at that time.

From Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who, through the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, have received a faith as precious as ours.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Thank you. Well, thank you so much, Ruth. Hello again. And as you probably noticed, we've started, we're starting a new sermon series this morning.

[59:11] We're taking a bit of a break from what we were doing, which was the cost of living Christ-like, about kind of the difficulties and persecution that we might face for being Christians.

And we're going to pick that up again in March, but for the next six or seven weeks, we're going to be looking at this book of 2 Peter. And it's actually a book that was written by a persecuted Christian.

Now, Peter himself introduces himself in verse 1. Do have that open in front of you, page 1222, if you haven't reached that already.

And so verse 1 of 2 Peter 1 says, Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. Now, this is Simon Peter that we know from the Gospels, the fisherman, the brother of Andrew, who became a disciple, one of Jesus' closest followers.

His name was Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means rock. If we read through the Gospels, if we remember the stories, often he seems anything other than a rock, to be honest.

[60:16] He was often very quick to speak, a bit too quick sometimes. He often got himself into trouble. He was a bit of an activist. He had some great moments, like he was the first one to recognize Jesus' true identity.

He also had some disastrous moments, most famously when he denied Jesus three times. But Jesus reinstated Peter in John 21, and he promised to build his church on Peter's foundation.

And we see, as we read through in Acts, we see Peter transformed, filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And we see him boldly preaching the Gospel, going out, taking the message out. We see him imprisoned and persecuted.

So that is the same Simon Peter who's writing this letter. And the next thing he says about himself is that he's a servant of Jesus. Peter is very keen, all throughout his letter, to point the attention, the focus, and the glory, not on himself, but on Jesus.

And we'll see more of that in the first chapter. The third thing he says is that he's an apostle. Now, the Greek word that's translated there literally means a messenger, someone commissioned to a task by a particular person.

[61:26] In this case, it specifically refers to the particular group of people that Jesus had met in person and that Jesus had commissioned to be his representatives.

Now, that gives Peter authority to speak to the churches that he was writing to. And we'll see the importance of that as he expands on that later. Now, why did he write this letter?

He wrote the letter primarily to address the problem of false teaching, of people who were fake teachers. Now, we have a big problem in our society today about fakes, don't we?

Whether it's fake news stories, fake merchandise being sold, whether it's scams that try to con us out of our money, or the other new thing now which is causing issues around fakes is artificial intelligence.

There's been some stories about that, about pictures of celebrities being faked by artificial intelligence. Paul was addressing fakes in the church and false teaching within the church.

[62:23] Now, this is also on the rise today. In Paul's day, this would have been manifest as people of power and influence, people who were probably quite charismatic in their personalities, getting a following within gatherings of the church and leading Christians off course.

Now, today, you don't have to go very far to see that sort of thing happening. But we also have other sources of false teaching, which are a danger to us. Today, we have the internet, which is a wonderful thing.

On the one hand, it means we can gain access to some brilliant resources for helping us in our spiritual development, in our relationship with Jesus. But on the other hand, it also means that we're exposed to lots of things which are potentially harmful for us spiritually.

Now, I recently got almost taken in by one of these bank scams. I did actually get taken in by it. Fortunately, they didn't manage to take any money. Well, I got a call a few months ago from the bank saying that there'd been an attempted fraudulent transaction on my account.

Now, this has happened to me before, and I've had these kind of calls from the bank. And from the kind of questions that they were asking me, it sounded exactly like one of these calls that I'd had before, where it was a genuine warning.

[63:37] Now, what I didn't realize is that it was actually someone who wasn't working for the bank, but they were fishing for information that they were actually using to gain access to my account via phone banking. Now, further into the conversation, some things didn't quite add up to me.

I'd had this uneasy feeling. So I hung up, and I went straight to the branch. And at the branch, they put me in touch with the actual fraud department of the bank, and they said they didn't know anything about the phone call that I just had.

And the fraudulent transactions that had been reported to me didn't exist, but that the person that I'd been speaking to had actually been trying to change the details on my account. They'd actually succeeded in changing the contact number on my account, which is quite scary.

Fortunately, we got it in time, and nothing was taken. Now, I've learned from that on a practical level. If you ever get, and this is my advice for you as well, if you ever get a call from the bank saying there's been any suspicious activity on your bank, hang up and phone the bank back on the number that you have for the bank that's on your card or on your bank statements.

That way, you can be sure. Because I've learned from this that by going direct to the reliable source, you can test whether the message is fake or not.

[64:48] And this is actually Peter's approach to addressing false teaching on the letter. He's saying, go back to the source of what you know is real. The false teachers that he was addressing in his letter were teaching some specific things which were not true.

They were teaching that Jesus isn't going to come back. That was one of the aspects of their false teaching. And they were also teaching that if Jesus isn't going to come back, therefore, by implication, there is no final judgment at the end.

And therefore, by implication, there's a moral outcome of that, which is you can therefore do anything you like because there's no judgment. Now, these are the issues that Peter was addressing.

He knew, actually, that he was close to the end of his life. We know from history that he was martyred just a few years after writing this letter. And he wrote this letter almost as a farewell speech to the believers.

And he gave them a message to stand firm, to remind his readers of what he and other apostles had taught them, that their faith, the gospel that they've been taught, is rooted in historical facts and figures.

[65:56] And so he walks them through the basics of the faith. It's like preventative medicine to help them to grow into maturity and so that

they're in a position to be able to guard against error.

Now, if I remember some of the basics that I had been told by the bank, then I wouldn't have started to be taken in by the bank scammers. And it's like that with Paul. He teaches us things to remind us that we won't be taken in by led astray by false teaching.

He writes this letter to the same recipients as his first letter. They were believers in a group of churches in what is now Turkey. But he had an awareness that this message was God's word for the entire church then and in the future now as well.

And I believe that this is particularly relevant for us today because false teaching is prolific. It's out there, but it's also within the structures of institutional church that we're facing today.

And it ties in very closely with the idea we've already been exploring about opposition to the gospel. Because to many people, as we've seen, the message of the gospel is offensive.

[67:02] It goes against what our culture tells us. And many false teachings arise actually not out of an evil motive, but as a way of kind of wanting to adapt the message to make it sound more palatable, to make it more in line with what the world says.

But as a protection against this, Peter points us to the foundation of our faith and the future hope that we have in Jesus. So that's what the book of 2 Peter is all about.

I do encourage you this afternoon, this evening, or sometime this week, just read through the whole of the book of 2 Peter. It's only three chapters. I reckon it'll take you about 10 or 11 minutes to read through the whole thing.

But that'll be really helpful as we go through the rest of this series. With that in mind, we're going to look in detail at the passage that Ruth read to us. So please turn to verse 1. And first of all, Peter, having introduced himself, he describes who the message is for.

The message is for all believers. This is how he describes us. Now, the righteousness of God is all about God's character.

[68:12] He does what is right. He does what is good. And out of his character, we all receive the same message and the same invitation. Becoming believers is not actually about what we've done.

We've received a faith. Faith is actually a gift from God. We just act on that gift. The God-given ability for us to trust him for our salvation.

Now, when we trust in Jesus' death, that he died for us, we are saved. That ability to trust is called faith. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 18, all this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

It's about being reconciled in relationship with God through Christ and what he has done for us. God sent Jesus to take the punishment for my sin and put me in a right relationship with him, which I don't deserve.

And Peter writes, this faith that you have received is as precious as ours. Now, if you think about it, that's quite a big deal because on the surface, there's very big differences between believers like us and Peter and the other apostles.

[69:22] He's met Jesus. He's been handpicked by Jesus. He's been mentored in person by Jesus. And he's been sent in person by Jesus. But our faith is just as precious and no different to his faith or any of the original apostles.

Do you ever feel like a second-class Christian? According to Peter, there is no such thing. In the life group notes for this week, very helpfully written by Rachel, the ESV translation of that verse, it's in there.

It puts this phrase, faith of equal standing, faith of equal standing. So our faith is on equal standing with that of the apostles. Now, on the surface, we're none of those things that Peter was.

He wasn't handpicked in that way. He wasn't sent specifically by Jesus in that way. But we stand in the same relation to God. We have the same access to God the Father. We can call God Father just as much as Peter or Paul or any of the apostles.

Now, in this letter about fakes, Peter wants to assure his readers, your faith is not fake and it's precious. Now, in verse 2, Peter talks about the difference that being a Christian makes.

[70:33] He says, grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Now, on the one hand, to say

grace and peace was just a standard secular way of greeting someone, of writing the opening to a letter.

Grace was from the Greek word *charis*, often used as a hello. Peace was from the original Hebrew word *shalom*, God's peace, but it was used as a greeting. But there's more than just a greeting here because Peter is describing what we receive as people who have been justified by God.

We have grace. That is the opposite of anxious striving. It's experiencing the generous heart of God and it's the flooding into our lives of a love that delights in us.

And it leads to peace. Now, my family will tell you that I get rather anxious in airports. And whenever we have a plane to catch, I'm particularly on edge about getting to the airport on time.

I make sure we're there like not just two hours, like four hours ahead. Make sure we get through security really early. And then make sure we get to the boarding gate well, well in advance of when we actually need to be there.

[71:46] Because for some reason I'm a bit paranoid about missing the flight. But, you know, something in me changes the moment I sit on the plane. Because at that point I become completely relaxed.

Now, I realize that for some people it's the opposite experience depending on how you actually feel about flying. But for me, once I get on the plane, the thing for me is that I know that the journey no longer depends on me.

You know, up to that point I have to do something. I have to make sure I'm at certain places by certain times with certain things like my passport in my hand.

But when I'm sat on the plane, there's nothing that I can do personally to help us get to the destination. Because I can't fly a plane. I wouldn't know where to start. But I trust that the pilot can. So I relax and I enjoy the movies and I enjoy the food that they bring me. And I actually find it very peaceful and very relaxing. And that's a bit like how the grace of God in us leads to peace in us.

[72:44] Because we get to the point where we know our standing with God is not on the basis of how well we read our Bible or how much we pray or how much we listen at church. But it's solely on the basis of what Jesus has done for us when he died on the cross.

And that's how we receive peace. Knowing that there's nothing that we can do to make God love us anymore. And there's nothing that we can do to make him love us any less. There's two words in this chapter which are translated knowledge.

This one is a relational knowledge. We'll come to the second one next week. It's about an intimate sense of knowing the person through relationship. And he says the grace and peace arise in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus.

It's about knowing him in relationship. If you don't know Jesus yet but want to, that invitation is open to you. You can know him. You can know him today. You can start that today.

And I would love to talk to you about that afterwards and to pray with you. Before we go on to verse 3, I just want to pause to look at what Peter is saying about Jesus in these first two verses. Because he claims four important truths about Jesus which are important as he develops the message in the whole letter.

[74:03] Number one, Jesus is Saviour. He describes Jesus as Saviour five times in the letter. So that means that he is the one that saved us from the punishment due to us because of our sin.

So that's talking about the past tense, about what has happened when Jesus died on the cross. He saved us from the punishment. Later in the letter, Peter shows us the present and future aspects of this.

In the present, Jesus saves us from sin's power. And in the future, he will save us from even the presence of sin. We'll come on to that later. Secondly, Jesus is God.

It's there in verse 1. Now, if you remember the talk on Christmas Day, we talked about Jesus being two in one. The one who came to save us is fully human. He is also fully God.

And for Peter, this is remarkable if you think about it. He's writing about our close friend, yet he can call him God. Thirdly, Jesus is Christ. That means that he's the anointed one, the Messiah.

[75:02] The one who fulfills the promises of the Old Testament. Now, for us, we hear this all the time. It's so normal for us to put that together, Jesus and Christ. But it was radical for Peter to use these two

titles together, these two names together.

He was the first one to say, in Matthew 16, when Jesus asked, who do you say I am? He was the first one to say, you are the Messiah, the Christ. And fourthly, Jesus is Lord in verse 2. Now, to call Jesus Lord among people who knew the Old Testament is to say that Jesus was present all through the history of Israel as their covenant Lord.

Now, at the time that Peter was writing, this title was used to address the emperor. So, to call Jesus Lord was to make a decisive stand to put Jesus first in everything. Why are all these titles important?

Why am I mentioning this? Well, many of the false teachings that were around in Peter's time, and still today, arise from not acknowledging that Jesus is all of these titles. You know, teaching that Jesus is Savior without acknowledging that he's Lord will result in a very self-centered approach to our faith.

And a lack of submission to any of his teachings, which we find difficult. Peter then goes on in verse 3 and 4 to talk about the implications for our lives. Let's look at verse 3.

[76:20] His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him, who called us by his own glory and goodness. A godly life is simply living like Jesus, the man who is God, and who showed us God's character in how he lived, in everything that he did and everything that he said.

The amazing thing here is that it says we have everything we need to be like Jesus. We have the power to live the Christian life. Have you ever spent a lot of time looking for something only to discover that you had it all along?

Now, I'm sadly at the stage in life where I have to kind of adjust my glasses, especially when I'm reading the small print. I can't do that with my glasses on now, which are more for distance. I'm told I probably need varifocals.

I'm still in denial about that. And a few times recently, I've been wandering around the house, looking everywhere for my glasses, only to find, where were they? They were right here on my head, and I've forgotten that they were right on me.

Anyone here watch the Bake Off? Great British Bake Off? A few fans. Good. In some rounds of the Bake Off, they give all the contestants exactly the same ingredients, and they tell them what to bake and give them a recipe.

[77:32] And that's the competition. They have everything that they need. They don't need to pop off to the shops to buy some extra ingredients. Imagine if one of the contestants partway through that round gives up on the challenge and says, I can't bake this thing, I just don't have the ingredients, I don't have what it takes.

Mary Berry would say, no. There's other judges as well, I can't remember what they're called. She and the other judges would say, no, you've been given everything you need. Follow the recipe, and you'll be able to do it. You know, the presence of the risen Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live the way he wants us to.

To live and grow in his likeness. And I guess in this analogy, the word of God, the Bible, God's instruction to us is like the recipe. So we follow that, and the Holy Spirit gives us the power to change.

And Roger will be sharing more about that next week. So we shouldn't be swayed by false teaching, which says, if you want to really know God better and be a better Christian, you have to follow this guy, or you have to go to this particular conference, or you have to have this particular experience. That's not true. God has given us everything that we need. Verse 4. Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[78:53] We talked about having everything that we need for the present. Verse 4 is about everything that's coming in the future. That's where God's promises come in. God's promise is always to be with us.

And he promises that Jesus is coming back to seal his reign forever. And he promises that there's an inheritance waiting for us. All these promises are found in the Bible.

2 Corinthians 1 verse 20 says, For no matter how many promises God has made, they are yes in Christ. God's promises to us are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

And if we hold on to God's promises, then we may participate in the divine nature. That's an amazing phrase. It's a unique phrase in the New Testament. What it doesn't mean is that we become God.

What it does mean is that we get conformed to being more like God. In Romans 8, Paul talks about being conformed to the image of his son. It means we grow into Christ's likeness.

[79:55] Put simply, if you know Jesus, you can become like Jesus. As we grow to be more like Christ, we can resist and stand up against the corruption that we face in the world now.

That's a process which has begun now, but it will be completed when we meet Jesus in glory. The wonderful promise for our eternal future is that we will escape sin altogether.

Right now we have to fight against it, resist it. But in the future, we can escape it altogether. Isn't that wonderful? That relates to Jesus coming back, which is the theme that Peter develops through this letter.

We'll see in the weeks to come. Being conformed to the image of the son, being more like Jesus is a process, which we start when we first believe in Jesus and what he's done for us.

For now, we're a work in progress. One day we'll be a finished work. We will be like him. Imagine if you're finding life difficult now, struggling with the cold weather, but you had a holiday book for next week somewhere warm.

[80:57] I know that Kathy has got tickets booked on Thursday to go off to the States. We're so thankful to God that she and John are able to go. And I'm guessing for Kathy that if she's finding things a little bit tough this week and these next few days, she can really look forward to going to the States on Thursday, maybe being in some warm weather, I don't know, but certainly seeing her family.

And that'll help her in the now because there's something to look forward to, something greater. This is what Peter is encouraging us to do, to look ahead to our eternal future, to look ahead to heaven because that changes our outlook on the present.

The power of that promise is that our desires get changed. We look to heaven as we journey through this world. C.S. Lewis put it like this in his book, Mere Christianity.

He said, The evangelicals who abolished the slave trade all left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven.

It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither.

[82:36] Aim at earth and you will get through it. Now, in summary, as we finish up, these four verses give us a wonderful picture of what it means to be a believer. We're given a new standing of somebody reconciled into a relationship with God and given a new role to imitate Jesus.

And we're provided with all the resources that we need to do that through God's abundant provision. The question for us is, where is your life aligned? To the world around you or to the future in heaven?

It keeps challenges to align ourselves not to what we were, but to what we're going to fully become. God has given you everything that you need to start with him, to carry on with him, and to finish up with him.

The author and pastor Alistair Begg described this as the commencement, the continuance, and the completion of the Christian life. We've been given everything for all of that.

God has given you in Jesus everything that you need to begin it, to sustain it, and to finish a life in all its calling. You don't need to go scurrying around looking for it somewhere. It's all found in Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

[83:48] We're going to spend a bit of time to respond to that message to us now. Just invite the musicians to come up and prepare. and I'll just ask them to play quietly as we just spend some time, just in quiet, just respect them what God is saying to us, to his word, and what I would spend to you in the time of time.

And we're both with him. Amen.

We realise that sometimes we've been led astray by things which sound good and which feel good and which look good, but they're not your gospel truth and they're not from you. And we're sorry for that.

We're sorry for being led astray by things which aren't the truth. They're not the truth from you that says you've done what we need. You've done everything to reconcile us to you in Jesus Christ and him dying for us.

And we're so thankful for that. And we thank you that because of that we don't need to strive. We don't need to do our best. We want to do our best in response to you, but we don't need to do our best in order for you to love us.

[85:52] And we're so thankful for that. Thank you that you give us everything. Thank you that you are alive. And thank you that you're coming back. And thank you for the promise that we have an eternal future with you.

Lord, we do long for that, but we don't long for that nearly enough. And we're sorry for that. Help us to fix our gaze on you. To fix our gaze on the hope you give us for the future.

So that that can change our perspective on the life we're living now, in the world that we're living now. Give us the power through your spirit to live for you. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. As we continue to respond, I invite you to stand and we're going to sing together. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[88:02] Amen. To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness. Morning by morning new mercies I see.

All I have needed, thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Pardon for sin and the peace that endureth.

Thine own dear presence to here and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

[89:42] Blessings for mine with ten thousand beside. Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness.

Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed, thy hand hath provided.

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. As we're standing, please receive the blessing.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.