

Preparation, Progress and Prayer

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Date: 12 February 2025

Preacher: Rev Colin Macleod

- [0 : 00] To be with you this evening for a time of worship as you prepare for your communion season. And we'll begin our worship this evening beginning of singing from Psalm 33 in the Psalter. Psalm 33, we're going to sing from the beginning to verse 6 to the tune Irish.
- Ye righteous in the Lord rejoice. It comely is unright that upright men with thankful voice should praise the Lord of might. Praise God with harp and unto him sing with the psaltery.
- Upon a ten-stringed instrument make ye sweet melody. We'll sing to the end of verse 6 to the praise of God together. Ye righteous in the Lord rejoice.
- It comely is unright that upright. And half a bright men with thankful voice should praise the Lord of might.
- Praise God with harp and unto him sing with the psaltery.
- [1 : 21] A song of the psaltery. Upon a ten-stringed instrument make ye sweet melody.
- A new song to him sing with the psaltery. A new song to him sing and play with loud noise skillfully.
- For righteous God's word. All his words are done in mercy.
- To judgment unto righteousness. To judgment unto righteousness. How love he may rest still.
- The loving kindness of the Lord. The air throughout the field.
- [2 : 34] The heavens by the word of God. The heavens by the word of God.
- In their beginning day. The heavens by the word of God. The heavens by the word of God. The heavens by the word of God.
- Their frame did take.
- Lord these words remind us this evening. That we are coming before you. Creator and sustainer. Sovereign ruler. Almighty God. And so we bow Lord this evening. We acknowledge you. We ask that as we join together for this hour of worship.
- As we open your word. And as Lord we spend this time in worship. We pray that you would draw near to us, Lord, and do us good.

[3 : 38] That we pray, that you pray, that you pray, That you pray, that you pray, That you pray, that you pray, That you pray, that you pray, That you pray, Lord we spend this time in worship we pray that you would draw near to us Lord and do us good that we might know the presence of the Holy Spirit here this evening and that he would in our hearts testify to the wonder and beauty and splendor and depth and richness of your provision toward us in Christ who has said he will testify of me and so Lord we ask tonight at the outset of this communion weekend for your blessing upon word and sacrament upon fellowship and singing that you would hear the prayers of your people and as they offer Lord to you their petitions as they bring to you the concerns of their heart as they seek the blessing of the Lord upon the cause of Christ here in Stornoway and across our island Lord be near them bless them keep them we pray and as they spend this time around your word together tomorrow with Callum and over the weekend with David we pray Lord God that you would draw near and bless we pray that there would be a real encouragement and an enriching of spiritual vitality a depth and a deepening of grace and faith by both word and sacrament being received in faith

Lord we thank you that you deal with us in such a way that we have here in our midst the very word of life and we bless you that you speak to us and that the word of God continues to do the work of God in hearts around our island and in their nation across the world this very evening we pray tonight for all the prayer meetings being held across our island we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who will be meeting just as we are with their Bibles open singing praise to the living God seeking your blessing the word as it is explained and broken down and Lord we pray that here and all these meetings across the land it would be to the benefit and blessing of your people that there would be real encouragement tonight through fellowship and preaching and prayer and praise that as your people worship they would be prepared Lord to meet you in that place of stillness and then ready to meet the world and tomorrow and in the next day at times we are so grateful for these Wednesday nights to come together to gather around the word brothers and sisters in Christ to remind ourselves whose we are and who we are children of the living God and so Lord as we reflect on these wonderful truths and the vitality of the gospel we pray for your blessing on your cause in Stornoway be with Calamurdo the elders and deacons the Sunday school teachers all the activities and groups and plans that go toward making this place a place that is dedicated to your glory and your praise and honour and Lord may that work reap a great harvest may your people be enriched and encouraged and built up in the faith and may those who as yet are unconvinced and unconverted Lord draw them we pray by your grace and in your power may there be conviction of sin in hearts may eyes be opened to the awfulness of our situation out with Jesus where we would remain under the wrath and judgment of God and so Lord we pray for the reality of our precariousness to be blessed to many and that

Lord as that work begins may your people come alongside to share a word in season a word of hope a word of grace and remind those who may seek you of the invitation and summons of Jesus come to me we are reminded of Philip's example when he spoke to that Ethiopian official he told him the good news about Jesus and what news it is the son of God who came into this world to seek and to save the lost he paid a price that we could not pay he stood in a place so that we would not have to experience separation and darkness and the awfulness of that forsakenness that he felt on that cross for he tasted that death which was due to fallen sinners and so we pray Lord that that atoning sacrifice would be ever more precious to us in the days ahead and that we would in our own way in time figure out ways to share and explain and describe the finished work of Christ in truthfulness in love with a sense of awe and wonder and that we Lord as people who have come to know the Lord as our saviour may our commitment to him in your grace and mercy become convincing to those around us for we know

Lord they watch our lives they they read our decisions they watch our conduct may our conduct be as we as we are called to be holy may our conduct be one a pattern of reverence and awe that we might have within us and out with us and about us a fear of the Lord that would speak to those around we pray Lord then your blessing on your word tonight on the upcoming communion services across our island and those as they preach Lord may they be endowed with the spirit from on high to show forth the praises of Christ to declare a risen saviour who was dead and now is alive Lord we commit to you the cares and concerns of our hearts tonight we pray for the congregation at this time of vacancy may they Lord be blessed to engage with the work may they be encouraged to engage with the work and may you bless Lord their endeavours in the cause of Christ at this time we seek your leading in these things as in all things and we pray

Lord that you would make your way known to the congregation here and to each one who has such a concern for the cause that this congregation has stood for all these years and generations Lord we require and need and plead for your blessing for without the Lord the labour is in vain and so we we express Lord and acknowledge our dependence and we seek your blessing and we ask the forgiveness of our sin and everything we do we ask in Jesus name amen we'll return to sing psalms this evening we'll sing from psalm 34 and the beginning of the psalm psalm 34 and sing psalms we're going to sing to verse 9 to the tune Jackson at all times I will bless the Lord I'll praise him with my voice because I glory in the Lord let troubled souls rejoice together let us praise the Lord exalt his name with me I sought the Lord his answer came from fears he set me free psalm 34 we'll sing to verse 9 to God's praise praise the Lord at all times I will bless the Lord I'll praise him with my voice because I glory in the Lord let troubled souls rejoice praise the Lord let them rejoice praise the Lord exalt his name with me I sought the Lord his answer came from fears he set me free

[11 : 24] I sought the Lord his answer came from fears he set me free voyance voyance voyance voyance voyance From him deliver and save.

The angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually.

All those who fear and honor him, he sets his feet.

The angel of the Lord is good, who just in him is blessed.

O fear the Lord, you saints with me, you will not be oppressed.

[13 : 01] I will turn this evening together in our Bibles to the first letter of Peter. 1 Peter, reading in chapter 1. 1 Peter, chapter 1, where we find the apostle fulfilling the commission given by the Lord to feed the Lord's people, to teach the Lord's people and encourage the Lord's people.

And he writes to the elect exiles of the dispersion scattered across the Roman Empire according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. And he writes and wishes grace and peace being multiplied to them.

He speaks then about our being born again to a living hope. And having said something about that, we'll read from verse 13, where he links into what he's just said about the living hope that belongs to every Christian.

Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 13.

[14 : 34] 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 13.

Sincere, brotherly love. Love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

May the Lord bless his word to our hearts this evening. We'll think about that passage in a few moments together. First of all, we'll sing again from Sing Psalm, Psalm 25.

[15 : 56] He guides the meek in what is right and teaches them his holy way. We'll sing to verse 15 together to God's praise. Because the Lord is just and good, he shows his paths to all who stray.

My great iniquity. But then I'm going to clear the Lord.

[18:14] My eyes are always on the Lord. He'll be my feet from every stair.

What a great description and definition that is of the Christian life. My eyes are always on the Lord. We'll bow in prayer for a few moments together. Lord, that our eyes would always be fixed on you, that we would heed the apostle's teaching as he feeds the church through his apostolic writings that have been blessed to our hearts down through the years.

We ask, Lord, for understanding, for insight, wisdom, patience, grace, that we might apply to ourselves what it is you would have us learn day by day as we open our Bibles, be it in public as it is this evening or in private, Lord, we pray that we might know your closeness and have an eye to your glory and have a desire, a burning desire, to serve and honour you.

Peter fulfills the commission given by Jesus that day on the beach when he said, feed my lambs. And here we find him doing just that, wishing grace and peace to be multiplied to his readers.

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And that's where Peter is in verse 3. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope. He's immediately reminding these Christians, many of whom were under the cosh, struggling, finding things hard, that they needed to remember or be reminded who they were and whose they were.

And having mentioned that at the beginning of the chapter, we find him doing it again in verse 23. Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living word of God, he's reminding us tonight who we are and whose we are, that there's been a change of heart.

[21 : 25] This new birth has been effected through the grace of God and by the application of the Holy Spirit. And now there's been a change of status. Verse 4, you have now been born again to a living hope, an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, being kept in heaven for you.

This is wonderful stuff as Peter begins to draw out the change of heart and its implications. It's not just a change of heart because of the change of heart, there's a change of status.

This inheritance is kept for you. So brothers and sisters in Christ, tonight we are being reminded by the word that our standing before God changes, our focus on life changes, our eternal destination changes because of what the Lord has done for us and in us and through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a wonderful flow of language that sets before us tonight, this change of heart, this eternal destination, the standing. It's ours because of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

And that is made very clear in verse 19 because all of this hinges on what? the precious blood of Christ. The precious blood of Christ.

[22 : 42] As with Peter, so Paul, the two great teaching apostles in their writing ministry make the same emphasis. You know well the words of Ephesians 2, so famous and precious to Christians down through the generations.

Once you were separated from Christ, alienated, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And in his letter to the Colossians, the same emphasis, he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

It's all about who Christ is and what Christ has done. And so Peter writes to remind and encourage Christians of this great reality using the same powerful imagery and language as Paul and in so doing, he places at the centre of it all as Paul does the precious blood of Christ.

Our change of heart and the resultant fellowship and status and the eternal destination, all these changes that we can think through and reflect on, it all flows from and are guaranteed by the precious blood of Christ.

[24 : 00] That is what we have been ransomed with. Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways in verse 18, inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold.

The world didn't do this. Religion didn't do this. The apostles didn't do this. The temple didn't do this. The sacrificial system, the Aaronic priesthood, none of these things have done this for you, Christian friend.

But nothing other than the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. And so tonight, as we think about these things, I want to reflect on you with the centrality of the blood of Christ and the resultant Christian way of life that flows from this.

Our fellowship, our worship, the very character that defines us, our conduct, which is mentioned here twice in this passage, all flows from an acknowledgement and a deep, growing personal awareness of our ransom price being the blood of Jesus.

Many hymns have been written to try and capture this. One of the more famous ones. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

[25 : 14] What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And this is the heartbeat of the New Testament. The very pulse of every congregation that names the name of Jesus, that holds forth his praises.

It's all about the blood of Jesus, which cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We profess our faith and hope to be in him and in him alone. And so we have this born again to a living hope flowing straight into a passage that says called to be holy.

So here's the implications of this wonderful reality. The precious blood of Jesus Christ that makes us, washes away our sin and makes us whole again. There's consequences. There's an impact.

There's a result. The Christian way of life. There's a few things to say about it this evening as we spend a little bit of time together. Verse 13 says, Therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 27] This Christian way of life has the characteristic of preparation. Preparing your minds for action. Now this is not a dodgy, weak link to try and force in the word preparatory.

It's at the heart of the characteristics that are listed in the Christian way of life. Preparation. Preparing your minds for action. Being ready.

This is a call to be prepared and set your minds to exert yourself. It's almost as if the picture is of the athlete in the blocks waiting for the starter's gun.

Or you're fixing your seatbelt. You're ready to rev the engine and go, let the handbrake off. It's about this being ready to go. But to go where? To do what? Preparing your minds for action and being sober minded.

Clear the decks. Clear the thoughts. Clear the attention. Clear the focus. And set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 31] And so we reflect on who Jesus is and what he's done for us. And the precious blood of Jesus that washes our sins away and makes us right and whole again.

And as we commit ourselves to the serious sustained thinking, this is how we begin to achieve a clearly committed Christ-like manner or Christ-like living.

So as we apply it, the more we know him, the more we study, the more we rely on him, the more we learn about him, the more we love him, the more we trust him, the more evident it will become that we belong to him.

That we are his and he is ours. And that will be made very evident this Sunday morning as you take your place at his table.

You go there on his summons. You go there called. You go there because in his love he has prepared a feast for you there.

[28 : 34] And he sees by his word in his spirit through grace come for all things are now ready. We've probably all been in a position where we've heard that summons and our hearts have almost burst with anticipation, our love overflowing and then suddenly the focus shifts and we come away from our Lord's finished work and remember our sin and our weakness and our failings and our foibles and our faults.

And we say I can't go there. That's for holy people. Good people. People better than me. If they knew my heart, if they knew my mind, if they knew the way my imagination works, they would never be, they would never allow me near that table.

But friend, it's not your sense of righteousness that brings you to the table. It is, the words of verse 19, your ransom price is the precious blood of Christ shed for you, shed for me.

Because in and of ourselves, lost, destitute, hopeless, helpless, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, go back to the language of Ephesians 2, once you were separated from Christ, alienated, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God.

But, now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. And it's having been brought near, we hear him say, having come to me in faith, sit at my table.

[30 : 21] I have a feast for you. And so, the Christian way of life has about it a sense of preparation. And as we prepare and as we set our minds on these things, as we focus and study and reflect and spend time in fellowship and listen to the word and allow the word to impact us and change us from the inside out, and as we set our minds on things that are above and realise and understand, we are hidden in Christ.

The language of the New Testament is wonderful. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you. We are his. And look what he says as you think this through. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance where the devil wants us looking, especially at communion weekend.

He doesn't want us focusing on the table and the feast and the preparation and the lavishness of the grace of our Lord. He doesn't want us thinking of his forsakenness for us, paying our price that we could not pay, going to that cross, that darkness, that awful judgment that he experienced so that we might have life and forgiveness.

He wants us thinking about our weakness, our sin. He wants us on the edge of things. He wants us fragile. He wants us brittle. He doesn't want us at the table because there's a feast there.

There's grace there. There's strength there. And we go there as obedient children. Do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

[31 : 50] But as he who called you is holy, you will also be holy in all your conduct. And so we are to be obedient and we are to be clear-minded. We are to fix our attention on our Lord and Saviour.

I want to share with you a wonderful saying, part of the writings of the famous Oswald Chambers. It's a saying I come back to a number of occasions, especially recently, because it does a lot in terms of clearing the ground here, making us just reflect on what Peter is saying here as in many other passages.

Oswald Chambers, who had such a remarkable life and achieved so much in a relatively short time, he wrote this, shut out every other consideration and keep yourself before God for this one thing only, my utmost for his highest.

I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for him and for him alone. That, friends, is a wonderful summary of the Christian way of life.

We've sung there in Psalm 25, For your name's sake, O Lord my God, forgive my great iniquity, my eyes are always on the Lord.

[33 : 04] He'll free my feet from every snare. As we keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. So we take Chambers' resolution to heart and say, well, if Oswald Chambers, in 1919 or so, or 1915 perhaps, when he wrote these words, I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for him and for him alone.

Go ye and do likewise. Could very much apply there. As we look at the Christian way of life and the preparation that we're called to engage in, how do we apply it ourselves?

The diligent use of the outward means of grace. Famous phrase used in the Shorter Catechism. The word, sacraments and prayer. Being in fellowship, being in worship, being in the word, being in prayer, communicating at the table with our Lord and Saviour, receiving the grace and nourishment and blessing from that feast.

Obediently, in humility and dependence upon him, we make diligent use of the outward means of grace, so foundational to our Christian way of life.

So there's preparation here. Secondly, we'll go through the passage in verse 15 and again in verse 17, we'll see there's progress here. As ye who called you as holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

[34 : 28] And then we go down into verse 17 again and we see the same emphasis. If you call on him as father, who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

You see, with Peter, it's not all deep theology. Same with Paul. They don't just cram theological realities into a letter and hope for the best. They say there's an outlet and there's a consequence and a result for all this theology.

It changes us and it is seen in our progress. The word we have here twice used is conduct. You also be holy in all your conduct and conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

And so that there's progress here. We're to be holy. There's to be something about the separateness of God himself and his being holy, his setting us apart.

We've been set apart by God and for God. But also, this separateness has to have as its nature or characteristic a fearfulness. You see, conduct yourself with fear throughout the time of your exile.

[35 : 39] That's a word that speaks of a sense of awe, a sense of wonder, a sense of adoration. not timidity and not being afraid but a sense of joy is here that we would know our God and what he's done for us that would impact us so powerfully that our conduct would reflect our understanding.

Now we're okay in the minds because we've followed the first example, we've prepared our minds for action, we're sober-minded, we're setting our hope fully in the grace that will be revealed to us when Christ says come, come to me.

Well done, good and faithful servant. That is to come. But God willing and unless he comes back before Sunday, the next summons you're going to have from him is to come to his table and where we go as obedient children.

And so we're making progress. It's all about their conduct becoming more and more Christ-like and less and less worldly. and the more we die to self and die to sin and die to the world, the more our conduct will reflect the light of the gospel and the nature and character of our loving Heavenly Father and the impact of faith in his Son.

That's what people see in us. That's what they hear. That's what the world is watching for and you know they're watching. Go to the workplace, you know they're watching. You know they're listening. They want to see you trip and fall and make mistakes and they'll be on you like a rash.

[37 : 10] Lots of them are like that wanting to see how serious you are about your commitment, your conviction, your confession. Well let them see. Let them hear.

Let them understand through your being prepared, through your mind being ready and set for action, being prepared to always give a reason for the hope you have within you and then let your hope be seen in how you conduct yourself.

So this passage, this section, this language, it's about growth in the Lord, growth in the Gospel, how we nurture and develop. It's a dominant theme, developing or growing up with the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We've all at one point in our lives been babes in Christ. Maybe we still are babes in Christ. Maybe the progress isn't what it could be. Maybe it isn't what it should be. All the more reason to be at that table on the Lord's day where the nourishment and provision and blessing and grace and strength is there provided by Jesus, our Saviour.

So this dominant theme of progressing is a thing that helps us to get things right. Verse 14 again, do not be conformed. That's where you used to be.

[38 : 33] That's the darkness. That's the world. That's worldliness. Worldly wise, if you like, to use Bunyan's famous character.

Worldly wise will tell us all day and all night, well, you know, that's nice that you're in the seminary. Nice to have the Bible. Nice to have Psalms. But you know what? Really? Commitment? Really?

Do you have to go that far? Do you need to? You know, there's other ways and means. And listen, he'll talk to us all night about the other ways and means. Anything. But Christ. And the finished work of Christ upon the cross.

Which is what the table speaks of and reminds us of so powerfully. Do not be conformed. And you'll be aware of the ministry, the writings of Dale Ralph Davis, a tremendous American commentator, very much focuses on Old Testament scriptures.

But he said this, he was looking at a particular time in Israel's history and he was applying it to our day and age and this is what he said and it's something for us to take on board and apply if it applies.

[39 : 38] The church in the West needs to recover doctrinal purity, vital worship, a bold witness holiness. And personal holiness.

holiness. That one right at the end there. There's the key. Personal holiness. And so that keeps us from burrowing away into books and becoming if you like professional theologians.

That doesn't cut it with the Lord. That's not what we're about. This vital worship and bold witness will be fed by a personal holiness and that's where we're going here in this progression we're called to make.

Guided by our conscience that is tender toward Christ, we press on toward the goal. Here we are called twice to consider and reflect upon that we're not conforming to the passions of our former ignorance but in our conduct we are being holy and in our conduct we are being fearful.

We have a sense of awe and wonder living to the glory and honour of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I mentioned Pilgrim's Progress. I wonder tonight if when we begin to think of progress we can think we're not we're not where we want to be.

[40 : 50] I'm not where I thought I would be. I haven't made the progress that I really should have. We could probably all think about that and take that on board but let me remind you and I hope to encourage you by doing so of the first chapter and Pilgrim's Progress as Pilgrim leaves the city of destruction under the guidance of the evangelist.

What happens next? Pliable. An obstinate get a hold of him slow him down distract him trip him up next thing he's in the swamp of despond he manages to get out of that in a right mess and worldly wise comes along gets a hold of him points him to the village of morality in the house of Mr. Legality he's in all sorts of bother and trouble and then the evangelist comes along and says in a repeated conversation what are you doing here?

What are you doing here? There's the path I told you look for the light walk toward the light and you'll find the narrow gate and that's just the first chapter so maybe we could have read that chapter we could look at the front cover and think pilgrim's progress it's more like pilgrim's lack of progress and that's what makes the book so timeless so appealing so real because we're all that pilgrim the slough of despond being distracted by obstinate and pliable ending up in the village of morality knocking on the door of the house of Mr. Legality instead of sticking to the king's highway and pressing on and that's what Peter is calling us here to do in this passage that we are to seek a personal holiness and a conduct that reflects progression growth on a personal basis and so we look in here to get this right and we say

Lord show me your ways that's where 25 the Psalm 25 starts to you oh Lord I lift my soul I trust in you continually do not let me be put to shame nor let my foes gloat over me Lord reveal to me your ways and all your paths help me to know direct and guide me in your truth instruct me in the way to go with our Bibles open with our hearts humble the Lord instructs us on the way to go and here tonight that instruction comes through Peter saying set your mind on things that are above look at this work of preparation be prepared to exert yourself to learn and study and get in about the word to feed your soul your heart and arm your mind by being rooted in the word and then with that preparation there's progress and that progress is to be you are holy and you are to be fearful and we're to press on with our conscience tendered toward Christ last thing in verse 17 if you call on him as father there's preparation there's progress there's prayer perhaps there's nothing that marks the Christian life or the Christian way of life quite as much as prayer

I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here I while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear what a great and glorious thing it is to be in prayer to converse with the living God and right in here in the midst of this section about the Christian way of life here it is if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds Peter wants him to be a praying people praying congregations praying individuals praying families praying calling on the name of the Lord calling it's a rich word it's used here it has a sense to rely on the one that is named and who is named our loving heavenly father and we call on him we rely on him we pray on him we pray to him we call out to him in Genesis 12 we have a very similar phrase used of

[45 : 16] Abraham and in fact I think it might be Genesis 4 or 5 the first description of human beings praying uses this phrase men called upon the name of the Lord and here it is in 1 Peter it's been well said that if you pull a thread in Genesis the Bible wrinkles in Revelation calling upon the name of the Lord is a fundamental of the Christian way of life we must rely upon the one that is named here as Abraham did as he built his third altar at Bethel he called upon the name of the Lord it also in that sense it's interesting in Abraham's sense it has the impact of a word that has a sense of proclamation and there's a bit of thinking that maybe he wasn't just praying he was preaching well maybe we can't be entirely sure let's keep the focus on prayer call on him as father what's our father done for us tonight for God so loved the world that he gave it's not precious to us this evening do you know what tomorrow will bring the weekend will bring there's challenges difficulties there's darkness there's heartache there's sadness around us quite often isn't there how do we deal with it how do we focus we clear the mind we make preparation we make progress but above all we pray we pray for wisdom tact patience insight understanding we call upon our father in faith and humility and we do so conscious of his lavish provision toward us let me just read to you these wonderful words in philippians in chapter 4 do not be anxious about anything isn't that often our undoing we get so anxious we forget to pray or we pray but our prayers are skin deep they don't go through the ceiling we don't lift up holy hands to our father we hold on to our worries because we get so anxious don't we do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and what happens the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus the promise of God as we call on our father he pours out to us this peace the peace of God that passes all understanding

Paul was so determined in that letter to the Philippians that these ancient Christians and us tonight would be reminded of what God longs to do in our hearts to pour out his peace his blessing his joy and communion with the living God and prayer is right at the centre of it all you know well the name of John Calvin he was a great hero of the Reformation experienced a vastly experienced and capable able church leader and theologian my goodness wasn't he just that man though went through many trials great heartache in his life he did not operate in a vacuum he didn't live in an ivory tower he knew life often inflicted what he called the ravages of anxiety and he said it is by such anxiety that the fervour of prayer is inflamed you see what the world thinks we should do and what anxious is go to the world for solutions go to counsellors for solutions run a programme don't go to the throne of grace why would you do that and the Christian says but that's where

I'm going I'm going to call upon my loving heavenly father for he sent his only begotten son into this world so that through him we might be born again and given a living hope cleansed and made right by being made new and our understanding our prayer life our Christian conduct what's the motivation our ransom price the precious blood of Christ that's what the world doesn't understand that's what the world doesn't get out there the world out there thinks we're engaged in something religious and we're engaged in something Presbyterian we're engaged in something free church but what we're doing is we're engaged in worship gratitude thanksgiving for the ransom price that's been paid for our sins a price we could not pay the things of this world are perishable silver and gold but the precious blood of Christ stands above and beyond all of it and that is a ransom price that was paid by our saviour for us and so we can confess and acknowledge our lack of progress our stumbles and our falling but we do so in prayer calling out to our loving heavenly father we give thanks to him for the goodness of his provision toward us and these characteristics flow from our deeper the deeper and more clearer our understanding of the ransom price the more preparation will be seen the more progress will occur the more prayer will take place what a thing to be a praying people we have been ransomed friends from the futile ways to the ways of faith and hope our way of life is one that is infused with our saviour

Jesus and it's worth noting just as we close that in this passage alone in 1st Peter chapter 1 verses 1 to 20 8 times the apostle names Jesus Christ another 8 times he refers to him as him he refers to him directly for instance there in verse 20 he was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was manifest in the last times for your sake who through him are believers in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God by the time we come to verse 21 Jesus Christ has been named and referred to 16 times the church of Christ on earth infused with the name of our saviour and it's to his glory and his honour and his praise that we live out our Christian lives and may the Lord bless you as you do that in these days to come as you gather tomorrow with Callum here in the seminary and David at the church services over the weekend may the

Lord bless you and keep you and feed you and encourage you at this time of communion through word and sacrament that God would be to you your loving heavenly father that you would be to him an obedient loving child of God professing your faith acknowledging you need to prepare and make progress and pray all the time we have to increase and improve in these characteristics all of us of course we do we're a work in progress and may God bless the progress we make tonight to his glory to his name be all the praise we'll bow in prayer for a moment together Lord our God we thank you for your goodness toward us we thank you for this opportunity the privilege of worshipping together Lord we commit to you these days to come in this communion weekend all the services all the preaching the serving of the sacrament the offer the remembering of Jesus offering himself which the table speaks to us of so clearly so powerfully hear us

[53 : 33] Lord in these things grant us grace to prepare our hearts and minds for action grant us Lord grace and strength to make the progress we need to run the race to set before us to fight the good fight to look unto Jesus and that we would at all times be people of prayer calling out to our Father we thank you that you hear us in Jesus and we pray for your blessing now this evening upon us forgive our sins Lord and go before us in his precious name we ask it Amen so we'll turn to the psalter this evening to close our service we'll sing from Psalm 27 in the psalter Psalm 27 I don't think we're doing all these verses we're doing verses 11 to 14 says here 1 to 14 that's the whole psalm that might be a bit much we'll go from verse 11

O Lord instruct me in thy way to me a leader be in a plain path because of those that hatred bear to me give me not to an enemy's will for witnesses that lie against me risen are and such as breathe out cruelty I fainted had unless it I believed had to see the Lord's own goodness in the land of them that living being in that wonderful phrase wait on the Lord and be thou strong we'll sing to the end to the tune Calmarnock we'll stand together O Lord instruct me in thy way to me the leader be in a plain path because of those that hatred send them to me give me not to mine and his will for witnesses that lie against me risen and sons!

I will be to see! fainted!

I fainted had unless that I will him have to Lord's own goodness!

have to in of their blood living being Wait on the Lord and be the strong that he shall spread spread afford and to thine heart give to the which I say upon the Lord may the of the Christ love of fellowship Holy Spirit you all amen