

That You May Know

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 April 2024

Preacher: Julian Ng

[0:00] Good morning. Good morning, church. Good to see everyone. Good morning, G. Hey, it is an honor and a privilege to share the message today. Not one I take lightly, but at the same time, there's just so much joy. There's so much joy being here in the Father's house together with you all and to have this opportunity.

I have the privilege of closing us off in 1 John. For those who've been coming for a while, we've been through this series where we've been looking at this special letter from the Apostle John, sometimes called the Apostle of Love.

And we've heard some great things. Just to recap, we began in chapter 1 with how John speaks of being eyewitnesses to Christ in the flesh. Nothing less than the Son of God came in human form. We saw how we were called to live in the light and that because of who Christ is, we have freedom to confess our sins to one another, knowing there is forgiveness. We saw how Jesus is our advocate. More than that, our propitiation for our sins. He bore the wrath of God, the penalty of sin for us.

We saw we are called to love one another because we are children of God. There was a warning about the Antichrist. There were those at that time who taught something contrary to the true gospel, who in some way, shape, or form compromised on who Jesus was, denying that he was the Son of God and came in the flesh.

[1:29] James preached that see we be. We are called to see who we are, see how much we are loved as children of God, to be nothing less than a reflection of his image as we were originally called to be.

And to do that together in community. There was another warning about false teaching and a call to discern the spirits of the age. We saw how God is love and because God is love, we are called to love him and to love one another.

Aaron and Jay brought us through in the beginning of chapter five, which talks about how our love for God and our love for each other is inextricably tied together. You can't have one without the other.

And we saw how by faith we overcome the world and all its sin, all its challenges. And James finished our last sermon on 1 John with the testimony, the trifold testimony of the blood, spirit, and the cross, which points to who Jesus, sorry, the water, blood, and the spirit, which points to who Jesus is.

You know, John's got a particular style. He kind of runs around in circles a bit. But when you get to the end of the letter and when you've read through the whole thing, you see two themes coming through so clearly.

[2:49] Firstly, Jesus is the son of God. And secondly, faith must be lived out in our lives. We have to apply what we have heard. We have to love God. We have to love each other.

And there's this beautiful assurance as John closes. And that's the tone I want to set as we come together to finish and look at this last bit together.

So at this point, can I invite you all to stand for the word of the Lord as we always do. First letter of the Apostle John, chapter 5, verse 13.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the request that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask.

[3:55] And God will give him life to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Amen. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

John wants us to have assurance as he closes. There's a beautiful promise here. He goes on to say, this is the confidence that we have towards him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

[5:04] I was reminded of a similar promise from the Gospel of John, which we know John also wrote. And we know that you heard from Jesus himself, he said, before he went to the cross, he said, if you ask of me anything in my name, I will do it.

There's this beautiful confidence that we can have as we bring our request to God. But it's on the condition that we pray according to his will. And that's a big condition because our hearts are not always in the right place as we come to God.

We come with our own thoughts and our agendas. And I think our relationship with our parents can sometimes illustrate this. I have a story about my dad. I actually prepared this before I knew he was coming.

But my dad's just sitting in the front row there. So when I was a kid, it's funny. John finishes with the invitation, little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Well, when I was a kid, I had an idol. And it was called RuneScape. I don't know if I'm speaking to the Gen Zs. RuneScape is still running, apparently, according to my sermon prep, anyway.

[6:13] But this is a game where you could, you live in this mythical world and you would gather money and you would kill and slay dragons. You'd learn spells. You'd upgrade your sword. You know, kind of like new life, real life, right?

And I used to love to play this game whenever I got back from school. And it ran on this thing called Java, Java software, before the smartphone days, right?

And, yeah, I used to love to play this game. The only problem was it would only work on my dad's MacBook Pro. So I had that old, like, black MacBook. You remember when they used to come in black and white?

Back in those days? And, yeah, I couldn't play it on that. So I had to wait for my dad to come home. And so what I'd end up doing is I would call my dad. He's a doctor.

He works at a clinic. And I called him. I called him in his clinic. I'm asking, hey, dad, can you come home? When are you coming home? And actually, my dad, being the wholesome guy, he was like, oh, that's so sweet.

[7:17] My son misses me. My son misses me. He just wants to spend time with me. He just wants to hang out. And this continued for a while in this little pattern. And I, like, tout out that he played the MacBook Pro when he got back.

And but then one day he came back and he left his MacBook Pro in the clinic. And I was like, I tried to be as subtle as possible, but I was seven.

Yeah, you're not subtle at that point. And I asked him, hey, dad, where's your MacBook Pro? And then that's when the penny dropped for him, because that's when he realized that I was kind of using him as a means to an end, you know?

I was really just looking for him because I wanted his MacBook Pro, not because I missed him. And I think, yeah, he shares that story, and he's amused by it.

We all are. But sadly, it does kind of illustrate our hearts sometimes, right? We look to the father, and we come with our own agenda. We're not really looking for him.

[8:14] We're looking to get something out of him. There's something in all of our hearts at some point that has said, God, I don't want you. I want your stuff. And I think that grieves him.

My dad will probably admit if you grow him hard enough, it grieved him as well. But what's beautiful about that is that he bore that grief internally.

He never shared that with me until years later, which I think is like a beautiful illustration of the gospel itself, right? The father is grieved by our hearts. But he bears that within himself, and he sends his son.

He sends his son to take that grief, that pain, that penalty upon himself. And I was reminded as well of this famous quote by C.S. Lewis.

It says, There's something there about how our hearts are fixated on the things of this world, and we can't see beyond that, even though God wants something more for us.

[9 : 30] He wants us to go beyond our kiddie pools, our runescapes, and our MacBook Pros, right? He wants to show us more. He wants us to share his heart, to desire what he desires, and those are greater things.

Those are greater things. One thing we can be sure of that is on God's heart is that he wants to see sinners set free. We know that, right? When we read through 1 John, I'm reminded of, if you go back and if you have your Bibles, if you want to read your Bibles, chapter 3.

It says, the reason the Son of... Chapter 3, verse 8, second half. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. He came to deal decisively with sin.

That's on God's heart. That's something we know he wants. And that's why we can have this assurance that John speaks of here. That if we ask anything according to his will, we know he hears us.

We know that we have that. So there's a call here. It's a pretty simple call. It's consistent with what we've heard throughout the rest of John. Love God, love each other. If you love your brother and you see them going down the wrong path, you'll pray for them.

[10 : 39] It's just a natural expression of your love for that person. And so I think there's a simple invitation for us all to just remember, hey, are we praying for one another? You know, James talks all the time about who are your three?

Who's your Timothy? Who's your Barnabas? Who's your Paul? Who's pouring into you? Who are you peers with? Who are you pouring into? Because if you have those three, then you're going to have people whose hearts have a burden for you when they see you going off the wrong path, right?

And they'll be praying for you. So do we have that? That's my challenge. That's my exhortation to all of you. Do we have people who are going to lovingly and gently call us to account?

That's the main takeaway, I believe, from looking at this passage. And I think if we're faithful to that, we're faithful to the heart of what John's trying to say. But I want to acknowledge what comes after, which is quite a difficult verse.

And it says, there's the promise, right? He shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death.

[11 : 44] I do not say that one should pray for that. I don't know about you, but when I first read that, I was like, whoa, that kind of hits hard. That's like a cold water to the face. And it leaves you wondering, what is that sin that leads to death?

It's a difficult verse. And John doesn't actually explicitly say what that is. But I'd be remiss if I didn't try to address it and share some possible interpretations with you.

I'll share what I think are perhaps better ones. The first interpretation some have taken of this is that this is referring to some specific class of heinous crimes or sins that are unforgivable.

And you see that played out in some church traditions as well. So they're trying to extrapolate and categorize sins according to what John is saying here. I think that's the least credible interpretation. It dangerously veers us into legalism of trying to categorize artificially our sins. And it doesn't square with what you see in the gospel.

[12 : 53] One of those heinous sins might be murder. Paul was the chief of sinners. He murdered Christians. He persecuted them. And yet he, his life testifies to the grace of God.

He turned around. He had an encounter with the Lord. He was saved. The second possible interpretation is that this might refer to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Jesus talks about this in the Gospels.

But you have to pay attention to the context when you read that verse because he's performing miracles. And the Pharisees oppose him even in the face of clear signs of his power and his

authority.

And they say, no, you're casting out demons by Satan. And then that's when he talks about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. As being the only sin that cannot be forgiven. That's one possible interpretation that I think might be more likely.

Because it refers to a complete rejection of Jesus even in the face of his revelation. Or it could refer to false teaching. That's the third possible interpretation. And we know that's at the background of what John is concerned about.

[13:59] There are people who are preaching false gospels. False truths about who Jesus is. Denying that he came in the flesh. That he was the son of God. So maybe John has that in mind.

Regardless of what interpretation you take. I think there are a few things we can say for sure. The first is that we cannot take sin lightly. It costs something. We know that, right?

We're one week away from Easter. And that should, I think, stir up something in us of reverence before God. To know how much it costs. And that doesn't come at the cost of a vision of his love, his grace.

In fact, I think it magnifies it. We see how much God has given. How much he has borne for us. And I think that lines up with what we see in the rest of the Bible, right?

In the Old Testament and the New Testament, by the way. There's sin that does lead to death. There's discipline that does lead to death. It's not something to be taken lightly. That's something I wanted to make clear.

[15:03] But know this church. In the light of the cross, there is forgiveness. There's forgiveness for all who come to the Lord in faith. With a humble and contrite heart. And say, Lord, I need you.

Have mercy upon me, a sinner. We know that. And that's the fruit of belief. That's the fruit of something that I think shows you're on the right path.

By God's grace. You see. That's the first point I wanted to make. Should have maybe started out with that.

If you want to take two things away from today. I want you to hear. Jesus provides is the first one. Jesus provides a way to be heard. And so we pray. And that leads me on to my second point. Jesus protects us. Jesus protects from the penalty of sin. Its power. And one day its presence. Would you look at the assurance here in chapter five?

[16:02] As we go on. Verse 18. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning. But he who is born of God protects him. And the evil one does not touch him.

We know. We know. We know. That's something that's repeated. John wants us to know. That. If we have been born of God. We will not keep on sinning. It's not in our nature. That's the first point I want to make here.

It's not in our nature. If you look at chapter three of this letter. Verse nine. He's repeating what he's already stated. No one born of God makes the practice of sinning.

For God's seed abides in him. And he cannot keep on sinning. Because he has been born of God. Gabe preached a few weeks ago about how the apple does not fall far from the tree. And I think that's a good illustration of.

As we come to know God. As we're saved. We. We become like him. It's in our nature. To reflect his image. To reflect his character. But there's this assurance too.

[17:06] That Jesus will protect us from sin. And we need that. We need that in this world. This complex dark world. And we've seen this throughout John.

We saw that Jesus is the advocate for us. That he. Satan stands and accuses us of our sin. All the things we've done wrong to God. But Jesus steps in and says.

No. No God. I. Appeals to the father. And he says. I appeal not only to your grace. But to your. Righteousness. Because I have borne the cost of this man.

This woman's sin. So it is not only graceful for you to forgive him. But just for you to forgive him. Because the debt has been paid. And Jesus also protects us in our prayers.

And that's a beautiful truth I've seen. In scripture. I'm reminded of. Again. The night before his betrayal. And. And in the lead up to Good Friday.

[18:06] He. He has his exchange with. With Peter. Right. He says. Peter. You are going to betray me. You know that. Right. You deny me three times.

But he says this. As well. Simon. Simon. Behold. Satan demanded to have you. That he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you. That your faith may not fail. And when you have turned

again.

Strengthen your brothers. I think that's what John is getting at. When he says. The son of God. He who was born of God. Will protect you. And.

And we see how Jesus. Does in fact protect Peter. He denies Jesus. But he doesn't fall away. He grieves his sin. He turns back. And there's that. Beautiful story in John chapter 21.

About. Jesus asking him. After he's raised. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

And it's. This redemptive moment of. This chance for Peter to affirm. Three times.

[19:08] Just as he did. Three times. To repair that. To affirm three times. Jesus I love you. And.

And John says. Then feed my sheep. And Peter does that. He becomes a pillar of the church.

He. Offers. Books that are in the New Testament. He dies for his faith. That transformation is available. For us. Too. And.

I've seen. I've seen Jesus protect me. For my own sin. And I've seen that through the church.

Through. Through the experience that. We have as the body of Christ.

I think. John is. When he's talking about. He who was born of the son of God. Protects him. He's talking about Jesus. And we have this direct. Relationship with Jesus. And. We pray to him.

And we know his protection. But the beautiful thing about. God's plan of salvation. Is that he wants to do it. Through. Us. He could have done it alone. But he chose not to. He appointed.

[20:06] Twelve. Random guys. To start the church. And he. Is with us now. And he's working through each of you. For us who believe. In the name of the son of God. And I've seen that.

I mean. You know. You get to know me long enough. You know. I'm a relatively serious guy. You know. I'm a fun guy. As Kawhi Leonard says. And.

And you know. I think that. Illustrates something about my heart. How there is this kind of diligent.

Hard working part of me. That just wants to do good. Just wants to do good. And there's something good about that.

But there's also this. Dark side to it. Right. Where. If I. If I fail. Or if. Someone disappoints me. Or I disappoint them. I just get so caught up. I just get so caught up. Or I'm so caught up on my.

On myself. That I forget even why I'm here. What am I doing? Am I loving people? Or is this about me? You know. And. And. And it reminded me of the elder son.

[21:05] In the parable of the prodigal son. If you're familiar with that. Read it in the gospels. It's a beautiful illustration of. The gospel message. Because there's this elder son. Who's worked.

All his life. To please the father. And he can't get over that. When the younger son. Who's forsaken his father. Squandered all his wealth. Comes back. And then the father welcomes him.

And says hey. Let's throw a party. He's so upset about that. Because. That's just not fair. That's just not fair. And I'm reminded of that. Elder son. And me too. But what I've seen church.

Is that. We. They say holiness is. Caught. It's not taught. Right. So. As I see the purity of the love. That is here. You know. When I hear from.

Jojo about her. And I see her grieve. For. For the people. In that no man's land. When I see. Hey. When you're. When you see your pastor. Calls you juju. In front of everyone else. You can only take yourself.

[21:59] So seriously. Right. And. And then. There's countless other people. My wife. Florence.

My clan. Who's just. A silly mess. And I love them to bits. Like. Who just keep me in check.

Right. And then. I see the grace of God. Working in them. I see the grace of God. Working in them.

Shaping my own heart. To. To just help that elder son. Come back into the party. When I'm loved.

Despite my failures. That. That warms me. That warms me. That lets my guard down. So let's keep doing that. Can we keep doing that? Hey.

And just to close. John finishes with. This simple command. Little children. Keep yourselves from idols. Of course. There's the sin of the elder son. And. And there's the sin of the younger son.

As well. Who. It's. It's similar to that story. I shared earlier. The younger son. Says to. The father.

Hey. I don't want you. I just want your stuff. I want what I can get out of you. Just give it to me. And I'm going.

[22:57] There's something. Of that. In each of us as well. And so. The challenge. The loving challenge. From John. To close. Is. What are. What are you. What are your idols.

Church. What are you looking to. For protection. For provision. When I. When I. Only. Can protect. And provide.

For you. So I just want to. Close on that simple. Question. What are we looking to. And will we look. To Jesus. Who provides. And protects.

So. Can I invite the band. To come up. To close this. And. Let me pray. For us. Jesus.

We thank you. For you. For you. The light. Has shone into the darkness. And the darkness. Has not overcome it. Let us look to you. Our light. Our salvation. The one.

[23 : 55] Who provides. Provides a way. To be heard. Provides a way. To enjoy. relationship with you and with one another. And Jesus, may we look to you, the one who protects in this dark age.

There are times in our lives we look to other things for provision and for protection. Help us see that that only comes from you ultimately.

However many good things there are in this world, in this world you've created, that you are redeeming. Let us turn to you, our true Redeemer. And we thank you that we don't have to do this alone, that we can do this together.

We are called to love you and to love one another. So would you help us be a church that models that and responds to Jesus, our King, in that way.

We pray this in your name. Amen.