

[7 : 32] Than can we number us. Just as we turn to prayer, maybe I could just give you an update on one or two people.

I saw Shona Davidson on Friday, I think it was, in hospital. And we've been praying for Shona over the nine, nine and about weeks now since she had the brain aneurysm.

And to see the progress that she's made from that Saturday nine weeks ago to where she is just now is just nothing short of miraculous.

And so there's much to be thankful for. As I was visiting her, I was thinking of Ephesians 3, where we're told that God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine.

And as you can have a conversation with her, and she's lucid, and she's the same as Shona. They took her to the gym this week to see if she could maybe take a step or two, having been off her feet for all that time.

[8 : 51] She walked the length of the gym. The sister caught me as I was going into the ward. And I said, how's she getting on? He said, the struggle we're having is trying to stop her from walking the whole length of the corridor continuously.

So she's doing really well. And let's thank God for that. The medical folks, the sister was saying, it's nice to see you today.

Come in, have a short visit. But she did say, maybe if you could put a message out to a few people to say that, keep, you know, it's great. It's encouraging for the family to be around her.

But basically what she's saying was, give her two weeks. So let the family stay around her for two weeks. And she can get very tired very quickly.

So keep praying for her. Keep thinking of her. I think she gets her phone back on Friday or Saturday it was. So there's means to contact her. But maybe give her a couple more weeks breathing space before we all charge to the hospital and see her.

[9 : 56] So pray on for her and pray on for others who are in hospital. Nurse Margaret, who's kind of struggling as they're trying to find out the diagnosis there. And Kenny with her.

Also, pray on for Nanny, who's in hospital in Stornoway. And I'm not quite sure when she'll get out. Pray for Mary Latham, who begins her treatment tomorrow and values our prayers.

Others like Finlay out, Scalpy have been in hospital in their back home. And I could go through a lot of names. I'll stop there. But we know of a lot of people who are struggling. And so let's pray on for them.

But particularly for Shona, let's be so thankful for what God has been doing. And pray on for her at this time. So let's pray together.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of prayer. We thank you for the awesome thought that we can, wherever we are, at whatever time of the day or night, open our mouths and speak from our hearts and have the full attention of the God of heaven and earth.

[11 : 14] And it's hard for us to comprehend that. And we confess that sometimes when we pray, we don't pause to take in the wonder of that.

Sometimes, Lord, we confess our prayers lack reverence as we rush into your presence.

Sometimes we take prayer for granted.

And we can be selfish and are asking. Sometimes our prayers are too small because we don't recognize the power of the God before whom we bow.

But we thank you, Lord, for the fact that you are powerful, that you are the awesome God. You are our creator God. You are our sustainer God.

We thank you, Father, that you sent your son Jesus into this world and that he is our savior. We thank you, Father, that you are the same.

[12 : 36] We are lifted from sin. We are forgiven of our sin. And we are placed on Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation.

So, Father, we thank you for that salvation. We thank you for the wondrous works that you have done to make it possible for us to be your children.

We thank you for your care of us. We thank you for your interest in us and for your willingness to listen to our prayers and to help our prayer, to help us as we cry out to you.

And we thank you, Lord, for all that we have even recognized in these last few moments. As we think of those who have been ill and those who continue to struggle, we thank you, Lord, that you hear our prayers.

We think of Shona in particular. And we thank you for the wonder of how far she's come in such a short time. And we recognize the care of medical professionals.

[13 : 39] We thank you for the skills that you have given them, for doctors, for nurses, for paramedics, for coast guards, for all those who were involved in taking Shona to a place where she was able to get treatment.

But when we see the recovery that she is making, we cannot but believe that your hand is upon her. And we ask, Lord, that you would continue to protect her, strengthen her, keep her mind clear, and give her to know that you are her God and that you are with her.

We thank you that so often it's in the storms of life that we realize the full extent of your love for us and your care over us.

And we pray that Shona, in due course, may be able to testify even here to how you have been with her in this storm. We pray for her. We pray for the family.

And we ask, Lord, that you would care for them and that you would reach each of them as well as each one of us look to you. We pray for others, Lord, who are in hospital just now.

[14 : 47] We think of Nurse Margaret in Glasgow and Kenny by our side at this time. And we pray for them, Lord, as they try to understand what's causing all the difficulty that she's experiencing.

We pray that you would give insight to those who care for her and that she would get the treatment that she needs. We pray, Lord, for Nanny. We thank you for her faithfulness over so many years.

We thank you for the way that she has pointed us so steadily to Jesus. And even in her hospital ward, we thank you for the contentment and for the witness that she is.

We ask that you would be near to her and that if it's your will, you would make it possible for her to go home and to receive the care that she needs there. We pray, Lord, for others.

We think of Mary Latham or Mary Morrison as she begins her treatment tomorrow. We pray that it would be effective and that you would heal her and that you would be with Connor and all the Lathams as they gather around her at this time.

[15 : 54] And we pray for Finlay out in Scalpe. We pray for others as well. Those who have been in their homes for a long time now. We think of Neil Cameron and others like him who would desire to be with us but who are unable to be here.

And we ask, Lord, that you would minister to each one. And we thank you, Lord, for the gift of prayer that even those that we cannot reach physically, we can carry to your feet spiritually. And as we do so, Lord, we pray that you would help them. As we pray for the bodily needs of many, we pray for the souls of all those who are around us.

And we pray for our own souls. Yes, we need restoration of body. But there is such a dire need for transformation of soul. And so we pray, Lord, for those who are dead in transgression and sin.

Those who go to sleep at night, who have no thought of eternal things, who have no thought of the fact that their sins are forgiven, are not forgiven yet, because they've never cried out to the Lord Jesus.

[17 : 01] We pray that you would burden such people, that you would take away from them any peace until they find peace in Christ. And, Lord, for those who are yours, for those of us who are your children, we pray that you would sanctify us, that we would walk close with you, and that we would be a good witness, that we would be salt and light in this world.

We pray for those who are going out from this place to different places in the world. We think of the McKellars as they go overseas today. And we ask, Lord, that you would be with them, and that you would guide them and lead them as they seek to respond to the commission that you give to all of us to go out with the gospel.

We pray for those who were with us for a long time, and who are in universities and colleges of our land. We think of Natalie, we think of Anna, and others who have gone out in past years.

We ask that you would help them and that you would help them to settle into churches and to grow in their faith. And we thank you for Christian unions and churches and groups like the Navigators who seek to support them and minister in these campuses.

There are so many things, Lord, that we can bring to you in prayer, and that we do so day by day. Help us, we pray, to be people of prayer. Help us as a congregation, yes, to be active, yes, to be reaching out, but enable us to be on our knees, to be a congregation that seek the name of the Lord, the glory of the Lord, and who acknowledge that apart from you, Lord Jesus, we can do nothing.

[18 : 40] Hear our prayers. Cleanse us from our sin. Help us, we pray, to worship you in this hour in spirit and in truth. For we pray this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Boys and girls, would you like to come out, please? How are you all today?

All good. A few things to show you today. Number one.

Number two. Number three. Number four. Back. So, tell me what's the thing you think that, you take these two as two separate things, and then these two as two other separate things.

What's the link do you think there? Fraser. That's where both the same thing. They're both the same thing. In what way? Same. Because there is two bags and two cups.

[20 : 01] Two bags, two cups. That's a good starting point. Yeah. Good first observation. They both have the same purpose. They both have the same purpose. What's the purpose of these things? To hold something.

To hold something, yeah. To hold something, yeah. So this might hold tea and coffee after the service. And this might hold lots of different things. So, they're both the same, you could say, and they both have the same jobs.

What else? What else? Cal? They're not really the same, because that one's kind of a pink one.

Yeah? That one's a kind of flimsy one. And that one's kind of bigger than the mic. That one's bigger than it. It's a bit sturdier, isn't it? Yeah. That's for the bags.

What about this? Raise on. It's like the coffee cup's really weak, but that cup's stronger than the coffee cup. So this one's really weak.

[21 : 00] Yeah. And this one here, stronger. Yeah. You dropped them for comparison. We're not going to drop them just now, no. No. No. There's actually, there's a word that you could use that describes both this, and this.

Any ideas? Anyone else want to have a shot? Go on, Cal? I'm kind of saying that that's a paper, I mean, a wooden cup.

It's a wooden cup, kind of, yeah. Wooden, thin wood, paper, yeah. No, it doesn't, because they're both rubbish. They're both rubbish. Now, that's getting closer to the way we want it to be.

So, this is not rubbish. This is quite sturdy. This is definitely not rubbish. This is going to get used over and over again. How many times is this going to get used?

Once. Once. And then where does it go? Big. Rubbish. What about this one? How many times do you think you'll use this?

[22 : 11] Imagine you had a big, heavy load of shopping, and you put this in. Four things of four pints of milk. Four tins. A spiky kind of carrot.

How many times do you think you could use this? Well, you can use it. You can use it in another bar. Well, you can use the bar.

You can use it to fill up the bin. You can use it to fill up the bin, yeah, yeah. But even at that, if it's got a hole in it. See this?

Shopping might be too heavy. That's exactly it, Fraser. The shopping might be too heavy. So you go down to Brownies. You're walking back with all your shopping all the way back out to the west, where your granny is.

And all of a sudden there's a disaster. The bag bursts. And there's milk. There's all kinds of stuff all over the pavement. And then milk just bursts.

[23 : 07] Milk bursts. No point crying over it, but it's... Everything just falls out. Everything falls out. So you've got the point, don't you? This is disposable.

Look at that. That's disposable. And these two things, you can use them over. They're useful over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again.

Now, there was a man and his name was Peter. And he was a disciple of Jesus.

And Jesus said to Peter... What did Jesus say to Peter, Ailey? He said... One day, Peter, he's washing his nets. He's getting organised for his normal work.

And Jesus was going past and he said... Simon, I want you to... Well... Not fall. Not fall, but fall. Follow me.

[24 : 07] And so Peter was one of the disciples that followed Jesus. And for three years, Jesus was teaching Peter all kinds of different things. And he was saying, come on Peter, keep following, keep following, keep listening, keep obeying.

Now, did Peter always get it right? Emily? Did he always get it right? No, he didn't, did he? Sometimes Peter...

Well, Peter had a bit of a bad temper. Sometimes he'd fly off the handle. But the other disciples... And when he should have been quiet, he'd have been blurting out things and speaking. And sometimes Peter wanted to be better than the other disciples. And so Peter was trying to be greater than them. So he was like, I'm the boss.

I'm the boss disciple. And that wasn't a good thing to be either. And one day, Jesus said to Peter, Peter, I'm going to go to the cross.

[25 : 09] I'm going to suffer and die for sin. And Satan has said to you, he said to me, he said, Jesus, he wants to sift you.

He wants to shake you. So you're broken. But Jesus said, Peter, I've prayed for you. And he said, and when you turn back, after having gone away for a while, I want you to strengthen the brothers. I want you to help other people who've fallen. And that's what Peter did. See, Peter, remember what Peter did when Jesus was going to the cross? Remember a little girl came to Peter and said, are you not one of these disciples?

And what did Peter say? He said, no. Somebody else came and said, I think you are a disciple. You've got a funny accent. And Peter said, no, not me.

And the third time somebody came, Peter said, I am not a disciple. And he even used some bad words to try to tell people that he wasn't a disciple of Jesus.

[26 : 16] He denied Jesus three times. And the devil would have been saying to Peter, you're just like one of these disposable cups or baths.

You're finished, Peter. You're good for the bin. You're done. You're done. But what did Jesus say to Peter? Jesus came to Peter after he rose from the dead.

And he said, I want you to say sorry. Peter said sorry to Jesus. And Jesus said, I want you to keep on serving me.

And like one of these things, Peter, for year after year after year after year, he was useful. And he did all kinds of great things that pointed people to Jesus and told people about how amazing Jesus was.

And so the great thing, boys and girls, about being a Christian is even though we make mistakes, Jesus never throws us away.

[27 : 23] You know, if this morning you ask Jesus to come into your heart and take your sin away, then he'll do that. He'll come in and he'll make you a Christian.

And then you'll make all kinds of mistakes just like I do every week. But Jesus promises he'll never throw us away. He'll keep on using us.

He'll keep on being our friend. He'll keep us close to himself today and forever. So, isn't that a good thing to think about?

How much Jesus loves us. And how we can be useful. You can be useful in school. Some of the older people can be useful in their jobs. In their homes.

Wherever. We just have to say to Jesus, I want you to use me. Even though I make a big mess of lots of things. Please keep on using. So we ask Jesus to do that now.

[28 : 27] Let's close our eyes and let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you love us. And we thank you that you call us to follow you. Just like you called Peter to follow you.

We thank you that when we follow you, life is exciting. It can be a bit scary sometimes. We never quite know where you're going to take us. But we thank you that you follow us.

And your way is always the best way. We thank you that when we trust you, you take our sin away. You make our hearts clean. And you save us forever.

And you give us a job to do. And even though we often make a mess of the jobs that you give us to do. We thank you that you don't throw us away. You keep on using us.

And even when the devil comes to us and says, you're finished. You may as well give up. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you keep saying to us, no, no, you follow me.

[29 : 23] Keep following. And no matter how far we sometimes fall, we thank you that there's always enough grace. To forgive us and to help us to be picked back up.

So encourage us, we pray. And we pray for the boys and girls that in their early years, even when they're in school, that they would trust you, that they would follow you. We pray for Natalie and for Anna and for others like them who've gone through Sunday school in YF and who are now out in universities.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you. Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your care of us.

And we thank you that when we pray, you don't tarry, you don't hesitate, but you hear and you respond to our cries. We are people who are poor and needy.

And we pray, Lord, that you would be amongst us, that you would be working in this room and in our hearts. And we pray for the children, that you would understand the simple, powerful gospel message in their early years, that God loves them, that Jesus died for them, that he rose from the dead.

And that all who believe in him, that you would have the promise of resurrection life, life in abundance and time and life that is eternal.

[41 : 16] And so impress that upon them, we pray, that you would impress upon us and work amongst us, we ask. We pray for the congregations around us, we pray for the congregations around us, that you would be working wherever the gospel is preached.

Lord, that you would be adding your blessing, that you would be building your church, that you would be seeking and saving the lost, that you would be sanctifying your children. We pray, Lord, for Gordon as well as he ministers over in US today.

And we ask, Lord, that you would help him, that you would put the words in his mouth. And, Lord, that he would know your help and your, that liberty that comes from the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in Loch Boystale and in Balavanach as he preaches.

So hear our prayers. And we pray for the children in the creche as well, that as they, as they grow and as they come to a stage where they have an awareness of God, we pray that they would, that they would believe and that we would see many young ones as they go through the church.

And we see them and we pray for them. We pray that each one of them would come to faith in Christ. So hear our prayers. Help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're coming to the end of this letter.

[42 : 44] And this is a letter that's from Peter, the disciple. And it's addressed to his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Initially, it was addressed to the congregations in what we now know to be Turkey. God's people scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

So Peter's writing to Christians, some that he would have met, some he wouldn't have met, but all of whom he would have loved and had that concern for. And why is Peter writing this letter?

And why is Peter writing this letter? Well, he's writing this letter because Jesus had given Peter a job to do. Jesus had called Peter to follow him.

So he was thinking about it. He was thinking about it with the children. And to serve him. And part of that calling that Peter had that was specific to him was he was to strengthen the brothers.

[43 : 45] So if we just keep that context in our mind all the way through reading Peter, I think it's hugely helpful. And even if we take a moment just to go back into that room where Peter is given that command, that commission, that job to strengthen the brothers.

Remember, they're in an upper room. Peter, the disciples, and Jesus. And Jesus is warning the disciples of everything that was about to happen.

The sufferings. The crucifixion. The fact that the disciples would all scatter. And they would fail Jesus.

Especially Peter. And Peter, being Peter, isn't very willing to listen to what Jesus was saying about his own failures. But Jesus, he addresses Peter directly in Luke 22 and verse 31.

And he says, Simon, Simon. It's his old name. Shaky is what it meant. Peter was rock. Simon, Simon. Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.

[45 : 02] But I have prayed for you, Simon. That your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back. When you have repented.

When you have confessed your sin. Strengthen your brothers. So that's in that wee room.

Before the crucifixion. And we know the scene that follows on from that. Where Peter, he turns away. Disfracefully.

I'm a sinner but I want to be saved. My sins are like scarlet. My heart is black but I want you to wash it Lord Jesus and make me as white as snow.

It just takes a prayer. The work is done. Jesus has paid the price. We have to ask for that forgiveness. We have to ask for that cleansing.

[52 : 00] We have to call upon the name of the Lord. Until we do! God is gifted.

Remember Peter a few weeks after the denial he's back in his fishing boat. He's not following. He's a distance from Jesus. But Jesus calls him back.

And as he turns back as he repents. As he confesses his sin. He's used again by Jesus. He's brought back into that close walk and he is used possibly more than anyone ever was used.

And certainly he was used more after he fell than before he fell. So for the Christian who's at a distance this morning perhaps who is back in the boat.

Repent. Repentance is a continual thing. It's not a one-off thing. Repent. Confess. And ask Jesus to use us.

[53 : 34] To strengthen the brothers as he did Peter. So what does Peter write to us as he tries to strengthen us as he writes this letter.

What do we find in these verses? Well the first thing we find here is a warning about pride. Look at verses 5 and 6. Young men in the same way be submissive to those who are older.

All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time.

So we have a warning here first of all about pride and pride is at the root of almost all sin. If we go back to before time Satan was an angel but he fell.

Why did he fall? Pride. He wanted to be like God and we have a snapshot of that in Isaiah 14. We don't have time to go there. Fast forward a little from before time began to the beginning of time and we see Adam and Eve and they're in the Garden of Eden and initially everything is good, everything is perfect.

[54 : 53] They are at one with each other, they are at one with God but then they fell. Why did they fall? They listened to Satan and what did Satan say? He said you can be like God.

And the fire of pride was lit. They took the bait and they fell and soon came in. Genesis 3. And every time you and I sin, every time we turn away from God and his word, what we're saying to him is we know better.

We're saying my way, not your way. We're saying to the Lord, I will be the Lord in this decision, not you. And we sin. And so Peter, he gives us this warning about pride and Peter knew all about pride. It was pride that caused Peter to clash with other disciples because he wanted to be greater, he wanted to be higher, he wanted to be louder. It was pride that caused Peter not to listen to Jesus. It was pride that was driving the statement that came from Peter's lips when he said to Jesus, you can worry about all of them but you don't need to worry about me. I'll never desert you. I'll never let you down. It's pride speaking.

[56 : 10] So Peter, as God leads them, says to us, all of you, all of you, clothe yourselves with humility. Be stripped of pride.

Why? Well, because God can only give grace to the humble. We can't take on the garments of grace if we're already clothed with pride.

God and how true that is when we actually think through the wider biblical context. Think of the teaching that Jesus gave in Luke chapter 18, the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Remember, there's two men and they're praying and one is a Pharisee and he stands in the place that's at a crossroads where everybody can see him and everybody can hear him and where a crowd can gather around him and he prays and he prays something along the lines of God, I thank you that I'm not like anybody else.

I thank you that I'm better than everybody else around me here. I thank you that I do this and that and the next thing. I thank you that I've got such great religious credentials. It's pride speaking.

[57 : 25] It's not a prayer. Then Jesus says there's a tax collector. And he's not standing on the pavement. He's hiding away in a quiet place.

And he hasn't got his head stretched up towards heaven and his chest puffed out. His head is bowed down. He's beating his chest out of desperation and he simply cries out to God, have mercy on me.

A sinner. The sinner in the Greek. And Jesus teaches us that God opposes the proud Pharisee. He's not saved. His prayer is not heard. But he gives grace to the humble, broken tax collector. So we can see in Luke 18 it's pride that kept the religious Pharisee out of heaven. And it's pride today that keeps so many people out of heaven. It's pride that rises up inside someone and stops us calling upon the name of the Lord for mercy. [58 : 42] It's pride that stops us from looking to the Lord Jesus and saying please give me your charity. Please give me grace.

it's pride that objects to the singing nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling. It's pride that makes us ineffective Christians.

It's pride that makes us prioritize me over God. My comfort, my ambitions, my time, not yours. It's pride that speaks there. And that's in the life of a Christian who's wrestling with all kinds of the conflicts and the responsibilities of life. Don't let pride determine your course, says Peter. It's pride that makes Christians quarrelsome. Because we're trying to get one over on each other. And so we're getting a warning here about pride.

[59 : 44] It's a sin that is particularly common to the religious. So we need to put it to death continually. So we have here first of all a warning about pride.

Secondly here there's a call to prayer. First P is pride, second P is prayer. And it says in verse 7 cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

You might think back a few weeks and say did we not do this already? And yes we did this already. We spent a Sunday in advance of the communion just focusing on these few words of verse 7. But I think we need to go back and revisit this again and again and again and again. The same way as a parent will say to the children over and over again put your clothes away, put your socks, your dirty socks in the basket, tidy your room, do your homework.

It's a continual thing. It's a continual reminder that children need. And we need this reminder and God Jesus says Peter to give us this reminder of our calling to pray.

[60 : 52] Why should we pray? Well Peter says because God cares for us. He listens, he gives attention to our prayers. Sometimes you can be speaking to someone and you know fine they're not listening.

Ministers know that. You can be speaking to people and you can see you know fine they're not listening. But every time we pray, God pays attention to our prayers because he cares for us as his children.

Why should we pray? Well we pray because God is powerful and we are not powerful. And again it's pride that stops us from going on our knees in prayer.

pride says I can fix this. I have cares but I can fix this. I'm strong. You know I'm going to use my mouse to try to find a solution to this.

Pride says what Peter says. Don't worry about me. I'll be okay. I don't need to pray. But humility says what the psalmist says in Psalm 40 at the end.

[62 : 11] Humility says I'm poor and needy. Humility says I can do nothing. Humility says I'm weak. But God's mighty hand, verse 6, is able to do more than I can ask or think.

And when we pray, in a sense, the mighty hand of God moves in response to prayers.

And that phrase in verse 6, God's mighty hand, it's an interesting phrase because as far as I could tell it's only ever used in relation to the Exodus. You can remember the story.

God's people are in captivity in Egypt. They're absolutely powerless. to secure their own freedom. They are slaves. They are bound. There is no way out of Egypt.

They are weak. Egypt is strong. The door is locked. They are doomed. So how did they get out? Well, it wasn't what they did. God's mighty hand was used to smash open the door of Egypt, to open up the sea, so they could cross, so they could be freed.

[63 : 35] It's a phrase that you'll see if you want to check it. Exodus 3, 19, Deuteronomy 5, 15, Deuteronomy 26, 8. Every time, God's mighty hand opens the door for his people to be saved.

And for us, we think about salvation. How can we be freed from sin? How can we be freed from the debt of our guilt?

How can we be forgiven our sin? How can we be saved? How can we become Christians? Well, it's not about what we do, because we can do nothing. It's God's mighty hand.

that is able to save us from our sin. And that hand is moved by prayer. The kind of prayer we heard from the tax collector, God have mercy on me.

A sinner. And then as Christians, maybe you're here this morning and you're a Christian, you're saved, you're forgiven, but still you're battling with sin.

[64 : 49] as I am. The apostle Paul was in Romans 7 towards the end of his life. How can we be freed from our besetting sins? How can we find freedom and release and help?

Do we want to follow God more closely? God's God's mighty hand? God's mighty hand. Let's move by prayer. And then when we think about the people that we love, that we feel anxious about, who may be distant from us, and as we think about situations, I can look around and I can think about various situations that trouble me.

And I'm absolutely helpless to do anything, to change them. So what do we do? We pray.

And we ask that God's mighty hand will make the difference and unlock what seems to be locked.

And all that is done as we pray.

So there's a warning about pride. There's a call to prayer. The third thing here is there's an alert to the prowler. And when I hear that word prowler, I always get transported back to Stornway, 1982, 1983.

[66 : 17] That was in primary three. And the police had become aware of somebody who was lurking around the school grounds at the end of the school day.

And so I remember the whole school were brought into the assembly hall and a policeman stood up and he gave a talk and he said to the children, we're aware that there's a prowler in Stornway and he's moving around this area.

We don't have an identity, we don't have much in the way of details, but we've been told that this is a risk. So stay alert, stay safe, head straight home, don't be dithering around the place.

And ever since then, whenever I hear the word prowler, I get taken back to that games hall. people.

And the word prowler is used here by Peter.

He says in verse 8, be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. So there's an alert here to the prowler.

[67 : 26] And sometimes we forget this, sometimes we go to sleep on this, sometimes we live as if all there is is the physical realm. realm. But we don't live in just a physical realm.

We are, as Paul reminds us of in Ephesians 6, we are in a spiritual realm. We battle against not just flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. And in the gospel, the God of eternity is reaching out to us.

He's offering us salvation. He's offering us grace. But there's a devil who's prowling. He's doing the opposite.

He's like a lion. And his intention is to devour, not save. I've said to you many times before, William Still, a minister that I was under for years, he would regularly say, I always keep one eye on the brute, the prowler.

And it was good advice. He said, it always stuck with me. It's wise words. It's not good to have two eyes fixed on the devil. It's not good to be fixated on the enemy and thinking that he's around every corner.

[68 : 45] But it's right to be alert. It's right to be self-controlled because a lack of self-control will be exploited by the enemy.

a wandering eye will be directed by the enemy to all kinds of alluring temptations. Idle hands will very quickly be used by the enemy to serve his ends.

A loose tongue is a great weapon. So we need to be self-controlled. We need to be alert to the enemy but not fearful of him because we can resist him.

And hear this. Don't miss this. Peter says in verse 9, resist him, standing firm in the faith. And it's just so incredibly simple.

Peter just says resist him. Yes, there's a prowler. He's going around. He's seeking to devour. He's strong. But just resist him. James 4, 7 adds when we resist him, he will flee.

[70 : 02] So how does this work? Well, the way this works is when we determine in our will that we will not give in to the devil, at that point, the power of God will be given to us to stand firm.

It's a bit like a turbo. You know, you can be driving along in a car that's a powerful car with a turbo or twin turbos and you're idling along at 30 miles an hour and there's a kind of low growl coming from the engine.

But it's just like any other car. It's going along at the same speed as my pathetic little Volkswagen up. There's no difference in speed, there's no difference in revs, it's just going along. But when I put my foot down in that little car, nothing happens. There's no turbo. power. But when somebody puts their foot down in a car that has a turbo, the power kicks in. But you have to engage the power. You have to put the foot down. And I think spiritually speaking, sometimes we think as Christians, we're traveling everywhere in a Volkswagen up, 55 brake horsepower.

[71 : 19] The devil comes and he tempts us and we say, oh, it's no point even trying. I'm not powerful enough to cope with all this and we just career off down the road of sin.

And Peter is saying, you're forgetting who you are. You're forgetting the power that's available to you. All you have to do is determine in your will to resist the devil, to say to him, I will not give in to temptation.

And the power of God, the Spirit of God, will give us the strength to stand firm. So there's an alert to the prowler.

And fourthly, we're almost done. There's the encouragement of other people. Because when we're going through challenges, there's great encouragement in knowing that we're not alone. Other people are with us in this. So for example, Road to Recovery, Alcoholics Anonymous. There's a real struggle there. But there's strength in knowing that you're not alone.

[72 : 26] There's other people who are going through the same kind of thing. And the Christians that Peter wrote to here, they were already experiencing hard times. They were about to hit harder times. And Peter says, take some courage in knowing that you're not alone.

Verse 9, you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. now we are, as Christians, not living in the kind of age of persecution in the way that they were, but every Christian struggles.

If you don't struggle, if you don't know anything about what Paul writes of in Romans 7, the good that I want to do I'm not doing, the evil I don't want to do, I've gone and done it again. If you don't know anything about that struggle, you're likely not a Christian.

Because every Christian struggles in the Christian life. Because we're battling against the world, the flesh, and the devil. There's that civil war that's within us.

It's the nature of Christ wants to thrive, and the old nature is rising back up and growling. There's a struggle. And so we need encouragement, and we need support, and that comes from God, and it comes from each other.

[73 : 56] So why come to church? Well, to worship God, to listen to his word, to unite our voices in praise, to unite our hearts in prayer.

But we come to church also to be encouraged by, and to be an encouragement to each other. So don't charge off out the door, second the benediction is done. There might be somebody in this room who's going through a hard time, and they need to spend five minutes with you.

Every Christian goes through struggles. So if you're going through a struggle just now, speak to someone, speak to someone, and they will understand.

We need the encouragement of other people. That's why YouTube church is a little bit good, but not very good.

That's why a Zoom prayer meeting has some merit, prayer. But not too much. Because we need other people.

[75 : 15] Yes, there's the benefit of hearing a sermon, there's the benefit of hearing somebody praying, but what we are commanded to do is not get out of the habit of meeting with each other.

prayer. Because we need encouragement from other people. Peter is saying that to us as God leads them. And the final P here is the promise of paradise.

And you've got it in verses 10 and 11. There's no time to go into it. the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

And so Peter is saying to us in simple terms, he's saying, yes, they're struggling, but take heart, all this will pass. There is suffering.

Jesus warned us of it ahead of time. Peter knew the reality of it. Peter, within a couple of years, the scholars reckon would be crucified upside down. He would suffer for Jesus' sake, but he's saying to us, yes, there's suffering, but it's just for a while.

[76 : 27] And then God will restore you. He'll make you strong, firm, steadfast. And he's talking about heaven. There is heaven promised to all who believe.

And somebody said to me a couple of weeks ago, John Angus, Professor John Angus, he made us homesick for heaven. That's a good thing. Because we're only here for a wee while.

And heaven is a big while. Peter is reminding us that although there is suffering, there is heaven promised to those who keep on going, who keep on believing.

And we're going to keep on believing. The assurance we're given is the God who cares for us will help us through short-term suffering and lead us into never-ending paradise.

to him, verse 11, be the power forever and forever. Amen. Amen.

[77 : 42] And let us sing now to God's praise as we sing that hymn that points us to heaven.

Mission praise 1116. There is a higher throne than all this world has known, where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come, before the sun will stand, made faultless to the lamb, believing hearts find promised grace.

Salvation comes. God's is the highest throne, and all this world has known, where faithful ones from every tongue will one day come, before the sun will stand, made faultless through the lamb, believing hearts by promise trade, salvation comes.

Hear heaven's voices sing, their thunderous anthem brings to end, rewards and suffer strife, their praises rise.

O glory, wisdom burn, strength, thanks, and honour are to God, and give praise on life forever more.

And there we'll find our home, a night before the throne will be honored in perfect soul, where we belong.

[80 : 00] He'll wipe each fierce deny, us thirst and hunger die, the lamb belongs to shepherds, we'll reign within, hear heaven's voices sing, their thunderous act and blames to end, the voices of us are their praises rise, O glory, wisdom and power, stand back, stand on the arms, who reigns forever more.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forever more. Amen.