



Daily Devotional – Prayer of Jesus (Part 1)

Luke 22:31-32 *Jesus said, “Simon, listen to me! Satan has demanded the right to test each one of you, as a farmer does when he separates wheat from the husks. But Simon, I have prayed that your faith will be strong. And when you have come back to me, help the others.”*

Chapter 22 records the evening of the Last Supper and the events leading up to the Lord’s trial. Jesus singled out Simon that is Peter, following a dispute about who will be the greatest amongst them all, He goes on to affirm Peter in that he will help and strengthen the brothers.

Peter on that same night will fall asleep while praying not to fall into temptation; cut off the right ear of the High Priest’s servant when they arrested Jesus and deny knowing Him three times before the cock crows. Amazing how the Lord never rejected Peter but knew his heart and potential to serve in the kingdom! Peter was valued for what he would become in Christ, not for how he had failed apart from Christ!

We learn from the Gospels that Peter was impulsive, bold, outspoken and headstrong. The world we live in today may admire these qualities but they held back his capacity to learn. However, even with so many imperfections Jesus was patient and continued to lead him to the truth about kingdom qualities and conduct.

In verse 31 *Jesus said, “Simon, listen to me!* He goes on to say that Satan desired to test Peter but why did Jesus pray that Peter’s faith would remain strong instead of praying against Satan’s demands? What is the purpose of allowing Satan to test Peter and how would the process of sifting prepare him to help the brothers?

Farming in the day of Jesus produced wheat grain contaminated with husks, stalks and small stones, which had to be removed before grinding the grain into flour. Therefore, sifting and sieving removed impurities; imagine bread with husks, stalks and stones - it may be good fibre for digestion but not so good for your teeth!

Jesus knew Peter’s weaknesses but he also knew that he loved and desired to follow Him. The Lord was patient and gracious to disciple Peter, even though he made great claims that he would go to prison and die along with Him. Peter was unable to match his words by his deeds and yet was still chosen to be used in the building of God’s kingdom. How humbling it must have been for Peter when he failed the Lord on so many occasions. Have you ever found that you learn more about yourself during the hardest times and by some of your worst mistakes?

There’s a well-known saying which you may have heard before: “God doesn’t call the equipped, God equips the called”! Equipping is a process called disciplining, which is a life-long process of learning, following conversion by faith in Jesus. Also, when someone is born again the Holy Spirit begins to sanctify, to make holy and set apart the believer. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus saying: *for we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* The image often portrayed in scripture on the subject of sanctification is one of purifying gold or silver, in this verse sifting wheat is used to illustrate refining for the purpose of making wholesome bread.

Peter, a disciple of the Lord was being prepared for great works and Jesus understood what He was doing by allowing Satan to strengthen his faith (in Christ). Remember Jesus was about to go to the cross to make the way possible for all believers to belong to the kingdom and be filled with the Holy Spirit to serve in His power and strength!

How wonderful that Jesus took our place on the cross, sent the Holy Spirit to bring comfort and now intercedes for all disciples!

However, we continue to live in a fallen world where bad things happen to good people but we are encouraged to *...know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* So we can rest this morning that when the Lord called us into a relationship of faith, it’s not because of who we were or by what we’ve done but rather in what He has already done and continues to do, after all Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith.

These two short verses in Luke 22 teach us not to focus on past failures, but rather to trust in what Jesus can do in and through each one of us by the power of the Holy Spirit, even in a fallen world! So let’s pray and agree with Jesus that our faith will be strengthened and believe that *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you”*.

Father God we thank and praise you for your love, grace and mercy over each one of us this morning. We trust that your purpose for calling us into relationship with Jesus will be ministered to us afresh in this day. Thank You Jesus for praying that our faith will remain strong under testing, as you refine us in our walk of faith to serve You. We trust that You are building each one of us into a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness and into His marvellous light.

We give You all the glory and honour, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.



Daily Devotional – Prayer of Jesus (Part 2)

Luke 22:31-32 *Jesus said, "Simon, listen to me! Satan has demanded the right to test each one of you, as a farmer does when he separates wheat from the husks. But Simon, I have prayed that your faith will be strong. And when you have come back to me, help the others."*

These two short verses are set in the wider context of the final hours before the Lord's crucifixion.

Peter must have wondered how he could get through those long hours after Passover, and every moment that followed the Lord's betrayal and capture in the garden. He must have believed the years of walking with Jesus had all come to nothing and was devastated to see His Lord dragged away. I can almost hear him crying "this wasn't how it was supposed to be, how can a kingdom be set up if Jesus is in prison or God forbid worse?" Did Peter's failure to remain faithful cause him to doubt the Lord and the coming kingdom and did doubt cause him to feel like giving up as the hours grew darker and darker?

Failure and doubt often lead to a sense of shame, guilt and helplessness, they can leave us feeling isolated, alone and lacking in desire to be with anyone. But Jesus said *'take heart! I have overcome the world'*. I cannot explain why Satan was the instrument used to achieve Jesus' objective of strengthening Peter's faith but I know the Lord cannot sin or make a mistake and He is sovereign over all creation, which includes the Devil and his demons!

The disciples from the beginning had difficulty to understand why Jesus came down from glory to serve in humility. Why would Our Father send His One and Only Son to suffer and die at the hands of sinful men? Their faith, trust and hope, it would seem, were in the belief that Jesus had come to conquer the world right there and then and rule with power and might over their oppressors. For many it is hard to accept that a fallen world would require 'The Perfect Sacrifice' 'The Lamb of God' to save it from Satan, sin and the sting of death. The realisation of God's plan to save mankind from certain destruction was especially challenging, as it was set in a culture of self-righteousness – has anything changed in our day?

Peter's confidence and hope crumbled as the Passion Week unfolded and Israel's promised Messiah went to the cross alongside thieves and criminals. The Sovereign Lord knew that Satan's demand to test Peter would lead him into a deeper faith and understanding of God's plan to birth a spiritual kingdom, not a secular one! Perhaps Satan's demand to test Peter, caused him to face his doubts and fears, turning to the Lord for mercy?

In discipleship there is always a lesson to be learned "there is no waste at the table of the Lord". May I submit to you that the lesson was to learn what the Prophet Zachariah had said to God's people ... *'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty*. Peter's was indeed severely tested, and his faith and understanding of spiritual matters would refine in the days leading up to Pentecost.

May I remind you this morning that we are all on a journey much like Peter, a voyage of discovering true spiritual life in Christ. The good news is that we are not alone in this walk of faith and we can be assured that our Lord, God, King and Saviour is with us every step of the way; Scripture declares that *'we live by faith not by sight'*. Do you truly believe that this morning, is your faith deepening in Jesus during this trial, can you go through today in the knowledge that you will submit everything under His authority and include Him in all your ways?

The word of God together with the indwelling Holy Spirit will lead us into a deeper faith-relationship and an abundant life in Christ, His perfect love casting out all fear. But, and there always seems to be a 'but' in the back of our mind, the Lord didn't say it would be a 'walk-in-the-park'! He confirmed that in this world *'you will have trials of many kinds'*. We recognise that a fruitful life apart from faith in Christ is impossible. The Apostle John records the words of Jesus on that same evening, saying *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

Have you found that to be true in your service to the Lord, or do you still trust in your own heart, lean on your own understanding and acknowledge yourself in all your ways and how does directing your own paths work out for you? Not easy is it? No, the bible says its's impossible apart from the Lord!

May I conclude this morning with this thought: The tests which come our way in a fallen world will either cause us to:

- Fall away from faith in Jesus, which is unbelief
- Make us try harder to please the Lord, which is self-belief
- Prayerfully we will draw close to God by placing our belief and trust in Christ alone, that's the Christian faith the Lord is praying for

Which will you choose today, should Satan happen to come roaming in your direction?

Let's pray:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has been his counsellor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.



Daily Devotional – Prayer of Jesus (Part 3)

Luke chapter 22 and the last few words of Jesus to Peter in verse 32 where he says *...And when you have come back to me, help the others.*"

What did Jesus mean "*come back to me*"? Some bible versions translate "*come back*" as converted. Strong's Concordance explains that converted means turning back to the worship of the one true God; back to love and obedience of God; back to the love for the children and back to love wisdom and righteousness. Converted doesn't refer to the conversion at salvation, as Peter was already saved. However, we can say that Peter had strayed from the Lord or at least had lost his way in the chaos.

Peter did in deed come back to the Lord and became one of the pillars of the early church, his testimony demonstrates to us all the love and grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and that He can take anyone one, whoever they are and equip them to minister to His children.

I'm often astounded by the testimonies of Christians I know and what they have had to suffer in their walk with the Lord. Their faith was sometimes severely tested, perhaps by the death of a loved one, or chronic ill health, sometimes it was a broken relationship or failed marriage. Very often financial disaster set them back and they suffered the consequences of bad decisions; there seems to be an endless list of bad things which can happen to good people! One thing in common is that they all testify to the faithfulness of God and the comfort they received; some even speak of the joy they experienced in the midst of pain, sorrow and suffering. Many, if not all look back and see the hand of God upon their lives and how only He could bring positive benefits from out of the most difficult time in their life. No one chooses to be tested but in my experience testing is inevitable at some point in our Christian walk of faith.

Have you gone through a time of testing, are you in one right now? If you have or if you are, then I would like to pray for you at the end of this devotional but first let's conclude our study. Jesus was preparing Peter to help the brothers (that is the church family) and his time of testing would not only increase his faith in Jesus but also prepare his heart to understand the difficulties which Christians encounter and to have compassion to minister Christ's love to them all in a fallen world.

I think the scripture in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 sums up exactly how God can take brokenness and make some sense of it all.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

We can trust this scripture to mean that with God it's a win-win situation!

Let's take comfort now and pray Peter's own words this morning found in 1 Peter chapter 1 verses 3-9

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Amen