

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, The Johannine Epistles

Session 2A – Theological Themes in

1st, 2nd, and 3rd John

This is Dr. Robert Yarbrough in his teaching on the Johannine Epistles, Balancing Life in Christ. This is session number 2A, Theological Themes in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.

Welcome to the second of a series of lectures on John's letters, and we're calling this Balancing Life in Christ.

If you're looking for exposition of 1st John, go to lecture 5. If you're looking for exposition of 3rd John, go to lecture 3. And if you're looking for a lecture on 2nd John, then go to lecture 4. But in this lecture, I want to sort of overview the theological themes in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John to kind of bring them together and get a sense for the framework that we have when we look at any of the Johannine letters. A theological theme can be defined as a topic or an idea that identifies or describes a truth about God, whether we're talking about Father, Son, or Spirit, or an idea or topic that deals with God-saving work, or any aspect of man in the world as God views them. And, of course, we learn how God views mankind and the world through revealed Scripture.

Now, you don't need a technical method to recognize the theological themes in John's letters. You can recognize themes intuitively by reading Scripture, alert to what it says about God, about humans, about sin, about salvation. The basic saving message in the Bible, which is the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that basic message is clear without specialist training or instruction.

But if you're watching these lectures, you probably are at a more advanced level of understanding. You probably have a sense that following God, believing in Christ, involves serving Him. The word for service or ministry is diakonia in Christianity, and the book of Ephesians talks about the need for God's people to be trained for the work of the diakonia.

God has given leaders, like apostles, pastors, and teachers, He's given them to the church for the equipping of God's people for the work of diakonia. And so, to do that work well, to connect with God well through faith in Christ and to be of service to Him and to glorify Him, we need to have more than a surface understanding of the theological themes in Scripture and in John's letters. And so, we're going to look at these letters through a particular lens that will help clarify what's in the letters.

And I didn't come up with this question, I was asked a couple of years ago to deal with these letters, and this question arises from a church in a part of the world that's

persecuted. And so, as a group, they were studying these letters, largely online, because it's very hazardous for them to come together in public, and their leaders asked me, would you present the theological themes in John's letters, answering this question, what does John have to say to Christians who are dying for their faith? That's one scenario, you know, faithful Christians who are not betraying Christ or their confession or each other, and if necessary, dying for their faith. And on the other hand, to Christians who are living with their bloodless religion.

And what he meant by that was, they're living with a religion in an affluent area or in a peaceful area where it's not going to cost them anything, you know, their religion is bloodless. So, two groups, and this question assumes that some are willing to die for their faith, and John's letters speak to that group. They're an encouragement to the very highest level of courage, loyalty, and sacrifice in Christ's service.

At the same time, in John's setting and in ours, people face the temptation to languish in a bloodless religion that makes low demands. Some are not so zealous or committed that they would lay down their life rather than deny Christ if this were required of them. And John writes to warn weak or false believers and to call them back to the costly but glorious truth of Christ, you know, a balanced Christian life that can balance our self-interest against God's interest in redemption of the world, and sometimes sacrifices involved for faithfulness to Christ.

So, I want to pause and ask why we should think that John, in his letters, has any special insight into this question. And there are a number of reasons. One reason is that, like all of Scripture, 1 and 3 John are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We know all Scripture is inspired by God, and it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God can be fully equipped for every good work we're called to. And God uses his word to uphold his people in their darkest hour of trial. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he quoted the book of Deuteronomy.

When he was on the cross, he quoted the book of Psalms. The word of God is powerful to uphold even the Son of God when he's under duress and under trial. And it's often true that as he was sent into the world, he sent his disciples into the world, and sometimes that requires self-sacrifice.

And God's word upholds God's people in that hour. Another reason I think John has insight is that he has a pastoral concern for people who may be deceiving themselves about the sin and darkness in their lives. He's concerned about them.

And we'll see in 1 John chapter 1, there are people, apparently, who claim to have fellowship with God, but they're walking in darkness. That describes a bloodless religion that enables them to avoid persecution as they stray from Christ. And as they

follow what John warns about in 1 John 4, he warns them about the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already, 1 John 4:3. John has a concern for people who may be cashing in the integrity of their confession and walking in darkness.

Either because they like that or because it avoids drawing attention to them, which might cause persecution. A third reason why I think John has insight into this is that John knows the trauma of suffering, as he writes. Not his own martyrdom, although he's writing from Patmos, or he later will write from Patmos, because he's going to know about arrest and imprisonment.

But he does know about the death of others dear to him. He has witnessed, and he's been affected by trauma, and that makes him a credible guide for people facing real or possible trauma due to their commitment in Christ. First of all, recall the trauma of seeing Jesus die on the cross, including the spear into his torso.

That's in John chapter 19. One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness.

This is John saying, I saw this. His testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe. I don't know if you've seen somebody die.

I don't know if you've been around physical violence and felt the adrenaline when people strike each other. Maybe people throw a rock. People do something.

Maybe there's blood. Maybe there's vocal anguish. People groan, or people cry, or people fall.

These are things that you don't forget. People around the world read the Bible, and it's easy to romanticize it. You can make television shows out of it, which may be okay, but TV is an imaginary medium.

You sit and you watch it, and its actors. It's one thing to see things enacted, and it can seem quite graphic, but you're in control of the situation. You can get up and get popcorn if you want to, or you can turn it off.

The cascade of events on the night Jesus was betrayed, going into his trial, and the next day when he was crucified, these were events out of control, and they just kept getting worse. The scourging of Jesus, the crown of thorns on his head, and the mocking of Jesus. This was somebody that, especially his followers, he didn't deserve any of this, and it was just being heaped on him, and it seemed like a car going downhill.

As you read the Gospels, you can see Pilate is trying to say, Look, I don't have anything on this person, let's let him go. But there were forces at work that were not going to let him go, and they didn't let him go, and so the end is him on the cross with even his dead body being desecrated by soldiers sticking a spear into it, treating it like a dog or a piece of meat or something. That would be traumatic if you're the beloved disciple, and you think that Jesus could be the deliverer of Israel, and all of a sudden, everything's reversed, and he's treated in such a terrible way.

Or you can think of Jesus' arrest. John 18.10 says that during his arrest, a man's ear was cut off, and in the drama of this moment, in John 18, Jesus saves John and the others from being arrested themselves. When the soldiers appear, Jesus tells them, I told you that I am he, so if you seek me, let these men go.

And then John writes, This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, of those whom you gave me, I have lost, not one. John knew personally of Jesus' ability to save his followers from harm, because he was in this pressure-packed moment in the dark of night with the soldiers with their torches and all their weapons, and they're going to arrest everybody. And Jesus saves them.

He says, I'm the one you're after, take me, let these men go, and amazingly, they do it. That's trauma. There's the trauma of arrest and imprisonment and beating.

In the earliest days of the church, John was among the apostles who were arrested and imprisoned in Acts 5:18. They were freed by an angel in verse 5.19 of Acts. They were tried before the Sanhedrin, who wanted to kill the apostles, including John, as we read in Acts 5. And it was decided not to kill them, but they were beaten before being released, Acts 5:40-42. So John had personal experience of arrest, of physical suffering, of the threat of death for faithful gospel proclamation. And he also knew what I'm sure he felt was the miracle of divine deliverance.

But these were all traumatic events. There's the trauma of John's brother, James, Peter, James, and John. John and James were brothers.

And this James is the second known martyr in the early church, the first being Stephen. James was arrested and he was killed in Acts chapter 12, verse 1. About that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. So, James was first in line, maybe they just, you know, caught him, then they were going to go for Peter. Who do you think they would have gone for next? They would have gone for John.

But of course, Peter is released, remember, an angel comes into his cell and tells him to get up and get dressed, and he walks out the door, and then he goes to where the Christians are hiding. He knocks on the door, and the servant girl who answers the door sees it's him, and she goes back and reports, and she says, There's Peter, and they think it's a ghost of some kind. They've been praying for his release, but when he shows up, they can't believe that it's him.

But it was him. But John, you know, he's living through all this, and it's his brother who has his head cut off, and Peter narrowly escapes this, and I think, you know, John might have been next. There's another trauma that John went through.

John served for years, we read, as a pastor in Jerusalem, along with Peter and James, the half-brother of Jesus. So you've got James, the half-brother of Jesus, who seems to be the main pastor, but Peter and John are serving with him. This is in Galatians 2.9. Paul calls them the pillars.

And we also read about them in Acts 15. James was martyred, and I don't know if you've served alongside other Christians. You may be watching this, you may be on a staff somewhere, formal or informal, serving on a leadership team.

We grow close as Christians serving in a church. We especially grow close if we're staff members serving side-by-side. And it seems that James, the half-brother of Jesus, and John and Peter served from the 1840s, at least, down into the early 1860s.

So, 15, 20, maybe 25 years or more that they had been a ministry team. And James is compelled, according to the ancient reports, to stand on the temple wall and to address the crowd, and they want him to tell the crowd that Jesus is not the king of Israel. Jesus is not the Messiah.

And James is somebody called, he was called Camel Knees, and the reports say that he would go to the temple every day and pray on his knees on the stone steps and pray for Israel, pray for his Jewish countrymen to receive Jesus as the Messiah. So, he's not going to deny this after preaching it for years and praying for Israel. And so, he affirms what he believes about Jesus, and he's executed.

One report says they threw him off the wall, another says he got hit in the head with somebody that had a club, it was actually a paddle to turn clothes in laundry vats. People who walked there were called fullers in English. So, a fuller was there, and he bashed James' brains in with his club after they'd thrown him off the wall.

Well, again, whether John was there or not, it was his colleague that's murdered on this occasion. And this is another memory that he would carry with him to the grave. I've already mentioned in the first lecture, John and James trying to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritans.

It's easy to pass over, but have you ever wanted to kill someone? Have you ever felt the impulse to choke somebody, or have you ever, in a fit of anger, desired someone's harm? Well, John did, and Luke 9.55 says Jesus rebuked him and James for it. Now I think he was forgiven for this, but I've had an impulse or two like this, and I don't think, unless I lose my mind, I will never forget it. It's a shameful memory for that urge to kill to rise up in you.

It happens. It happened to me as a teenager, and I'm not proud of it. I'm glad God has forgiven me for it, but these are traumatic things that become part of our memory bank, part of our character.

They remind us that John has experienced the hard aspects of living life, the beauty of forgiveness and reconciliation, but also the memory of the raw edges of what we are, what people around us are capable of. And then, you know, issues, events that make us grieve and that never quite leave us. In the footnotes to my lecture here, I've got a book that's well-known among counselors in English.

It's by Bessel, that's B-E-S-S-E-L, Bessel van der Kolk, K-O-L-K. And it's called *The Body Keeps the Score*. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*.

Trauma is a reality; it's part of our bodies. Not so much trauma done to us, although that counts, but the trauma that affects us, just being in its proximity, as again I said, feeling the adrenaline, you know, witnessing something that we cannot unsee, and it's there from that time on, and it affects us. Another trauma for John, and the last one I'll mention, is that he would have witnessed, and we don't know at what distance, but he would have witnessed the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the late 1860s.

However near to this John was, we don't know how much in advance of the Roman pillage and devastation that he exited Jerusalem, but many thousands of his fellow Jews died, and doubtless many Messianic Jews died with them. By Messianic Jews, I mean Jews who lived in Judea and Jerusalem who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. And most of them didn't, but many of them did.

And these believers would have died when the Romans came in and killed every living thing that they could find. The blood ran in the streets, literally. John and other Christians survived.

As I said, they obeyed a warning that they remembered from Jesus to flee the city when they saw the armies heaping up the battlements around them. But we can compare the sacking of Jerusalem to many other situations. There are cities that

have been overwhelmed in recent years, at least from the standpoint of my giving this lecture, as Russia is bombarding Ukraine all the time.

That's very traumatic. I'm living in a city right now where there was just a tornado and a devastated block after block after block. It killed five people.

People are living in the rubble of their brick houses, if they're still living. If you live through that, this is traumatic. The day after the tornado, I was texting a pastor who lived in that neighborhood, and he was driving when the tornado went by, and he said it was the scariest thing in his life.

And he was a man in his 70s who's seen a lot of scary things. But he said just the force of the wind, he says he doesn't know how he lived, but things were being picked up and disappearing and being destroyed all around him. He'll never forget that.

And that's just a tornado in a little city with five people dead. We're not talking about 50,000 or more people dead, as happened in Jerusalem. The fall of Jerusalem will be another traumatic experience that qualified John to write honestly about faith in Christ through times of trial and suffering and death.

So, the point I'm making here is that John's letters are not sanitized, abstract musings about ideas. They come from a beloved disciple of Jesus who witnessed death and lived in a community constantly threatened by arrest and even execution, as happened to Stephen, John's brother James, and John's co-pastor James, the brother of Jesus. John could therefore speak with gentleness yet authority both to those facing possible death and to those whose faith was lax and who did not know Christ at all.

And I think of 1 John 5:12, you know, getting near the end of the book of 1 John, whoever has the son has life. Stephen had life, James, both his brother and his co-pastor, and they all had life. It was taken from them, but they went from this life to life in God, life in Christ.

Whoever has the son has this life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. They may be metabolizing, but they don't know the quality of life that comes from a communion with God.

So, I want us to be very clear that, you know, John is somebody who well understands real life and well understands the quality of community life when the stakes are high. I'm thinking here of a couple of dozen visits that I made some years ago over the course of about 17 years to the country of Sudan in Africa. And during that whole time, Christians were being persecuted.

And we would gather and we would teach Christian leaders. And the rejoicing was profound in our worship sessions. But one of the reasons that the rejoicing was so profound is that people were so relieved to be able to live another day, because they were always subject to arrest and harassment by the religious majority in the country of Sudan.

And there were plenty of people known to everybody who had been killed. And there were some people in every conference who, in the years previous, had been arrested and tortured. But they were still true to the gospel.

They knew the joy of salvation. Some of them felt their mission was to witness to Muslims. You know, Jesus said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

And they found joy and they found a purpose and a meaning in scheming, praying. How can I share the gospel with another Muslim? How can I see them come to Christ? And there were plenty of people in these conferences who had been born into Islam and who were confessing faith in Christ. But they appreciated the life, the vitality, the sense of forgiveness of sins, the assurance of a future in Christ, which Islam doesn't offer.

There's no assurance of salvation in Islam compared to the assurance we have of a savior who rose from the dead and who appeared to his disciples and who says, I go to prepare a place for you. You know, we have a very real assurance that's more real to us than the life we're now living. This life will end.

This life is expendable. But our real life is abiding with God in Christ in the age to come. And John understood this.

And so, as we look at his letters, you know, I want you to take with you just the recollection of the real-life dimension of John, who knew the trauma that you probably know. I think all of us, if we think about it, know trauma. In some cases, we know trauma just from our upbringing, because certain styles of parenting, like being beaten by your parents, perhaps, or being deserted by your parents, these things are traumatic.

John knew what trauma was. God knows what trauma is, and the gospel addresses it. So, we're talking about theological concepts in John's letters, and I'm going to take an empirical approach to this.

Every statement in scripture is true, as we interpret it correctly, but we do observe that biblical writers place emphasis on what they talk about the most. In other words, the frequency of mention implies focus, the emphasis of a biblical book. The

more they talk about something, the more that's probably what we should pay attention to in the book.

For general ministry purposes, the search for theological themes should center on what is most prominent in a biblical book. And when we analyze the Greek text of John's letters, we find a dozen most frequent words that summarize his theological message. So again, thinking of our question, what does John have to say to Christians who are dying for their faith, and to Christians who are living with their bloodless religion, we want to look at this from the standpoint of these prominent words, and I've got these listed in the order of their occurrence.

These are the 12 most frequently repeated words in John's letters. God, loving, knowing, with a word that's a more experiential kind of knowing in general, the idea of abiding or remaining, number five, world, cosmos, number six, son, capital S, that is the son of God, seven, love, eight, sin, nine, another word for knowing, oida, which tends to be more of knowledge of principles or truths, number 10, hearing, number 11, commandment, and number 12, father. So, what I've done is drop a chart, and we're going to look at each of these words, and we're going to look at John's message for the faithful dying, and we're going to look at John's message for those who are lax.

So, let's start with God. God is mentioned 62 times in 1 John, mentioned twice in 2 John, and three times in 3 John. A typical reference here would be 1 John 2:14, I write to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning, I write to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

The message there for the faithful dying is that the eternal one defeats the evil one. For all believers, at all stages of faith in Christ, the eternal one defeats the evil one. He does this through the word that he implants in his people, and through this word, they overcome all evil and fear.

Now it's not just a word in the sense of words on a page, it is words on a page or in a text, but this word conveys God to us. It conveys what it is that's required for our hearts to be open to what they were closed to. God is real, and he opens our hearts through his word.

Let me read this again, I write to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning, I write to you young men because you are strong and the word of God abides in you. Of course, Jesus is called the Word of God in John's gospel. So we can think of this in Christological terms as well as scriptural terms, but they're both present.

You have overcome the evil one. That's John's message for the faithful dying. Through the word, you overcome the evil one.

Now for the lax, for those whose talk is not matched by a faith expressing itself in obedience, John is aware that they're deceiving themselves and they may be deceiving others, but they're not deceiving God. So John has a warning for those with a bloodless religion. Whoever says I know him, that's easy to say, it's easy to say, oh yeah, I know God, I believe in Jesus.

Whoever says I know him but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word in him, truly the love of God is perfected. So, this is his message for the lax, people who say one thing but live in a different way.

I said those people are deceiving themselves. John is actually more direct. He says that person is a liar.

And the translation is whoever; it's a little bit broader. The Greeks are the ones who. So, it really personifies this individual and specifies, personalizes the person that's envisioned.

So, it's not just this generic faceless mass, but as you read this, at least as I read it in the original, I think of, is it I, Lord? The one who, the person who does this. This is the message for the lax. When it comes to God, it's easy to say something, especially because we're made in God's image.

And as you travel the world, you will see there's a general conception of divinity. And in every language, there's a word for what we call God in English. But that word can mean all kinds of things.

Allah in Islam is a very different being than Yahweh, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit in the Christian scriptures. They mean the same thing as far as the final authority in each religion, but they have a very different character, and they have brought a very different message to the earth. So that's the contrasting messages about God.

For the faithful, the eternal one defeats the evil one. And you can overcome, and you do, through him and his word. For the lax, don't fool yourself.

They're not fooling God. Secondly, love. Notice if you add up God and then the other words for divinity, like son, it's clear that God is by far the most important thing in 1 John.

If you read commentaries on 1 John, often the most important thing is the fighting that's going on, who says what, and the social setting. I'm not saying the social setting is unimportant, and I'll talk about it, but we want to have our attention riveted by God, especially God the Father and God the Son, because that's what John talks about the most. And it's from that relationship with God and those convictions about God and the knowledge of God that he is speaking to people, and I think he still speaks to us.

As far as the verb, I love, it occurs 28 times in 1 John, twice in 2, and once in 3. And John's message for the faithful dying is, a sign of deep love for God is love for fellow believers, or what he calls *hoi adelphoi*, the brothers, which is inclusive of both men and women. And such love assures us that we have eternal life beyond death in this world. One of the great assurances of being a Christian is the love that you have for other people, and especially other believers.

John says, 1 John 3:14, we know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. There's an older English word, *brethren*, that's a good translation here because it includes men and women. So this is not a male-exclusive club; this is talking about the whole congregation.

Whoever does not love, John adds, abides in death. We're supposed to abide in Christ. We're supposed to abide in the truth.

We're supposed to abide in love. But people who don't know a love for especially other believers that's bigger than themselves, bigger than their love for themselves, John says, they abide in death. That's his message for the faithful dying.

If you have this love, you know, and in persecuted areas, this love can get you in a lot of trouble because it's a link that you have with others who are also under condemnation. And, you know, Satan loves to divide and conquer. And Christians survive in part because of their solidarity and their care for each other.

And that's love, when you care for others so much that you put your life on the line for them. The last time I was in Sudan, security came to arrest me, and I didn't know it. I was leading communion in a service, and the pastor of the church talked to security in such a way that he delayed them because he knew my plane was leaving soon.

And so, on the way to the airport, I was told that, you know, the pastor is with security now, they've arrested him. And I didn't know that. But he got himself arrested so that my colleague and I could get to the airport.

And then security tried to arrest us at the airport, but they couldn't find us. And we got on the plane simply because I think God blinded the eyes of the security people

who looked at our passports. But we would never have gotten to the airport if it hadn't been for the pastor and his love for the ministry to the 120 or more pastors and pastor workers that were in that conference.

He wanted that to go on. He didn't want the guests from another country to be arrested. And so, he put himself in a position for others to move on.

And then that began a persecution that he underwent for months and years to come. That was love. We have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

There's a message for the lax here. We abide in death. We lack assurance of eternal life.

If our regard for fellow believers is lukewarm or absent. And the same verse applies here. Whoever does not love abides in death.

And so that's a check for a lot of people. I mean, I think it's a great thing to go to church. But over the years, I've observed some people who go to church and that's their religion.

And that's the expression of their religion. They go to church. They don't give the impression that they really like anybody at the church.

They go because they know it's their duty. And maybe it makes them feel better. But their loyalties in life, the devotion of their money, the devotion of their energy, the devotion of their attention, it's not in any observable way.

It's not directed toward the spiritual and physical welfare of anybody else in the church. Their social contacts are elsewhere. So that would be the message for the lax.

The third most frequent word in John's letters, which occurs 25 times in 1 John, is the word *ginosko* for I know. And it often occurs in a more experiential context. John's message for the faithful dying here is that Christ's death for us equips his followers to trust the Father if he calls us to give our lives in his service.

Christ's selfless acts of love for us translate into our selfless acts of love for others. And this is how John puts it in 1 John 3:16. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.

And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. Now, I don't think this means in the first instance that we should look for a way to be killed somehow for the sake of other Christians. But Jesus laid down his life in all kinds of ways prior to his crucifixion.

And he symbolizes it with the foot washing. He washed the feet of the disciples in John chapter 13. And he often commends and he models a servant mode of care and expression of love for other people.

And this is what John says to the faithful dying. He laid down his life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

At the same time, there's a message for the lax here, because some don't listen. Or they don't appropriate the full apostolic word. They follow what John calls the spirit of error.

There's the spirit of truth. And then there's the spirit of untruth, falsity, error. And this happens when people do not know God.

And they are not from God. They have not truly become his children. I'll mention these verses in John's gospel later on.

About people who receive the message and become children of God. John says to the lax, people who have a bloodless religion, we are from God. He's speaking about himself, the other apostles, and those in the community of churches he addresses who know Christ on the terms that John and the other apostles teach and preach.

We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. There's the hearing thing, the importance of hearing.

Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this, we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. So, his message for the lax is, you better make sure that you're listening to the apostolic message.

You'd better make sure that you're not customizing your conception of God and your conception of church life if you're involved in a church. Make sure you're not customizing it so it's out of sync with the message that has been delivered from Christ to the apostles and faithfully carried on ever since. Another player in the early Christian community that was very close to John and his brother James, and James, who was killed in Jerusalem by martyrdom in the early 60s, and Peter, another near contemporary to these people, is another half-brother of Jesus named Jude.

And when you read Jude's epistles, you're reminded in verse 3 that he talks about the common salvation that Christians have, the things that we believe as Christians, but he says, you know, I have to write a letter to you because certain people have crept in unnoticed, and they're godless people, and they deny our Lord Jesus Christ, and they're living a life that is not in compliance with the knowledge of God. He

implies that it's sexual immorality. And as you read the book of Jude, you can see these folks are full of a spirit of error.

Apparently, they claim to be followers of Jesus, but by their lives and by their beliefs, when you get to know what they really mean by faith in Jesus, they don't know God, and they're not listening to the faith that was once for all delivered. So that's the message to the lax there. If you're not listening to the full apostolic word, and that happens in churches all around the world today, there are large church bodies that deny aspects of what their church always did believe until the last 100 or 200 years in the West, where there's a lot of denial of things like miracles and of things like the blood atonement, and even things like gender identity, which is decreed by God, male and female, made he them.

There are church groups that are very, very, you know, advanced in leading into the areas of, you know, gender theory. And, of course, abortion is another issue that I think, throughout the centuries, Christians would say that's not compatible. Killing unborn babies is not compatible with following Christ.

But in the West, we have churches that are very pro-abortion, and I think that's an unfortunate and a tragic spirit of error. So, we've seen God, and we've seen love, and we've seen knowing. These are our three prominent words that contain a message for the faithful dying and a message to the lax in John's letters.

And in the next lecture, we'll continue our look at this list of frequent words that imply the focus of John's letters.

This is Dr. Robert Yarborough and his teaching on the Johannine Epistles, Balancing Life in Christ. This is session number 2A, Theological Themes in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.