Luke 22 (Part 4): 31-46 • Standing in the Hour of Temptation

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Luke 22:31 goes like this.

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." [33] Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." [34] Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."

[35] And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." [36] He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. [37] For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." [38] And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough."

[39] And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. [40] And when he came to the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." [41] And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, [42] saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." [43] And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

[44] And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. [45] And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, [46] and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation." (ESV)

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, open our hearts now. Speak to us from Your Word. Lord, fill us with understanding. We pause before we dig into the Scriptures Lord, that our hearts might truly be open to all that You desire to say to us today.

Lead us, Father, Lord. We desire to learn and to grow, to understand and help us, Father, to apply Your Word. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

As we get into these verses, you can see that we're in the very final moments of the upper room discourse and the Passover celebration, which of course, morphed into the Last Supper.

And Jesus is making His final statements there before moving on to the Mount of Olives. And He begins to speak to His disciples about the difficulty of the next several hours. And He actually tells them that they would all desert Him that very evening. We're not told that in Luke. We're told that actually, in Matthew's Gospel account. Let me put that on the screen for you. For Matthew chapter 26,

Matthew 26:31 (ESV)

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"

Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. (And He said) *For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"*

And He no sooner said that, but Peter began to loudly protest. No way is that going to happen. I will not do that. At this point, Jesus turns to Peter and says, *"Simon, Simon."* And this is what's recorded for us here in verse 31 from Luke's account.

He said, "*behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat."* Very interesting statement. Is it not? It's important by the way, to understand that the Greek pronoun that is used here, *"Satan has demanded to sift you as wheat,"* is plural, right?

To sift you as wheat. And so the sifting that Satan intended to do was for all of the disciples. But it's also obvious, from the text here, that Peter is front and center in this conversation. And frankly, the sifting that he received, the challenge that came his way through the enemy, is something that we hear most about. And as hard as it was for Peter, and by the way we're going to cover

everything that happened to Peter in that denial of the Lord and what happened afterwards next week, but regardless of how hard that whole thing was, we know from this passage that the actions of Satan toward Peter were not random.

And what I mean by that is that Satan had to go before God. And it actually says here that Satan demanded, and in another Gospel account it says, *"Satan asked,"* Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. And so, we get some interesting information here, particularly related to understanding what is involved when Satan attacks a child of God. And we merge these passages with some of what we learn in the Old Testament, such as in the Book of Job, where we understand that the enemy had to come before God and received permission to do what he did.

And I have no doubt that Satan wanted to go far beyond just sifting, or that sifting process was to not just give Peter and the other disciples a bad day. We know that the enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Satan certainly qualifies as an enemy. And so, we know that his intent is to do far more than perhaps he does. But we know that he was kept in this case from destroying Peter, just as he was kept from destroying Job completely.

And we're told in verse 32, one of the main reasons why. Look at verse 32 in your Bible. It says, *"but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail."* That's beautiful. And the fact that Jesus prays for those who are called by His name is a wonderfully comforting thing. The fact of the matter is He continues to do that even today, even seated at the right hand of God. Let me show you this passage on the screen from Romans chapter 8. This says,

Romans 8:34 (ESV)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Who is (going) *to condemn* (the saints of God)*?* (Is it Jesus? No heavens) *Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that,* (He's the one) *who was raised* (Paul writes) *—who is* (even now sitting) *at the right hand of God, who* (look at this) *indeed is interceding for us.*

Jesus is in a ministry of intercession for the body of Christ right now. And that's beautiful. But I want you to take special notice here about how Jesus prayed for Peter, because this is huge. This is absolutely important.

We're still in verse 32. Look what Jesus said. He said, "*I've prayed for you, Peter, that your faith might not fail or may not fail."* Notice that Jesus didn't say, I've prayed for you so that the satanic attack wouldn't come your way.

God gave the enemy permission to actually bring that sifting, but He said, I've prayed for you, not that, I mean, all the things that you and I pray for when there's some kind of an attack going on and all that. Beside the thing, He says, I've prayed that your faith wouldn't fail. That's a very significant thing for Him to say, because Jesus knew that the level of personal failure that Peter was going to face that very night would be such that it could actually shipwreck his faith. And so Jesus prayed for him that his faith would not fail.

And that got me thinking about all the things that could cause our faith to fail. We have a lot of expectations, you and I, and when those expectations aren't met, we can become pretty disappointed. Disappointed with God and our faith can become shipwrecked.

I was reading a comment just this last week, on some post on social media, and in fact I think it was just yesterday, and there was a post, I don't even remember what the post was all about.

It was something about the Lord and whatever else, but this woman responded, and in her comments, she explained how her husband had passed away suddenly the day after they were married. Yeah, very tragic, very tragic situation.

But she went on to talk about how she began to question the love of God and how could God let something like that happen, and I could tell by reading what she had written there in her comment that her personal sifting had ended up very much like Satan probably wants every sifting to end up.

And that is with people actually questioning the love of God and becoming disappointed and walking away from Him in bitterness and anger. And Christians, it happens all too often. And it's always tragic to see it happen.

But you'll notice that Jesus expresses a confidence here related to Peter and we're still in verse 32. He actually says to Peter, *"and when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* And I read those words, "*turned again"* and I thought, well, it's interesting. I need to look that up.

I looked it up and in the Greek it's just one single word and it actually means to return or to turn back. So, Jesus is saying to Peter, when you've turned back, I

want you to strengthen your brothers. And so, the question we ask is, what is He expecting him to return from? Well, that's simple. Failure. Failure. A colossal failure. An absolutely huge failure. That night, Peter would be tempted. Despite all of his claims that he was ready to go to prison or to go to his death for Jesus.

That night, he would be tempted to save his own skin by denying that he ever heard of a man named Jesus of Nazareth, and he would fall to that temptation most profoundly.

And you'll notice here in these verses, that Jesus encourages Peter that his failure is not going to be the last word for him. Did you catch that? He says, *"and when you have returned."* He's saying to him, Peter, this failure, and it will be big, is not going to be the end for you. When you've returned, strengthen your brothers.

And the reason I love that so much is because it is the birthright of every Christian, that our failures would not ultimately define us. And that means your failures, and my failures, and they have been big. They don't have to be the last word about our lives. Do you guys know that it's possible to lose a battle and still win the war. It's possible to lose a battle to Satan and still win the war. And there have been many of us in this room, in fact I'm willing to say all of us, who have lost a battle or two along the way.

But we're going to see here as we get into this further and we talk more about Peter into next week as well, that how after caving to the temptation that he faced that night, that Peter will return.

And Peter will not just return, but that he would be stronger for his failure because of his failure. Isn't that incredible? In fact, I'm going to tell you something. I believe that one of the signs of Christian growth is when we can look our failures straight in the eye and thank God for them, for all that we've learned, and the way that we've grown because of them.

I really do. We can sit around and mope and dope, and cry about all the things that we've messed up and all the failures, but when we can look at those failures and look them right in the eye and say, you know what, that was a biggie. Yeah, that was a whopper. Can you, how would you like to be Peter? Have your failure written down in the Bible for all time for people to read over, and over, and over again. At least most of yours are private.

But the fact of the matter is, they're failures just the same. And we can come away from those failures and we can say, Jesus, thank you. Thank you that you

allowed me to go through that because you've done a work in my life to strengthen me and to challenge me to go beyond that failure and not to let that failure define me. And you've taught me from that failure. And I've understood what you've taught me. And now I have gone forth in my life with a greater strength than I ever could have imagined, and it happened because of that failure.

And we're going to see that in Peter's life. We're going to see that God was actually using Peter's failure to prepare him to go on and be a pillar, to become a pillar along with the other apostles as well. But of course, Peter hasn't learned any of those lessons yet.

He says in verse 33, if you look with me there, Peter says to Him, *"Lord, I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death."* And of course, that's just a reminder that we all say things to the Lord that are untrue sometimes, don't we? Right?

It's passion speaking. You ever had that done, that you ever spoken to the Lord in the moment of passion said something that you absolutely regretted later on? Jesus says, he comes back. *"I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me."* And that's just a simple way of saying the sun isn't even going to be, won't even crest yet on the horizon yet before you will deny me this very night.

And I'm sure that Peter probably didn't believe a word of it, or if he did, he was determined to prove Jesus wrong. But either way, Jesus goes on to speak to all the disciples. If you look with me in verse 39 and says something interesting. He asks them, first of all, to remember when He sent them out. And He says, "*I told you, don't take a money bag or a knapsack or even in sandals or anything like that.* (He says) *but did you lack anything?*

And they came back and said, no, we had everything we needed. But then He goes on in verse 36 to say, *"But now let the one who has a money bag, take it. If you have a knapsack, bring that along too. If you don't have a sword, sell something and buy one.* Verse 37*, "for I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors,"* quoting out of Isaiah.

And what Jesus is saying here is that things are going to change now. There's a great fulfilling, fulfillment that is going to come into place tonight with the arrest, and the trial, and the beating, and suffering, and ultimate crucifixion of our Savior. And He's basically telling His disciples, by prediction, that they are

going to face all kinds of new challenges and new dangers on this road that they are on. And they need to be prepared.

And then the narrative you'll notice as we go on to the next few verses moves from the upper room where they'd been celebrating Passover and having the last supper, now to the Mount of Olives, verse 39. *"And he came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives. The disciples* (of course) *followed him and when he came to the place He said to them, pray that you may not enter into temptation*."

And the temptation that He's talking about here is the temptation to give into fear because Jesus knows what's about to happen this very night. There's going to be great fear that's going to come into their lives, and He's saying, pray that you don't enter into that fear. It's interesting, isn't it? He'd already told them up in the upper room. He said this, you're all going to desert me tonight. So, He knew. He knew they were all going to give into fear, and they did. Every one of them.

They all gave into fear and ran, okay. And yet, what is Jesus saying here to them? He's saying pray that you would not enter into temptation. Do you understand what's going on here? Jesus knew what they were going to do and yet He's giving them every opportunity not to do it.

Do you understand that? That messes with some people's minds. Because they think that God's foreknowledge fixes an event so that it can't happen any other way. That is wrong. Just because God knows something is going to happen doesn't fix it to happen just that way.

That is not predestination. That's just simply God's foreknowledge. He knew they would fall, but He continued to exhort them to say, it doesn't have to happen that way if you would follow what I'm telling you. Now, pray that you don't fall into temptation. But He knew they were going to fall asleep and ultimately not pray, and ultimately fail. He knew that, but He still gave them every opportunity. Do you understand?

Do you understand what's going on here? This is the heart of God. God already knows everything about everything. I mean, there is no passage of time for God. He just sees it all. But that doesn't mean He's not going to speak to you about the weaknesses or the issues or the challenges that come into your life and talk to you and direct you according to His will. Whether you choose to understand or to embrace or to follow after that exhortation is you, that's up to you. But He's going to give you every chance.

Verse 41, it says, *"he withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me."* I get this. Jesus knew the horrors that were just very quickly going to come into His life. And as a man, and you heard me right, as a man. Jesus is a man. He's all man. He's also all God. But as a human being, you and I can fully relate to the idea of knowing that something bad or hard is about to happen and you don't want to go there. I mean, nobody in their right mind would want to willingly walk into a hurtful, painful, scary situation.

We don't want to do those things. We may resign ourselves to do it. We may resolve to do it, but we don't want to, and I can fully understand the fact that Jesus doesn't want to. And so, He prays. He also wants God's Will to be done. And so, He prays and says, Lord, if there's any other way to accomplish your Will. In other words, if there's any other way to save these people, if there's any other way to make sure that their sins are completely paid for, then let's do it.

Let's do that, so that this cup might pass from me. But we know, don't we, that the cup of suffering did not pass from Him, and that tells us something else. It tells us there was no other way. There was no other way. People ask you and they say, so how do you know Jesus is the only way for people to be saved? You just tell them, I know because Jesus prayed and He said, if there's any other way, then let this cup pass and the cup didn't pass. There is no other way. There is no other way to be saved than to put our faith in what Jesus did on the cross.

And I love those last words of verse 42, so powerful, where Jesus says, *"nevertheless, not my will but yours be done*." Ultimately, even though Jesus knew how painful, how devastating, how horrific, and you and I don't know how painful or horrific was His suffering. We may never know. But even though Jesus knew, He submitted. He ultimately submitted to the Will of His Father by saying, Lord, *not my will but…* (your will) *be done."*

In other words, He chose submission over the exercise of His own. And I love that. I love that. And isn't that what you and I spend a lifetime doing? Learning how to put God's Will above our own. It's funny sometimes people will write me, and they'll say, pastor Paul, I'm just struggling to, I'm just struggling to surrender to God's Will. And I'm like, really? You're struggling? Did you think that the struggle was going to be over this side of heaven?

You will struggle with this for the rest of your life! You will never stop struggling until you see the face of your Savior. You will continue. This is a lifelong process you guys. Learning to surrender, learning to submit, there is something in our human make up that just wants to make our agenda the

agenda, even when it comes to God. God comes along and He lays His Will out before us and we go, well, not me today thank you very much, I'm doing my own thing. Right?

And how many times have you done that? A billion. This whole thing of learning to surrender, learning to submit, is a lifelong process, and don't think that you're going to snap your fingers or come down the aisle and get somebody to pray for you and you're going to walk away going, it's done. It's done. Forever and a day, it's done. It's not going to happen. You will struggle every day. Even though we sing about it like it's this easy sort of a thing. Let me show you, I love this song.

> All to Jesus I surrender
> All to Him I freely give
> I will ever love and trust Him
> In His presence daily live

All to Jesus I surrender. (You ever sang this one? Yeah, me too) All to Him I freely give. (I freely give it, Lord, thank you. Boy, we sound holy when we sing stuff like that) I will ever love and trust Him. In His presence daily live.

And then we go on to sing the chorus.

> I surrender all
> I surrender all
> All to Thee my blessed Savior
> I surrender all

I surrender all. I…, (and by the way, I love these words. And I love singing this song) I surrender all. All to Thee my blessed Savior. I surrender all.

But I've learned in my years of walking with Jesus that they're easy to sing and hard to live. Have you learned the same thing? And we will live, we will spend the rest of our lives figuring out how to do all that. And by the way, let me just say this too, and this is important.

The only reason you and I can begin to actually walk in an attitude of surrender to the Will of God is because the One who, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed and said, *"Lord, not my will. But yours be done,"* is now living in your heart.

And because He's living in your heart, the power to surrender your life now resides in you. His victory is now in you. His ability to lay down self and let the Will of God have the day, is living now in you. What a glorious thing that is. Of course, what it takes is for you and I to resist the flesh, which is very strong, and to yield to the Spirit. Right?

But that is, that's the challenge, and that's where we're all living. I mean, that's, this is what we're going through every single day. Verse 43, I love this too. It says, *"There appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him"* And by the way, that always happens when you surrender.

When you finally get to that place, and if you ever have gotten to that place of surrender, and they call it sweet surrender because it is, and I don't know if you've ever gotten there or not. I've experienced this on a couple of occasions in my life where I've come to the place of just such turmoil that I finally surrendered my heart, my life, my circumstances to the Lord, and I've experienced this just sweet peace that just floods your soul.

And it's a peace that nothing can explain. It's literally like the Bible says, peace that passes understanding. And it comes upon you when you get to that place where you realize there's nothing I can do except lay this down at the feet of my Savior and trust Him. Nothing, absolutely nothing I can do. And when you finally get to that point, you will be attended by, you may never see an angel this side of glory, but you will be, I promise, you will be attended by a peace.

And some people say, well, how come I've never felt that peace? The Bible's always talking about that peace. Well, the peace comes from surrender, okay? And surrender is like dying. And dying, by the way, is hard because it's a dying to self, death to self. But produces such a sweet surrender, such a sweet peace.

And it says in verse 44, and this is another powerful revelation. *"And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*"

I am convinced that the agony that Jesus suffered there in the garden of Gethsemane was nothing compared to the agony that He suffered on the cross, and yet this was enough for Him to mingle His sweat with blood. And even so, in a state of that level of agony, we're told here that Jesus prayed, and these are the words*, "more earnestly."*

In other words, He committed Himself more to prayer, being in agony. And the reason that's significant is because I've found in my own life, and I've certainly

never experienced this level of agony, but I've experienced agony, and I know you have too.

But I have noticed that there is a tendency in my human flesh when I am in agony to stop praying and to run and try to find solace or comfort in something else because I'm not getting what I need. And so, I am particularly impressed by the fact that this passage tells us, that being in agony, He prayed even more. And that is a great example for you and I to not seek our comfort elsewhere. Even in a time of agony. Especially in a time of agony.

But to redouble our efforts to press in on God. To say, no I will not get up from the place of prayer until I've met my Savior, until I've experienced His comfort. I'm tired of reading about it. I'm ready to experience it firsthand, and I will not rise until it is mine. That's what I love about this example for you and I.

Verse 45 goes on and says, *"and when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow."* I don't know if you've ever been so worn out by grief that you couldn't even stay awake, but it's a thing.

And even so, it says Jesus exhorts them. He said, why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you might not enter into temptation. And it sounds almost like Jesus is being a little hard on these guys. It's like, I mean, it's the middle of the night. It's probably three, four in the morning or something like that and it's like, well, isn't this the time when people sleep? I mean, you're the one who created us. You created us to need sleep during the night, and here we are sleeping.

We're doing what people do during the night, and you're saying, get up and pray. But you know what? There are times, are there not, when the Lord calls upon you and I to suspend or to sacrifice some aspect of regular life that we need, in order to focus our attention on Him, on prayer, and on the need of the moment, because there is a desperation that requires that level of sacrifice. And sometimes it comes in the form of fasting, where we just have a sense in our heart that even though I know that food and sustenance is obviously very important to my existence, the Lord is calling me for a time to set it aside that I might focus on prayer.

We know that Jesus did this many times during His earthly ministry, went a night without sleep. Of course, He needed the sleep. As a human, He needed sleep. And yet He went without sleep from time to time because the situation demanded it. And there are times when the Lord will call you and I to set aside

something that we otherwise need, in order to focus on the situation at hand. And when He does call you in those times, He will provide what you need.

In other words, He will provide the ability to go without that sleep, or the ability to go without that food, or to fast from whatever you happen to be fasting from. He will give the ability. I believe that very much. I believe that had the disciples that night resisted the temptation to give in to the grief and sorrow of their hearts and to fall asleep, that the Lord would have been there to enable them to be able to stay up, and to pray, and to stand through this very, very difficult hour.

And what we're basically saying is where God guides God provides, right? If God is guiding you into a period of sacrifice, to sacrifice something that you would otherwise need for your very existence for a short time, He will provide the ability to do that very thing. So if God is guiding you right now to sacrifice some aspect of life that seems impossible to you to give up I want you to know that if you will resist the temptation to curl up into the fetal position, to crumple up into a ball and instead choose to meet whatever the challenge is, in the power of the Lord, that He will give you what you need to stand. He will give you what you need to stand. Let me show you one more passage from Ephesians chapter 6.

Ephesians 6:13 (ESV)

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in *the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

Therefore, take up (Paul writes, *Therefore*) *the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand* (Right? To withstand what?) *…the evil day,* (The evil day. And all the things that come against you in that day. Because God has given us what we need to stand. And then after we've met the challenge, right, the passage goes on to say) *and having done* (that. Having met that challenge in the power of the Lord, and with the armor that He's given us) *all,* (then) *to stand firm.*

And that means to have your faith end up at the end of that challenge and be intact, right? Just as Jesus prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail. God has given you and I what we need to face those challenges, to face those difficulties, to face the evil hour. He's given you what you need. So, resist the temptation to give in and to curl up and just wait till it goes away. It's not going to go away. But the Lord will enable you to stand.

He will enable you to stand firm because it is through His power and not your own. I like to come to the Lord often and tell Him that I can't do it without Him. I really do. I like to say it. It's very freeing to say that. I tell Him that often. Lord, I can't do this without you. I'm not going to take one step in this direction that you want me to go without you. Now with you, I'll go wherever you want me to go, but I will not take one step without you because I can't. I don't have what it takes.

And if you will admit that to the Lord, that's the point when He'll speak to your heart and say, okay, we finally got to where we needed to be. Now I can empower you to do what you would otherwise be unable to do in your own flesh, right? To walk in the power of the Spirit we need, in this day and age, to walk in the power of the Spirit you guys. We desperately need to walk in the strength that He gives, amen?