

1 Peter Chapter 5 v 8 -14

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[0 : 00] If you've got one of the church Bibles, that's page 1194. 1 Timothy in chapter 6. Usually we begin with a reading from Scripture just to warm our hearts before we come to sing.

Remind us who we are worshipping, who we are singing to, whose name we are exalting, and also what it is that we're about as believers. Why are we here? What are we doing?

So 1 Timothy 6, and as you're aware, this is Paul, the Apostle Paul, writing to his prodigy, if I can put it that way, Timothy, the young man who he'd appointed, encouraged to serve in ministry, pastoral ministry.

But his words to Timothy are words to ourselves. So I'm going to pick up from verse 12, verse 12 through to verse 16. And hopefully we can just draw some thoughts together as we come to worship.

The first call is perhaps a real challenge to us. Verse 12. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you were made, sorry, when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

[1 : 16] In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who, while testifying before Pontius Pilate, made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time.

God, the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal, and who lives in unapproachable light, who no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and might forever. Amen. Paul's words to Timothy are challenging words to fight, to take hold. There are verbs, as it were, and Paul gives him this charge to keep the command.

Living the Christian life is not easy. It's not a walk in the park. It's not just a simple matter of ascertaining certain things with your mind. It is a challenge to us daily, whether we are those who, like Timothy, were called to this spear point of Christian living, or whether we are walking with Christ day by day.

There is no easy Christian life. And sometimes we look around and think, well, I wish I had their Christian walk. It must be so much easier than mine, than the problems I have.

[2 : 39] But the truth is that each of us, yet here is the wonderful truth, here is the wonderful assurance, that everything depends upon God, and that we are heading forward.

We are heading to a goal. What is that goal? The appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about. Nothing is going to happen in this world to prevent Christ from coming again.

There is not going to be a war, which is going to destroy the heavens and the earth. Man is not going to obliterate himself through global warming. Everything is heading to one end.

Christ is coming. And then, dear friends, we shall be with him. And what a vision of God he gives us here. God the blessed, the only ruler, the king of kings, the Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and lives in unapproachable light.

What I'm... Oh, Lord our God, you are excellent and glorious. You are the only God, the true God, the living God, the almighty God.

[3 : 50] Lord, we thank you for the things that we've read in your word and the truths of which we've been singing concerning yourself and your son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that you are God.

A mystery, a wonder, something, oh Lord, that we cannot truly understand or grasp that you are God, one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

And yet, Lord, we know that it is true because your word tells us this is so. We know it is true because, oh Lord, we see again and again throughout the Bible how together, as one God and three persons, you fulfill all of your works in creation.

All things were made by you in your redemption and salvation. Again, we've recognized this is the work of the Father. The Father who purposes and chooses and determines to save and to rescue sinners.

The Son who, before the world was made, put himself forward to be our Savior, gladly acknowledging that he would need to come and to live and to die in our place.

[5 : 01] We thank you for the Holy Spirit who graciously, powerfully, effectively, speaks to our minds and our hearts those words of life when we were dead in sin.

Those words of see when we were blinded by the God of this age. Oh Lord, we thank you for your work as the triune God. And we thank you that your work is not finished.

We thank you that you are not the God who sits idly by or the God who looks on with no power to act at a world which is full of distress and heartache and confusion.

We thank you that you are the God who is actively working in your world just as you have always been. We thank you, oh Lord, that you are the God over the nations, that you are the God over the peoples, you are the God over coups and governments.

Yes, Lord, you are the God who rules even over terrorism and terrorists. Oh Lord, we don't understand all that goes on. Our hearts break when we see so much wickedness in this world but we know, oh Lord, that you are working all things out towards that goal of which we've read when Christ will come again, when he will be revealed for who he is as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

[6 : 19] We thank you that for us who have put our faith in Jesus, what a day it will be of joy and celebration and delight when all evil will be conquered, when all wickedness will be defeated, when all sin will be triumphed over, when there shall be no more death or sorrow or tears or crying and all the things that spoil this creation that you have made and this life that you've given will be utterly removed.

For us, it will be a day of great joy and delight when we shall be, Lord, taken into your presence for all eternity with nothing to spoil, nothing to come in between, that fellowship with you, when we shall receive those resurrection bodies, bodies that no longer are limited by time and space, bodies that are no longer, Lord, as it were, run through with sin and corruption which brings about all sorts of sorrows to us, not only physical pain and distress, but Lord, the sorrow and the grief of sin's mastery and its fruit in our lives.

But Lord, it will be such a sad day, such a grievous day, such a horrible day for those who have rejected you, Lord Jesus, for those who've lived without a concern for you, those who've not fled to you and run to you as their saviour and their Lord.

What a day, travesty and tragedy it will be when at last but too late they shall see Jesus in all of his splendour and glory, the one that they mocked and ridiculed, the one they had no time for, the one whose people they would not associate with.

Oh Lord, we ask that in these days, these days of grace in which you've placed us, these days of mercy in which we now live, before you come with judgment, please, oh Lord, revive your church, us and your people throughout this world that we may be instruments in your hands to proclaim and declare the warning and the good news.

[8 : 15] That, oh Lord, we might be those who you are pleased to work through as your fellow workers to bring men and women and boys and girls into a knowledge of the truth. We do pray, Lord, even now as we come to worship you that you would deal with us, change us, mould us and shape us, make us to be, oh Lord, the men and women you want us to be in this day and generation, in the places that you've put us, that our lives may be signposts to the wonderful God and his glorious Son.

Amen. Let's sing again. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's sing it, Yeah, Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I say history Then, Lord, shall I fully know Not till then how much I owe Chosen love for good in me Waken down from wrath to flee Hidden in the Saviour's side By the Spirit sanctified Teach me, Lord, all the earth to show By my love and love my own

One Peter Over the past few weeks and months we've been journeying through this wonderful letter, this first letter of Peter.

[10 : 28] And we're going to read in chapter 5. Again, if you have the church Bible, Pew Bible, that's 1220, page 1220.

And 1 Peter and chapter 5. We'll read the whole chapter that we've already covered in the previous weeks up to and including verse 7.

It's verses 8 to the end that we're going to be considering tonight as we close our journey through this book. And I'd encourage you to take time to read through it again and again because it has been a great blessing to my own soul.

So 1 Peter chapter 5 beginning at verse 1. To the elders among you I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them. Not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.

[11 : 32] Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. In the same way you who are younger submit yourselves to your elders.

All of you. Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another because God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble.

Humble yourselves therefore under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him.

[12 : 31] Standing firm in the faith because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And 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, make you strong, firm and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I've written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings. So does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all who are in Christ. Such is God's word. That was the last time you sang eight verses in a hymn, eh?

Oh, goodness me. Nowadays, of course, we like to sing one verse eight times, but not eight verses altogether. Let's turn then to 1 Peter and chapter 5 and to the passage we read just a few moments ago.

[13 : 54] It's verses eight, particularly, as I said, through to the end of the chapter. If you have the Church Bible, it's page 1220. Page 1220 in the Church Bible.

Verses eight to the end. Steve Backshall is a children's TV entertainer, but he's famous particularly for a wildlife series called Deadly 60, and in that he travels the world and he finds the most dangerous, terrifying, poisonous animals on the planet, from spiders to snakes, from leopards to lions.

He's seen them, handled them, and run away from quite a lot of them, if he had any sense.

Dangerous creatures don't come any more dangerous than really a lion, particularly a roaring lion, and Peter chooses that imagery to introduce us to the devil.

There in verse eight, Be alert and of sober mind your enemy. The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Probably no more dangerous creature on earth than that.

And as Peter now, as I said, is bringing his letter to a close, he's coming to a conclusion, he's wanting to sum up, in one sense, the things that he's taught, and leave God's people, those people who are scattered throughout modern-day Turkey, part of the Roman Empire.

[15 : 29] He wants to give them some careful instruction in this vital matter of spiritual warfare, spiritual conflict, which they were all too aware of. When Paul writes to the Ephesians, we could have read from there, chapter six again, his letter concludes with that same theme, that same call to action, that same recognition, that the Christian and the church is in a battle.

And the thing that we need to take on board, and the thing that he wants to impress upon the believers here, is this, the reality of the devil, your enemy, the devil.

To the writers of the New Testament, in fact, to the writers of the whole of the Bible, the devil is not a mythical creature, not a bogeyman story told by parents to make their children behave.

He's not a pantomime villain that you can hiss and boo at, but really has no power at all. If we think that the devil does not exist, or is of no consequence, we need to read the accounts of Jesus' confrontations with him, and Jesus' teaching about him, which is much and many truths.

Now, this is the first time in the letter that Peter has made mention of the devil. First time he's referred to him directly, but he and his readers have been aware, all through the letter, that they've been dealing with the activity of Satan, the activity of the devil.

[16:59] Verse 9 shows us that the devil is the one who is behind the persecution and the suffering of the church around the world. Notice in the same context of the devil, the devil resists him standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

What sufferings? The sufferings that have been caused by the devil. The one we're to resist, the one that we are to watch out for and stand firm against, but he's the one who's been behind those forces of authority, those civil authorities that have persecuted them.

The Roman Empire, with all of its power, was against Christ and his people throughout the first three centuries of the church.

It's the devil who's been behind those masters, those harsh and cruel masters who made the Christians' lives difficult and beat them simply because they were believers. It was the devil who was behind the world and the people who slandered the Christians and attacked them and heaped abuse upon them as we've been looking through the letter, who made again their lives difficult and hard and caused them to know trials and sufferings of many kinds.

So Peter's final warnings, his encouragements, are simply not to fill out his letter at the end. You know how sometimes when you've written a letter you think that's a bit too short. I better fill out a bit and pad it out or an email pad it out with a bit of, not nonsense, but unimportant things just to make it seem as if it's worthwhile.

[18:35] No, that's not, it's not a filler that he's put in here. It's not simply closing niceties. The words that he has to teach and instruct us are necessary words. They are words of great help.

They are words of great instruction, great benefit to Christian pilgrims, Christian sojourners, as he describes us, Christian foreigners living in a hostile world.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. That's one piece of advice found in the ancient Chinese manual, The Art of War, a document thousands of years old but still studied by military strategists today.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. And so Peter tells us about our enemy, tells us about the devil. He instructs us about who he is and what he's like and what he's up to.

And then he also tells us other things that will help us to not fear the battles that we encounter. What does he tell us first of all? He tells us that he is our enemy.

[19:45] He's the enemy. The enemy of all mankind is the devil. One of the most effective weapons that the devil has put into use, particularly in our day and generation, is for people to think that, one, he doesn't exist, or two, actually, he wants us to have a good time.

The devil is someone who wants to help us, someone who likes us, someone who gives us all sorts of tasty temptations to enjoy. But the reality is that the devil is the enemy of every single living person upon this planet, that he hates humanity because human beings are made in the image of God, but he especially hates Christians above all else because we bear the image of Christ.

He has always hated believers. He has always been the enemy of the church. He is always at work to attack. That's why we read there, your enemy devil prowls. He's not standing still.

He's not taking it easy. He's not lying down. He is prowling. He is active. He is at work. I think every Christian here knows that to be true.

He's called the devil. What does that mean? That's a title rather than a name. It means the accuser. Literally in the Hebrew, it means one who slanders, one who speaks against another.

[21:06] In Revelation chapter 12, we're given this insight concerning the devil. He is spoken of in this way, for the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

If you read the book of Job, particularly the first few chapters, you'll see the tactics of the devil, that he accuses Job of not trusting God or not loving God. He seeks to throw into doubt Job's faithfulness.

He accuses him. He's a liar. And the father of liars, Jesus says. He accuses. He's an enemy. And then notice he is particularly, terrifyingly, the devourer.

Looking for someone to devour. The sense of the word is to swallow down whole. Like one of those great big pythons might do for a small piglet or whatever it may have captured.

To swallow down whole. He's always on the lookout for a way of swallowing believers. Now the devil can never ever take away your salvation, dear Christian.

[22 : 18] The devil can never ever stop us from getting to heaven. The devil can never ever stop us from following Christ and knowing his love and forgiveness and being with him in glory.

But he does do a great deal of damage in the world and he does do a great deal of damage to the family of God, the church. First of all, as we've already seen in the book here, he is the one who can stir up persecution against the church.

This is what he has always done from day one. It was he who entered the very heart of Judas, wasn't it, to betray him to death. We know that the devil was very much at work throughout the book of Acts and the New Testament and throughout the ages of history we have seen that Satan again and again has raised up persecution against believers.

He's doing just the same even now through the evils of Islamic State, to the evils of the rulers of North Korea, attacking and devouring and killing believers.

He can also send lying and false teachers out into the world. Sure, that's one of the reasons why Peter refers to the true grace of God in verse 12 of his letter here.

[23 : 31] And as we've seen, he's spoken about all sorts of things in the letter. The devil is able to deceive people, to mislead even genuine believers.

He's able to put false teachers into the world. Paul speaks about how the devil has his ministers who disguise themselves as angels of light.

They look like godly people, members of the church. One of the great tragedies of our day and age is that the world in which we live and many of those who claim to be Christians in the church of Jesus Christ are false teachers.

Teaching that there is no hell. Teaching that there is no devil. Teaching that good people get to heaven. Teaching all sorts of falsehood by which people put their trust in a gospel that is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many Christians sadly have fallen and been seriously damaged in their faith. Many of us have known dear believers who began the walk with Christ and yet the false teaching or a false teacher got hold of them.

[24 : 39] They walked away from the Lord. They walked away from the church. And many of them are now in a wasteland of sadness and grief and all sorts of harm. Satan deceives.

But also of course Satan is at work in the sense that he uses our sinful weaknesses against us just as he sought to do with Jesus. Jesus was in the wilderness for those 40 days.

We have the account of how on three occasions he came to tempt Jesus to seek to cause him to sin against God, to move away from the path that God had set before him, that way of our salvation. And Satan is the one who tempts us. Yes, we have our own sinful tendencies, but the devil uses them. He knows the chinks in our armor. Paul tells us that we're not unaware of his schemes, his traps.

He uses them to terrifying effect to destroy a believer's joy and a believer's fruitfulness. Telling us that money is the way to find happiness in this world.

[25 : 41] Telling us that we're better to spend our time on our career than we are upon God's word. Better to seek after the popularity of man rather than seeking to please God.

All sorts of temptations and lies. And so Peter reminds them that they have an enemy and that he's a roaring lion of an enemy and he's looking to devour them. It's a terrifying picture of someone with great power and might and who is set against the church.

These are discouraged. These are hard-pressed Christians. These are Christians living under the Roman might and rule. They're finding it tough. No doubt their question must be and ours must be as well. How on earth in a world which is controlled by the God of this age, how on earth when there is such opposition to the things of Christ, how can we overcome?

How can we not be devoured? How can we live for Christ and persevere for Christ when he is prowling around, waiting and looking to devour us? This, I think, is where Peter speaks from first-hand experience.

This is where I think Peter's instruction is certainly so helpful to us because he was himself someone who Satan tripped up and for a time devoured, if I can put it that way.

[26 : 59] Remember in Luke in chapter 22 where Jesus speaks to Peter. He says to him, Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, but I've prayed for you, Simon, that your faith will not fail when you've turned back, strengthen your brothers.

He's talking about that time when Jesus, sorry, when Peter was in the courtyard sitting by the fire, warming himself, and on three occasions he was tempted to betray Christ and he, not betray Christ, deny Christ, and he did so.

So what is the advice of someone who has first-hand felt, as it were, the devil's breath upon his neck and fallen into one of the devil's schemes and traps?

What does he tell us to do? He tells us, first of all, to be alert. That is, to be on our guard. That's why the devil is so very sensible, isn't he? So very clever. If you don't believe in the devil, you're not going to be looking out for him, are you?

If you don't believe there's an enemy, then you're not going to be watching out for him. If you think all is safe and all is well, then of course you're going to take things easy, you're going to slack off, you're going to relax. We are watchmen, we're to be like watchmen on a city walls looking for an impending enemy, knowing the enemy is coming, but just watching for him to come, that we can give the advance notice.

[28 : 18] Peter wasn't alert when he was by the fire, he was caught off guard when the devil came and tested him. He let his guard down when the girl came up to him and spoke to him.

Paul warns us in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 27, not to give the devil a foothold, not to give him an opportunity, not to open the door to him in one sense.

Be on our guard. Don't give him room to get under our radar. Are you on guard against this devil's attacks? Are you on guard against his temptations? Are you expecting him?

That's what we should be doing. We should be expecting him to attack us. Expecting him to be trying to trip us up. To be on our alert. And then he says, be of sober mind.

In other words, clear thinking. We know what the opposite of sober is. Clouded judgment. We need to have our wits about us. Elsewhere, the Bible, New Testament, keeps calling us to exercise self-control, self-discipline.

[29 : 20] It means having a sober judgment about ourselves. Not only be on the alert about the devil, but be alert to ourselves. Be alert to the fact that we are weak. Peter never thought he was going to deny Jesus.

Do you remember how often he said, even if I've got to die with you, Jesus, I'll never deny you. I'll never leave you. He wasn't being sober minded. He wasn't thinking of himself as he should have done.

He had self-confidence. He didn't recognize the weakness of his flesh, the weakness of his person and character. Even if all leave you, I'll never leave you, he says.

What does Paul warn in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 12? He warns this. If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. One of the most dangerous places for a Christian to be is in a place of success.

One of the most dangerous things for a minister or a church leader to be in is in a church that is thriving and growing and seeing wonderful things happen. It's then that we let off our guard. It's then that we become confident.

[30 : 24] And overconfidence is surely the most dangerous attitude to have in all things.

Overconfidence, when you're driving the car, can be dangerous, isn't it? I've got complete control.

Nothing's going to happen. And then it happens. Christ-like living overconfidence, not being of a sober mind about who we are, of our limitations, of our weaknesses, places us in grave danger.

As soon as we think that we can live the Christian life in our own strength, that we are doing fine, that we're getting on well, that's when we are most likely to fall.

How do you think you're getting on as a Christian? Do you think you're ticking all the boxes? I do my quiet time every week. I read my Bible and my daily bread every day.

I'm there at church twice on a Sunday. You know, I'm doing pretty good as a Christian. Devil's not going to catch me out. Dear friends, that's when we're in the most danger. So we are to be alert, on guard, expectant, expectant.

[31 : 26] And we're to be sober minded, realising that we are weak, dear friends, and without some real help, then we are going to be devoured. So what do we, so we're aware the devil is attacking, we're aware that he's there, what are we to do?

What are we to do when we find ourselves under attack, spiritual attack as believers? Well we're told there, verse 9, to resist him. That's it. Not give in to his lies.

Not to give in to his temptations. Not to give in to his doubts. We're to recognise that they are false. The devil never, ever gives and speaks the truth. Always a lie.

You don't need to be doing that as a Christian. You don't need to be reading your Bible. You don't need to live in the way that God has given you in the Word. Remember that God's Spirit within us, His work within us has given us the power to do what we could never do before.

Before we were Christians, we could not say no to sin. Yeah, we could to a certain degree because the temptation wasn't too great. But when the temptation gave great and we really wanted to do it, there was no way we could hold ourselves back.

[32 : 39] That's why the world throws itself into all sorts of troubles and trials and sorrows and griefs. Can't say no. But here's Titus 2, verse 11.

For the grace of God has appeared. It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. That's the wonderful power of God's grace in our hearts. Not only to forgive us from our sins, but to give us power over sin.

So that it shouldn't be the master. It doesn't need to rule us anymore. It doesn't need to have control anymore. Resist it. When the devil comes, there was a, I think many of you know the story or whatever it is about the little girl who, when she was asked about these things and they said to her, what do you do when the devil comes knocking?

She says, I send Jesus to the door. Knowing that we can't go ourselves. Send Jesus to the door. Knowing that we can't. We've got to resist the temptation. Resist.

Strength. We're going to see how that comes about. We're to resist but we're to stand firm in the faith. What's that about? We need to be sure of what we know to be true of God.

[33 : 52] That's what it is. Standing firm. That standing comes out a lot in Ephesians 6. Paul speaks a lot about having done all. Stand. We don't need to run away from the devil.

We certainly mustn't run to the devil but resisting him is just standing firm. standing firm in what we know about God what we know to be true of him.

How was it possible that the devil was able to trip up Adam and Eve in the garden? What did he do? How did he manage to get them to eat that fruit which they knew was going to bring death because he told them a lie about God?

He sowed doubts in their minds about who God is and what he had said. Genesis 3 verse 4 You'll certainly not die. God had said they would and they repeated it.

And doubting God's goodness and faithfulness and love for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God. In other words God is keeping back from you something good.

[34 : 56] What sort of God would do that? Eat the fruits. Get the blessing. Get the pleasure. Get the joy. You know standing firm in what we know to be true.

What did Peter do in that place? He denied what he knew to be true didn't he? He didn't resist. He didn't stand firm. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He knew that he was the one that he had put his faith and trust in.

He's the one who'd said whenever anyone else left him Lord we know you have the words of eternal life. But in that moment all those things that he knew to be true he didn't stand firm upon. Stand firming upon God's truth. Dear friends why has God given us his word? Why have we got the Bible? Why do we have preaching? Why? Because God wants us to stand firm. He wants us to know there are things that are definite and certain that we can trust in when we face temptation and difficulty.

In fact the very reason again that Peter wrote this letter wasn't it? He wrote it so that you might know the true grace of God stand fast in it. Give you a letter says Peter it's got all that you need to know about God and yourself and the world.

[36 : 08] Know it understand it take hold of it it's true it's dependable the lies and the falsehood of Satan are not dependable. The lies of the world around about us are false.

So how are we to do it? We're to stand firm in the faith but we're to stand firm together. We're to stand firm not on our own but we're to stand firm with all God's people. We don't do it alone. It's a wonderful help a wonderful comfort a great encouragement to know that you dear Christian and I are not on our top but that we are part of this great family of believers around the world. Resist him verse 9 standing firm in the faith because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. We can feel like that as Christians. We can feel like that in our college our school our workplace even in our family at times I'm the only believer and I feel so alone I find it so difficult at times. That's why God has given us his church. [37 : 12] That's why he's given us the family of God that we know that we are part of this family that supports one another that encourages one another that is there for one another. I'm sure from time to time you get newsletters from persecuted Christians about how they're getting on or things that happen.

I remember one Christian who had been arrested and imprisoned for several months and years how afterwards he confessed he said the thing that helped me so much was knowing that God's people were praying for me around the world. And sometimes he'd get a letter or receive news or whatever. It gave him amazing strength to know that he hadn't been forgotten. And in the trials that we face as we come under the devil's assaults as we live for him in this world where it is so often hard to know that we're not going through it alone that we're not by ourselves is a great comfort to us. But more than that it's a great comfort to know that we are part of a local church. Notice how as he closes Peter mentions certain people. He mentions Silas he says who I regard as a faithful brother. Silas was the one who probably brought the message brought the letter to the church. Possibly he's the one who helped him write it as well his secretary. Now Silas was somebody who knew a lot about suffering.

[38 : 36] We know a bit about him don't we from Acts. Acts 16 who is it that's with Paul who's in the prison at Philippi who's just been beaten within an inch of his life it's Silas. He's not somebody who doesn't know suffering he knew it and persecution and now he's supporting Peter.

He'd been a supporter of Paul and worked with him and now he's enjoying Peter's brotherly love and Peter's so thankful to God that he's got a brother in Christ there who helps him. But he's got someone else as well he's got Mark as well there in verse 13 so does my son Mark almost certainly again someone we heard of before in Acts John Mark who had been again a helper of Paul and Barnabas someone who'd known the enemy's assaults and had gone through a time where he'd been devoured hadn't he remember we read about it in Acts 15 he'd left Paul and Barnabas in the most difficult time and it caused a rift between Paul and Barnabas afterwards he'd struggled and he'd fallen but he'd been restored it's so important dear friends as Christians that we do not put on a mask that all is well it is no good to one another we just when we say how are you doing oh I'm fine now of course we don't want to moan and complain about the difficulties of life but sometimes we need to say to one another I am struggling in my life as a Christian I'm finding this hard please pray for me we need to have those Christian friendships and that Christian trust that we don't have to be those are always super Christians always being victorious always things are going well no

Mark was somebody who had fallen and been restored just as Peter had once fallen and been restored and then there's the local church as well verse 13 she who is in Babylon what's he talking about she who is in Babylon well it's code a bit like some of the things we read in Revelation the church is who he's talking about she the church is feminine if I can put it that way because she is the bride of Christ and all you men you are the bride of Christ and one day you will be with your husband who is Christ in that glorious meeting that glorious marriage supper of the Lamb so she is the church the church in Babylon where's Babylon it's not talking about that ancient city that we read about in the Old Testament Babylon is one sense a code word all the way through the Bible that speaks about the enemy of God in the world the spiritual enemy of God and in Revelation you read about

Babylon being fallen and destroyed it's a picture of the fact that the earthly demonic powers as it were are destroyed and overcome when Christ comes again yes it was an historical city under King Nebuchadnezzar that destroyed Jerusalem but now it pictures the satanic power upon the earth Peter's day that's Rome the Roman Empire was anti-Christian anti-God it worshipped Caesar as God on earth through the Roman authorities and Roman powers I said before 300 years of

persecution came upon the church of Jesus Christ so what is Peter saying he said the church in Rome sends its greetings Peter's almost certainly writing from Rome himself and they're in the very heart of that Roman Empire as a group of God's people and they are part of a family to which Peter belongs perhaps he's imprisoned perhaps he's undergoing all sorts of trials himself but he's part of a church and so he's receiving fellowship and support from the church yes the church is not perfect the people in this church are not perfect but dear friends we are brothers and sisters in Christ it's so important that we're committed to one another it's so important we're in membership with one another it's so important that we pray for one another it's important that we're there for one another and it's so important that we don't try to do it alone

[42 : 49] Peter didn't Paul certainly didn't why on earth should we I wonder and this is hypothetical of course how would Peter have coped if perhaps he hadn't been on his own in that courtyard on that night if he'd been with John or some of the other disciples and they had been in a group together would he have denied Jesus then in the group almost certainly not would he have had strength to own up to Jesus before those who questioned him if Andrew had been there or John or others dear friends we're not meant to be lone rangers in the battle we're not meant to be those who are on our own but we're meant to be those who give loving support and care for one another and even show it from time to time it's that lovely little closing words verse 14 greet one another with a I think the original is holy kiss it's translated as kiss of love well we're English of course so he couldn't possibly do that we're not French or Italian for goodness sake perhaps a very very light hug occasionally would just about subdue wouldn't it but we are to show affection to one another we are to show love to one another we're not to be those who are who are po-faced or in any ways sort of standoffish we're brothers we're family and sisters in Christ dear friends how important it is to weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh so we have help don't we we're to resist we're to stand firm because we have the word of God we're to stand firm because we have the family of God but that's not all we have is it if we only had the word of God and the family of God that still wouldn't be enough for us we have the God of God's himself and so we come to verse 10 the greatest help we have in the spiritual battles that we face and are engaged in and all of us are comes from God himself and what sort of a God is he he's the God of all grace come across this sort of this sense of God's allness in grace in verse 10 of chapter 4 where it speaks there of us as faithful steward of God's grace in its various form in its manifold forms he's not simply the God of grace but the God of all grace

Hebrews tells us we're to come before the throne of grace to receive help in time of need and so what Peter is saying to us is this whatever your situation God has grace for you whatever your circumstances whatever battle you're in at the moment whatever difficulty God's grace is enough for every situation and for every person never doubt that never doubt that but come to him for grace and what about this God who is all grace so he's the one who's called us to his eternal glory in Christ his very purpose in saving you and I is not that we should be devoured by the devil his purpose in saving us is not that the world should have victory over us his purpose is that we shall get to eternal glory if that's his purpose nothing can stop that this confidence is something that's permeated through Peter's letter the confidence that we have a salvation which is eternal which is ours which can never be taken away from us chapter 1 wonderfully verse 4 an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade inheritance kept in heaven for you who through faith has shielded God's power into the coming of the salvation ready to reveal it's God's power

God's purpose God's salvation we picked a little bit up there in chapter 5 of those who will share in the glory to be revealed when the chief shepherd appears we shall receive the crown of glory that never fades away dear friends you and I are heaven bound the devil may shout and scream and shake his fist he may do all sorts of terrible things to the church but he cannot prevent the church of Jesus Christ entering into life everlasting as the bride of Christ notice this again he's the God of all grace and he's the God of eternal glory and he's the God of time after you've suffered a little while at God's appointed time these sufferings will come to an end sometimes when you're in the midst of suffering in the midst of a battle it can seem unending when is this ever going to end when is this ever going to finish when am I ever going to feel as if I've come out of the tunnel the other time well you will dear friends but in God's timing and notice that it's not a long time it feels like a long time but we're told after a little while even those trials that the devil engineers against us are for a little while this reflects again back in chapter 1 verse 6 though now for a little while you've had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials is Peter sort of patronizing them no he's not the trials that we suffer in this

life they may be weeks they may be months they may be years but they're not eternity eternity is a long time this life is a brief life a passing life after a little while what will this God do well he himself will restore you he will himself restore you make you strong firm and steadfast who is it who restored Peter after he fell when the devil sifted his wheat was it Andrew who got alongside him and restored him was it John it wasn't was it

John 21 tells us it was Jesus so he walked along the beach with him he restored him didn't he feed my sheep take care of my lamb reinstated him gave him that strength gave him that purpose gave him that reason for going on Christ himself who sent him out sent Peter out from that moment to change man who was the one who led the preaching on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed the gospel to those thousands it was Peter who was the one who took the lead in so many ways the one who proclaimed the gospel before the Sanhedrin when they said you mustn't preach in the name of Jesus he said we jolly well will because we're going to obey God and not you this man who quivered when a young girl asked him if he knew Jesus now stands for the most powerful government with the power of life and death in their hands in Jerusalem and he says we don't care what you say we're going to do what God says who did that to him Jesus God himself restored him God himself made him strong

God himself made him firm and steadfast that's what Jesus had promised do you remember right back then in that passage that we read from Luke in chapter 22 when I've prayed for you Simon that your faith may not fail when you've turned back strengthen your brothers why did he go through that trial why did Christ restore him because now Peter was able to give to us the encouragement that you can get through that those Satan attacks and batters and assaults you can stand firm and you can overcome and how can we do that we've seen the answer already it's verse 11 to him who God Christ be the power forever and ever amen often when we get to these what are often called benedictions these closing blessings we have grace and peace to you forever and ever glory and honour to Jesus be forever and ever no it's to him be the power forever and ever that's just what these disciples needed just what these

[50 : 31] Christians needed they were under the rule of the most powerful empire upon earth Rome and they needed reminding that the authority and the power is not in the hands of Nero or the Roman emperor or his legions but the power and the authority over their lives is not based in Rome but any other human rule but is based upon the very hand and throne and heart of God he's got the power to keep them and bring them through to glory he's got the power to keep them in every generation forever and ever as our God changed no Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever how can you and I dear friends in a world which is increasingly hostile to true Christian faith how can we resist the devil how can we stand firm how can we make it through to the promised land in glory only by the very power of God which does not change that's our confidence that's our assurance the assurance is this and it's only this that gives us that peace of which he speaks at the very end peace to all who are in Christ how can we have peace in a world of turmoil of hideous attacks by terrorists of coups of civil wars where's our peace it's found in the reality that we are kept by the sovereign hand of a loving God who has all power and who will bring us through to glory let's and the

God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ after you've suffered a little while will himself restore you and make you strong firm and steadfast to him be the power forever and ever Amen