

Jesus Prays for You

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles tonight to the Gospel of Luke in chapter 22. You all know that we gather tonight to observe, to partake of the Lord's Supper.

! And as we do that, we're visibly reminded of God's covenant grace towards us. And we receive that grace as His unworthy, undeserving people.

If you're in Christ tonight, God has saved you by His grace. He's brought you into His family, made you one of His children. You enjoy the rights and privileges of being called sons of God, which is just remarkable.

That we who are rebels against God should be considered His children. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection have accomplished for us our redemption, the forgiveness of sins, our right standing before God, our sanctification, our glorification.

Christ has secured our place in heaven with glorified resurrection bodies, without any suffering or death. We don't deserve any of this. None of it.

[1:12] And yet, Christ has earned it for us. We receive it through Him. It's truly amazing. And I hope that we'll be struck in a fresh way tonight of just how blessed we are, despite how unworthy we are.

And to see that, we want to see several instances of how Jesus dealt with the Apostle Peter. And to find encouragement knowing that He deals with us in the same way.

That He dealt with His unsteady, unfaithful Peter. Peter was undeserving. We know that well. We read about it all in the pages of the Gospel.

But if there were books written about our lives, like there were about the disciples' time with Jesus, everyone would know, just like we know about Peter, that we're just as unworthy as he is.

More unworthy than he is. I'm glad there's not a book written about my life. I hope that there never is. But Peter is a set down for us.

[2:12] And what we see is a very real person. I'm glad that Peter doesn't look like a perfect saint in the Gospels. That'd be discouraging to me. He looks just like I do.

He struggles with the same things I struggle with. And to see our Lord deal with them gently, faithfully, consistently should be a great encouragement to our hearts tonight.

We're in Luke chapter 22. I want you to notice with me verses 31 through 34. And then we'll notice some other verses as well. But we'll start here. Luke 22 verses 31 through 34.

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

But he replied, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death. Jesus answered, I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.

[3:13] I want to stop there and skip down to verse 54. Jesus has been arrested. He's been taken away. And we read in verse 54 through 62. Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest.

Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight.

She looked closely at him and said, this man was with him. But he denied it. Woman, I don't know him, he said. A little later, someone else saw him and said, you also are one of them.

Man, I am not, Peter replied. About an hour later, another asserted, certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean. Peter replied, man, I don't know what you're talking about.

Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. And Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him.

[4:12] Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly. The first thing I want us to see tonight is that Jesus prays for you.

Just as he prayed for Peter, he prays for you. Now, Jesus knew what was about to happen. He knew what Peter was about to do, what he was about to face.

The disciples just prior to that had been arguing about who was the greatest. And he knew that one of them was about to betray him for silver. He knew that some would sleep when they should be praying.

He knew that all of them were going to desert him. And he knew that one of them was going to deny him three times. And what we find from our Savior is not harsh rebuke. He shows them the foolishness of arguing about who is the greatest.

He doesn't say, though, as we frustrated parents might, I can't believe you disciples. What are you thinking? I can't believe you're arguing about who's the greatest. And I can't believe that you're about to desert and deny me.

[5:18] Instead, he prays for them. Peter, and especially for Peter, Jesus, knowing all things, knew that Peter's temptation would be especially great. So, Peter, even though Satan asked to sift all of you like wheat, it's you in the plural.

Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. I have prayed for you, singular. You, Simon. You in particular, Peter. Not, I think, to the exclusion of the other disciples, but he's showing his concern for this one especially, and this one in particular.

This is what Jesus does for his disciples. Maybe proud Peter didn't think he needed someone to pray for him. But he finds out that his need was great. And this is what Jesus does for his disciples.

He prays for us. And he prays for us particularly, individually, by name, just as he did for Peter. We are not alone in the midst of our temptations.

God does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but rather Jesus prays for us when we are tempted. Jesus, my great high priest, ever lives and pleads for me.

[6:31] Hebrews 7, 24 and 25. But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them.

We often, and rightly so, remember the death of Christ and how it's accomplished our forgiveness of sins. But do you remember that Jesus is alive too? And that he is praying for you.

He is interceding for you. We rejoice in his death and his life. His sacrifice and his intercession.

Jesus is a great high priest and we always remember the sacrifice part.

But do you remember the interceding part? That he prays for you. He prays for me. Just like he did for Peter. Romans 8, 34. Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

J.C. Ryle says, We need not hesitate to regard this as an example of our Lord's exercise of his office as an intercessor for his people. What he did for Peter.

[7:36] When Peter knew nothing of his danger, he is daily and hourly doing for all who believe on his name. You know the comfort that it is when a brother or sister in Christ comes to you and says, I'm praying for you.

They know that you're in the midst of trouble and they come to you and they look you in the eye and they say, I'm praying for you. And you know that person and you know them well enough to know they're a person of their word. And if they say they're praying for you, they are praying for you.

And you know what a comfort that is and what an encouragement that is. How much more so to know that Jesus is praying for you. And he's praying for you particularly.

He's not just praying, Lord, God, help all of my disciples. And he prays for Peter especially. He's not, Lord, God, help all of the people all over the world that follow you.

He's praying for you by name. You see what he says to Peter in verse 32. I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. Maybe sometimes we find it easy to pray, Lord, help my brothers and sisters in Christ.

[8:43] I hope we take the time to pray particularly, to pray individually, even as Jesus does for us. So we ought to do for one another.

There's great comfort here knowing that Jesus prays for us, especially when we face temptation. Worth quoting J.C. Ryle at length here. The continued existence of grace in a believer's heart is a

great standing miracle.

How is it that believers continue in grace? It's remarkable. He says, his enemies are so mighty and his strength is so small. The world is so full of snares and his heart is so weak that it seems at first sight impossible for him to reach heaven.

And if you know something of your own strength, you know that it would be, if it was left up to you, impossible for you to reach heaven. But then he says, the passage before us explains his safety. He has a mighty friend at the right hand of God. Whoever lives to make intercession for him, there is a watchful advocate who is daily pleading for him, seeing all his daily necessities and obtaining daily supplies of mercy and grace for his soul.

[9:52] His grace never altogether dies because Christ always lives to intercede. Jesus is praying for you. I hope you're not so arrogant to think, I'm good.

I'm not going to fall. I don't need prayer. I'm not like Peter was. If so, you and Peter are poster children for Proverbs 16, 18. Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit.

Before a fall, we need prayer. We don't know when our next great temptation is coming, but Jesus does. And he is praying for us that even though Satan should sift us as wheat, we will be kept and preserved.

We will be restored and be able to strengthen our brothers for having gone through that experience. You know what it is to be sifted like wheat? To be in a sieve and shaken back and forth like wheat is?

And we see that. Peter, we see him at those extremes. At one moment he's saying, Lord, I'll never leave you. I'll go with you to death. And the next he's denying. At one moment he's cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest.

[10:58] And the next moment he's running away because he's scared. You see these extremes. He's being sifted. And you know what it is to be jerked around and back and forth. But in the midst of that, Jesus is praying for you.

What a blessing that Jesus didn't only die for us, but that he also lives to intercede for us.

Remember that next time you face temptation.

Don't despair. Why am I being tempted in this way? Think, I'm being tempted and I know that Jesus is praying for me in the midst of it. And find great comfort there.

That's the first thing I want us to see about how Jesus deals with Peter. He prays for him. He prays for you. But secondly, Jesus died so that your sins might be forgiven. It's what we've gathered to remember tonight as we partake of the Lord's Supper and we remember his death until he comes. He died that our sins might be forgiven. Knowing our sin beforehand, Jesus goes to the cross anyway. You just read about what happened and how Peter denied him.

[12:00] And I want to see especially one thing here. And that is how our sin pains our Savior. How it hurts him. We see it in his look at Peter after the rooster crowed the third time.

Or after the rooster crowed after Peter's third denial. And the Lord turns and he looks straight at Peter. Looks intently at him. He had looked at Peter this way one other time when he first saw him. And he called him to be his disciple. That no doubt was an intense gaze. But this one must have been a withering look. The eyes of our Savior filled no doubt with sadness and rebuke and compassion and forgiveness.

All at the same time, how it must have smitten Peter's heart to have just finished denying his Lord. And for his Lord then to catch his eye across the courtyard. And he remembers his Savior's words and he goes out and he weeps bitterly.

The glorious thing here. The thing that ought to amaze us. Is that Jesus doesn't say, you know what Peter, that's it. I've had it.

[13:06] I warned you. I told you this was going to happen. I even told you that I had prayed for you. And still you gave in to this temptation. No more.

I'm done with you, Peter. I'm sick of it. You're too proud. You're too concerned with yourself. You're too disloyal. Get away from me. Imagine if Jesus said to that to us every time we failed him.

If he had quit on us. But he doesn't. And he still goes to the cross taking that very sin with him.

Taking Peter's denial with him. He goes and he dies.

So that that sin can be forgiven. I'm glad that Jesus isn't like us. We reach a point. People have let us down where we do that.

Say I've had it and done. No more. But Jesus dies for those sins. And he did it for us. He knew all about you and your sin before he went and died for it on the cross.

[14:09] He knew that you would fail him repeatedly. He knew that you would let him down. He knew that you would be ashamed of him. He knew that you would break his commands and do it repeatedly.

But yet he still died for you. So that your sins can be forgiven. I can't really wrap my mind around that. I hope you can't either. I hope we always are amazed that Jesus knew these things about us and still he goes.

And he dies for us. And so does that make us say, well, I'm just going to go and sin all the more. Knowing that it doesn't matter. It's forgiven. I trust not.

Oh, Jesus doesn't care. He died for our sins. No, I hope you see in Jesus. Look at Peter that he does care. He cares deeply. It hurts him when we sin. The question is, does our sin pain us?

Does it hurt us when we sin? Far from continuing in or growing in our sin because we know it will be forgiven. Our sin should cause us great pain because we know the price that was paid.

[15:13] That those sins might be forgiven. How do you respond when Jesus looks at you through his word? Like he looked at Peter. You ever experienced that?

You're reading and you hear Jesus say that when you hate someone in your heart, you've murdered them. Have you ever felt his watchful eye on you seeing your hateful heart towards that person? What do you do when Jesus looks at you that way?

What do you do when you hear him and you see him looking at you? He says to lust after a woman and your heart is to commit adultery. Does his burning, sad, compassionate gaze reach your eye and reveal your sinful heart?

When he says that we shouldn't worry about tomorrow, do you feel as disappointed but compassionate for giving eye on you? As you've been foolishly, pointlessly worrying.

How could you not trust me? The look says. How do you respond when Jesus looks at you the way he looked at Peter? Peter wept. Do we?

[16:15] Do we mourn our sin that put our Savior on the cross? It's part of what we've come here to do tonight. We're remembering the vast incalculable cost that was paid so that we might have our sins forgiven.

And be children of God. What a great sacrifice. I hope it shows you the magnitude of your sin. How great it is. How it's not just some little thing that can be swept under the carpet. No, it required the death of God's own son.

For your sin. My sin to be forgiven. Ye who think of sin but lightly. Nor suppose the evil great here at the cross may view its nature rightly.

Here its guilt may estimate. Your sin. My sin is enormous. It's heinous. It caused our Savior's pain. And suffering and death. Does it cause us pain? It should.

But I don't want to leave you despairing in your sin tonight. Jesus died that it might be forgiven. That's the second thing. And the third is that Jesus restores Peter. He doesn't just leave him with that look.

[17:18] He comes back to him. Turn over to the Gospel of John. Chapter 21. John 21. John 21. Jesus comes back to his wandering disciple. And we read in verse 15.

This is after his resurrection. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? Yes, Lord. He said, you know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my lambs.

Again, Jesus said, Simon son of John, do you truly love me? He answered, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. Jesus said, take care of my sheep. The third time he said to him, Simon son of John, do you love me?

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, do you love me? He said, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

I tell you the truth. When you were younger, you dressed yourself and went where you wanted. But when you were old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.

[18:22] Then he said to him, follow me. You see, Peter's sins had been forgiven. They were paid for at the cross. And so they're not held against him.

And Jesus comes and gently restores him. He commissions him to be a faithful shepherd and follower. Take care of my sheep. But then at the end also, follow me. Even as he had been told at the beginning of his ministry with Jesus, come and follow me, as Jesus called his disciples to follow after him.

Maybe the three questions, challenges to Peter, match Peter's three denials. That's possible. We're not sure. But we are sure of Jesus' love and his sustaining grace for Peter.

Remember what he told him before he betrayed him? When you have turned back, he was confident Peter would recover. He knew that he would restore Peter. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

And now he says, feed my sheep. Strengthen your brothers. And it's this way for us as well. We stumble and fall. And Jesus gives us that look through his word, but he doesn't leave us there in despair, does he?

[19:33] He comes and he gently restores us. He challenges us. He shows us the sinfulness of our sin. And he calls us afresh to follow after him, to fulfill whatever calling it is he's given to us for his glory, for his praise.

Come and follow me, he says again to us, again and again. And that means that we must pick up after we've sinned. We turn and there must be repentance. We don't go on continuing in our sin that grace may abound.

May it never be. No, we repent. We turn from that sin. And so what do you see Peter doing? It's Peter who was so fearful that he denied his Savior. We see him going and boldly proclaiming Jesus.

He is taking care of Jesus' sheep. He's calling other sheep into the fold. He's preaching him. He's willing to do what he said before he denied him. To go to prison with him and even to death. And he does those things, doesn't he? And it's remarkable, a turnaround from just before Jesus' death to just after Pentecost. And Peter goes to prison. And he's not afraid of the very same authorities that he was afraid of when Jesus was on trial.

[20:39] The same ones that could have punished him then. He's in their hands now and he's rejoicing to be worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Jesus took him and restored him and made him useful in his kingdom.

He's willing to die for the Savior who had died for him. What a remarkable change in this one who saw the death and resurrection of his Savior. It changed him.

Has it changed you? You've had your sins forgiven. Called to follow after him. Are you living like it? Boldly. Following after him. Willing to suffer for him.

Willing to go. Should he call you to it? Even to death for him. He was willing to die for you. And so may we tonight bring our sinful selves to the foot of the cross.

And there find great comfort and power and encouragement because our sins are forgiven in Jesus. Your sins aren't so bad that Jesus decided not to die for you.

[21:41] No, not that one. He's going to be too much of a rebel. Too much of a disloyal servant. I don't want that one. No. He died for your sins too if you are trusting in him tonight.

His death so great, so powerful it can atone for the worst of sins. This is a sinner's sacrament, praise God. But it's for forgiven sinners. And I know that some here tonight are not trusting in Christ. Your sins are not forgiven as you sit here tonight. And our hope and our prayer is that you would come to him. That you would bow before him. That you would say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner.

That you would see the certain path that you're on will lead to certain punishment. Pray, God, save me. Set me on the path that leads to life. And then you know what? You too can have Jesus praying for you.

Praying that you would be guarded and kept in the midst of temptation. Jesus' death and resurrection and life and intercession will be for you.

[22:41] His restoration, bringing you back after you've sinned, will be for you. So come and trust in him tonight. And if you are a believer in Christ tonight, praise him.

Thank him for what he has done for you. He's died for you. But Jesus' work for you isn't done. That's the glorious thing.

He's still working on your behalf. Still interceding for you. Still praying for you. Praying for you by name. Take comfort in that tonight. And when you stumble, go back to the cross.

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