

## Luke 22:32 – The Intercession of Christ

The Christian life is full of many challenges and temptations! Can think of Christian in the story of “Pilgrim’s Progress,” who had to cross both sink pits and mountains and fight temptations every step of the way. What keeps the children of God in the midst of the Christian life? What holds us up in strife and lifts us up in our weaknesses? As we look at God’s word today we see one of the most beautiful passages showing the security of the believer, and we see that it is rooted, completely and utterly, in the gracious work of Jesus Christ. **Christ’s prayers secure the wavering faith of His children.** To find confidence in this we must:

1. Know our need
2. See our Mighty Helper
3. Hear the resultant task

### 1. Knowing our need

JC Ryle in his comments on this passage wrote these words. “We learn here what a fearful enemy the devil is to believers. He was near Christ’s flock, though they saw him not. He was longing to compass **密谋** their ruin, though they knew it not. The wolf doesn’t crave **渴望** the blood of you lambs any more than the devil desires the destruction of our souls.”

**Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift **筛出** you as wheat.**

The words of Christ tell us several things. They remind us that we have a great adversary who despises the people of God. Satan did not desire merely to sift Peter as wheat. Jesus uses the plural word for ‘you’ – it refers to the entire group of disciples. The devil wishes to sift them all, and this is the constant desire and effort of our enemy – our adversary – the devil.

In the Old Testament he sought to wipe out the entire Jewish nation *repeatedly* to destroy the seed of the woman that would one day crush his head. Whether it was in the time of Esther through Haman, or it was in the time of David through the Philistines, or whatever it might have been the rage of the devil was seen as a dragon who sought to destroy the woman – the church – before she could bring forth the Messiah who would be his undoing.

In the New Testament Jesus gives him the fatal blow, and the accuser, we are told in Revelation 12, is cast down from heaven no longer to find a place in the presence of God to accuse God’s children. But immediately upon the heels of this victorious announcement comes this warning – Rev. 12:12 – **Therefore rejoice O heaven and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.**

Jesus calls His disciples to remember once again the affliction and hatred of that old enemy before Jesus goes to His death – and we too must remember the warning. There is a great foe who seeks the destruction of God’s children. He wants to sift us.

The process of sifting was a common process in that time for preparing the grain for the mill. The grain was put into a sieve **筛子** and violently shaken back and forth. Through this process the chaff – the weeds and unusable parts of the harvest – rise to the surface and are removed. Then the sieve is turned from side to side like a teeter-totter **跷跷板**, and as this is done air is blown across the top – and whatever is left of the chaff is blown aside.

This is Satan’s desire – his desire is to show us to be but chaff. His desire is to show us to be hypocrites, to show the weakness of our love for the Lord, to show that in the midst of the greatest claims of faithfulness, **even if all others deny You I will never deny You** – to show in the midst of the greatest days of confidence and trust and love for Christ, that our faith is fickle **易变的**, and our commitment thin.

**Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.**

Will you be able to stand?

The great enemy of God’s people still prowls **巡游** around the church. Peter himself, coming through his own personal trial, would later warn the church with these words. 1 Peter 5:8-9 **Be sober, be vigilant **警醒的**, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...**

The devil is no enemy of long ago. He is not like a human enemy who, once defeated, is relegated to times long ago. He continues to rage against God’s people. He continues to ask that he might sift us like wheat and, remarkably, as in the time of our text, God gives him this permission.

You see the trial will come to Peter. Jesus has not prayed that Peter and the disciples will be kept from the attack of the enemy – that this attack will never fall. In fact the tense of the verb in the Greek implies that not only has Satan asked for them, to sift

them as wheat, but he has been given permission. The testing will come – it will come in one sense because of the malice 怨恨 of Satan, but it will come also because of the permission of God. God will allow the testing to fall upon the head of Peter and, remarkably, He will allow Peter to fall.

It has been noted that in verse 31 Jesus calls Peter by the name **Simon**. You remember perhaps that this was Peter's previous name but that, in being called as a disciple of Jesus, Jesus gave him the name Peter. You may remember also that the name Peter means Rock, and that in a play on words in Matthew 18 Jesus says to Peter **and I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.**

It is as if in that name there is a subtle reminder that Peter, too, is just a man. And in verse 34 all subtlety is lost – Peter, says Jesus, **ROCK – you will fail. You will deny. The devil will sift, and he will find you wanting.**

But My son, My son **I have prayed for you.** And you will see that when the strength of man fails, the power and love of God does not.

First – we have an enemy. His wrath and power are great – armed with cruel hate. But in the face of this enemy we have also an Ally – we have, as one man called Him, a **Mighty Friend**. And this Mighty Friend pleads for us, **that our faith may not fail.**

## **2. Seeing Our Mighty Helper**

The extreme beauty of Christ, that He speaks to Peter in such a way to move Peter's eyes away from himself, to fix his hope in Jesus. I don't think Peter understood this all at the time. In fact we know he didn't – because we know he was adamantly 固执的 certain that he would not fail, and he couldn't have been certain of this if he understood what Jesus was saying to him.

So Peter didn't understand this all at the time. But looking back in the time of his tears, I wonder what kind of solace 安慰 Peter found in the memory that Jesus had said **I have prayed for you.** I wonder what kind of refuge there was for Peter when all his self-righteousness came crashing down.

Luke tells us about that moment in pretty vivid detail. It occurs in verse 60-62 of this very chapter. **Peter says (for the third time) “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.**

**And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.**

**Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows you will deny Me three times.”**

**So Peter went out, and wept bitterly.**

**Lord I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.**

Who of us can know if we would be willing to go to prison and to death for our Lord? Who of us can be sure? Peter thought, indeed, that he would be willing to die for Christ and, in God's grace, one day he would be. One day this great apostle would not only go to prison for Christ, but give his life for Christ's sake and for the Gospel.

But what of us? Can we have such confidence? Can we have such certainty? The truth of the matter is we cannot – not at all in ourselves. But Jesus taught Peter through this lesson that there was a source of confidence far greater than our own power and strength. And it is in the work of Jesus.

In the midst of his grief, Peter had two things to remember. Not only that Jesus had warned him in advance that **before the rooster crows you will deny Me three times**, but also that Jesus said **But I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail.**

And this is the great comfort of every struggling Christian throughout the history of the church. It is not in our power or in the greatness of our faith. It is not in our religious accomplishments or in the number of times we may have stood for Jesus in the past. It is in an Almighty Saviour who pleads not *our worth* before God, but His *own* worth before God, that has been given for us.

You see in the very moment of Peter's denial Christ was taking upon Himself the sin of His entire people. He was in a very accentuated 强调 way **becoming sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God.** It was as if in the mockery and beating He endured, that He was enduring the mockery that Peter was not strong enough to receive.

And He prays for us. He prays for us in our weakness. He pleads for us in our hypocrisy 伪善. He pleads for us in the frailty and weakness of our faith. For this also, Lord, be merciful. Because for this also, I have died.

Peter would not deny Jesus forever. He would return, he would be strengthened, he would in God's grace be the rock upon which Christ would build His church. But he would forever remain in himself a frail and needy man who needed the Almighty prayers of an Almighty God. And he would receive them. And because he received them, he would return from this place of bitterness, and he would bless the Lord again.

Beloved in our Saviour, this is where God directs our hope this morning. It is not unto ourselves. It is not unto the strength of our faith. The devil desires to consume us – he hungers for our souls and beloved, in ourselves, he would have them. He can prove us hollow! He can prove us fainting!

But Christ prays for you! The blood of Christ is shed for you. And the Saviour pleads that blood over against all the power of the enemy and, have no fear – His blood is stronger! He is stronger!

All our faith is to be directed to Him. All our confidence to be found in Him. All our desires received in Him. Pray for me dear Lord, and I will climb mountains. Plead your blood and I will stand. This is the hope of every man, woman and child – this is the only hope for all mankind – the love of a holy Saviour which is poured out on us as He ever lives to make intercession for us.

**That our faith may not fail.**

And by God's grace, **our faith does not fail.** Just as, by God's grace, **Peter's faith did not fail.**

See first the existence of a great and terrible foe.

See secondly the existence of an almighty and merciful Saviour.

### **3. The resultant作为结果的 task / The resultant Commission**

**And when you return, strengthen your brethren.**

One of the most incredible truths of the working of God in the midst of a sinful human race is how God can turn the weakness and frailty of man into the greatest and most remarkable doorways and opportunities for Him to reveal His incredible glory and power.

Who will be the one to strengthen his brothers? It will be the very one who failed so terribly on this fateful night! Who will be the one to strengthen his fellow disciples in their trust in God? The very one who trusted in himself.

Another man wrote, "It is one of God's peculiar attitudes to bring good out of evil. He can make the weakness of one member of His church to be to the benefit of the entire body, and He can make the fall of a disciple the means of fitting him to be the strengthener and upholder of others.

"Have we ever fallen and been raised by Christ's mercy? Then surely, we are just the people to deal gently with our brethren. Let us tell them from experience what an evil and bitter thing sin is. Let us warn them from experience against the dangers of pride. But let us tell them also of the bounties of Christ mercies, and the powers of His love for, having survived our own trials only because of His grace, we must be quick to strengthen others in the mercy in which we ourselves have learned to stand."

**And Peter, when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.**

Notice with me that the return of Peter was never in question for Jesus. He knew that, because He prayed, because He would go to the cross, Peter would be saved. Peter's failure would not stop the power of God. Peter's human pride would not stop the power of God. This was one God has snatched from the fire – He would not only be saved but he would be used precisely as God said he would be used – **to strengthen God's children.**

The salvation of God's children is never in question when it depends upon the power of Christ for them to be saved.

Do you struggle in the faith, once having known the joys of walking with the Lord – do you face now the darkness? Do you see now no light at the end of the tunnel? Do you find yourself surrounded only by weariness? **Christ prays for you. And when you return, praise Him here with us to the upbuilding of His glorious church.**

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 42 **Why are you downcast沮丧的 O my soul? And why so disquieted within me? Hope in God for I shall yet praise Him – the help of my countenance and my God!**

May those same words be each one of ours this morning, because Christ prays for us. Because Jesus prays for us.

But note also that, when we are restored, we have a job to do. Peter would be commissioned **to feed Christ's sheep.** He would be commissioned by Jesus to **strengthen his brethren.** And by God's grace Peter would do precisely this very thing, preaching to thousands, but praying with thousands as well to lead and bring them not to Peter, but to Jesus.

But by God's grace He has a task for each one of us. It is certainly that each of us can encourage others and strengthen others with the comfort which we ourselves have been comforted by God. But surely it is also to praise our God, and it is also to live with renewed zeal for Him, and it is also to strive, in the power of His love, to never turn from His side again.

Beloved where sin abounds, looking to Jesus, grace abounds all the more. But this grace is never an excuse to continue in sin. Rather it is all the more encouragement that as we are brought to stand upon our Lord again – brought to return to faithfulness to Christ again, that we might also standing strong in His grace, and under His blood, be used of God for the glory of His name in the building of His church and in the proclamation of His gospel to the people and nations around us.

May God indeed strengthen His people this morning, and may our hearts find our hope and our confidence fixed on the fact that **Christ prays for us** so that in the midst of knowing our sin, and in the midst of knowing our weakness, and in the midst of knowing that there is a terrible enemy seeking to destroy us...that in the midst of all that we may also know that there is a greater Saviour – His name is Jesus – and He prays for us **that our faith will not fail.** And because His prayers are most certainly answered **we shall be made to stand.** And all God's people said, **Amen.**