

# “But I Have Prayed for You”: Our Interceding Savior and Invincible Security (Part 2)

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>31</sup> “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, <sup>32</sup> but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

<sup>33</sup> Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.” (Luke 22:31–34)

### Part 2

A. This is now Part 2 of what we began last time. I said I was dividing this text into three headings: (1) Satan’s Demand (v. 31); (2) Jesus’ Prayer (v. 32); and (3) Peter’s Denial (vv. 33-34). The first two we looked at last week. The third shall be our focus for this morning.

B. If you recall, the import of vv. 31-32 you remember was essentially this:

1. Satan is demanding to sift Peter and the disciples here like wheat—to so shake them that they abandon their faith.
  - a. And, indeed, it seems they would be inclined to do so, were it not for one profound fact: namely, Jesus is praying for them.
2. In particular, we’re told here that He is praying for Peter, for his faith, that it will not fail. And Jesus’ prayers will prevail. How do we know?
  - a. Well, for one thing He’s God.
  - b. But for another thing, He tells us right here. He doesn’t say: “And if you turn again . . .” —no, no. He says: “**And when you have turned again . . .**”
    - i. It’s a settled fact in the sovereign plan of God. Peter’s faith, though it will momentarily falter, will not ultimately fail because Jesus is standing—or kneeling, as it were—in the gap on his behalf. . . interceding, pleading, begging, praying for him.

C. And, most astoundingly, if you are in Christ, you must take in the full-breathed reality Jesus is doing the same for you . . . right now!

1. Each week has its own challenges and trials and tests of faith, does it not? Whatever you were worried about last week, well you may have a whole new list now this week.

- a. What is it? Where is the devil shaking and attempting to sift? Listen, your Savior, He's praying still . . . and His prayers will prevail!
- D. Now I summarize all this from last week up front here because it really sets us up for where we are going next, which I'd like to begin to turn our attention to now by asking a couple of questions:
  - 1. The first is simply this: If Jesus could stop Peter's faith from failing, as this text seems to clearly imply, couldn't He also have stopped Peter's faith from faltering?
    - a. To put it another way: If Jesus could stop Satan from sifting Peter, couldn't He also have stopped Satan from shaking him? If Jesus could keep Peter from falling away in an ultimate sense, couldn't He also have kept Peter from denying and renouncing his Savior in a momentary sense?
      - i. The answer seems to clearly be: Of course He could have stopped it.
  - 2. And so the second question that is then thrust upon us with great force is simply this: So why didn't He? Assuming He has some good reason, as we know our God always does, what was it?
    - a. What was He trying to accomplish in all of this with Peter?
    - b. And what might it have to do with you and I and the sorts of things God is trying to work out in our own lives as well?
- E. Well, there you have it. This whole sermon is really an attempt to answer that question. I see three things in particular that Jesus is after here with Peter and, by extension, with us well: (1) To Empty Him; (2) To Fill Him; and (3) To Use Him.

## (1) To Empty Him

### "I Am Ready . . ."

- A. You know there's a lot of talk out in the culture these days about the importance of self-esteem and self-love and self-confidence and things like this. "Believe in yourself!"—that might as well be the slogan of our day.
  - 1. Honestly, whenever I watch a cartoon or movie or something with my kids, that seems to be the message running on repeat. That's what's being inculcated by the powers that be to all upcoming generations.
- B. And Jesus is saying this is precisely the sort of thing has to go! This is the big issue with Peter that Jesus is going to have to rectify before he can really be of any use to Him.
  - 1. It's not that Peter is lacking in self-confidence, but rather that he has far too much self-confidence, and it's misplaced, it's misguided, it's not in accordance with reality. His view of self is too big and, consequently, his view of God is too small.

- C. You know I just read in [Rom 12](#) the other day, Paul says: “Never be wise in your own sight” (v. 16b).
  - 1. If you know the book of Proverbs, you know that such a thing is the mark, not of a well-adjusted and healthy human being, but of a fool.
    - a. And that seems to be the lane that Peter’s running in here.
- D. So in vv. [31-32](#), when Jesus tells Peter that Satan is asking for him, it’s almost as if in [v. 33](#) Peter’s response is something like this: “Well, bring it on! I have what it takes. I’m not afraid of the enemy. Oh Jesus thank you for praying for me. But, honestly, I can take it from here.”
  - 1. Look at what he says: “[Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.](#)” “Let the devil come. I’d like to see him try to shake my faith. My name is the Rock after all.”
    - a. Some of you are thinking of Dwayne Johnson right now and, honestly, he might be the one guy alive who has a chance against the devil—the one exception to the rule.
      - i. But as for the rest of us, there’s no shot. Unless you’ve got biceps the size of basketballs and thighs the size of tree trunks, you better raise that white flag up now.
- E. But you hear this in Peter. This maniacal, even suicidal, self-confidence.
  - 1. Matthew records the way he sized himself up against the other disciples at this point: “[Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away](#)” ([Matt. 26:33](#)). You’re prophetic prediction may prove true for the JV team here, but not for me.
    - a. “[I am ready,](#)” he says. Let it be clearly stated: So long as you think you are ready in yourself, truly you are nowhere near it!
- F. Perhaps now you’re beginning to see what needs to be emptied, aren’t you? Perhaps you’re beginning to get why Jesus permits that this brother falter a bit.
  - 1. He’s full of himself. And so long as that’s the case, he’s going to be empty of God and of true satisfaction and power in the Spirit. When you’re brimming with vanity, there’s no room for grace.
- G. So Jesus, in love, responds to Peter’s self-confidence this way, [v. 34](#): “[I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.](#)”
  - 1. Here we see how far man can get in his own strength. We can’t even make it through the night.
    - a. We have a big bark but no bite. We talk a big game but can’t back it up. We write million dollar checks but they all bounce at the bank.

- b. Peter thinks he will stand up for Jesus even in the face of death. But Jesus says: “Left to yourself, brother, you won’t even stand up for Me in the face of a little servant girl.”
  - i. As one commentator writes: “The same Peter who in the comfort of the Last Supper vows readiness to go with Jesus to prison and death will, in the crucible of Caiaphas’s courtyard, swear with equal vigor that he never knew Jesus” (PNTC).

H. It’s a disastrous blow to the ego. And that’s precisely the point.

- 1. You know where the word ego comes from, don’t you? Well, it’s the personal pronoun in both Latin and in Greek meaning: “I”—referring to the self. And that ego, that self-centeredness, it’s got to go.

### Three Observations

A. I’ve got three quick observations I want to bring out at this point . . .

#### Observation #1: “Peter”

- A. The first is simply to make note of the fact that Jesus, after this great display of pomp and pride, refers to Peter by that name . . . Peter—*Kēphas* in the Aramaic, *Petros* in the Greek, meaning, as we’ve alluded to already: “the rock.”
  - 1. You say, “What’s big deal with that?”
    - a. Well, I wonder if you realize that, apart from the scene in Matthew’s gospel ([Matt 16:18](#)) where Jesus first determined his name should be not just Simon but also Peter, this is the only other verse in the all the gospels where we see Jesus explicitly refers to him as such.
- B. And so the question is why? Why use that name here while prophesying of such a devastating denial?
  - 1. Well, I’ll tell you what I think. I think Jesus is trying to get Peter to reflect on his identity and where it’s ultimately found—in himself or in Christ?
    - a. There’s obviously an irony to all this, but it’s ultimately hopeful. He’s showing Peter both who he most certainly is not in himself but also who he can and will be in Jesus. “You think you’re a rock in your own strength. That will prove embarrassingly false. But, in my strength, by my grace, I am making you a rock, a pillar in the faith. I’m praying for you, and whether you receive my prayers or not, Peter, trust me, you desperately need them.”
- C. I wonder where your confidence is these days? If it is in yourself, under pressure it will inevitably start to crack and crumble. But if it is in Jesus, you shall stand unmoved in the fiercest of storms.

1. Don't dread those days of crumbling ego, God is doing a great work, and making you not less stable and secure but more so, only now in Him.

## Observation #2: The Rooster's Crow

- A. The second thing to make note of is this intriguing image of a rooster crowing. If you noticed, it's the rooster's crow that marks the finale of these denials and things.
  1. And I'd never really thought about this before, but you know when a rooster crows, don't you? Well, typically it's just before the dawn, isn't it?
- B. Now think of that. What a wonderful metaphor.
  1. In one sense, Peter's third denial and the crowing of the rooster, oh it's this horrible descent into the depths of night and things, he goes out and he weeps bitterly, we're told ([Luke 22:62](#)).
  2. But, in another sense, it's like the hours just before dawn, right? Yes, he's being emptied of self, he's coming to see what he's truly made of, and it's not all that impressive, it's hard to face. But such a thing is only preparing him for a fresh sighting of God and His grace. You see, as we'll come to in a moment, Jesus doesn't empty us of our vain self-confidence and things to merely leave us in the dirt, no! He empties us to fill us.
    - a. What a sign this rooster crow is! Yes it marks the depths to which our nature can fall, but it also marks the turning of a new day with fresh revelation of God and fresh mercy in the gospel! It's an ending but also a new beginning.
- C. I wonder, has the rooster been crowing in your own life lately? Have you been brought to the end of yourself? It feels horrible. It feels hard. But if you'll follow Jesus through it, you'll find it's truly the beginning of a new day. There's fresh mercy for you coming with the morning!

## Observation #3: A Particular Glory

- A. And I suppose this leads to the third observation I wanted to make. And that's simply this . . .
  1. It is a particular glory of our God that He is able to take the enemy, with all his foam-spitting ferocity, and harness him in such a way that what the devil means for our destruction is leveraged for our ultimate good.
- B. In this case, Jesus permits Satan to shake Peter, but only to a certain point—namely, only to the point of self-emptying, only to the point where it will prove truly to benefit Peter and bring glory to God.
  1. It's an interesting thing, and I owe this observation to my wife Megan, but you remember Satan is desiring to sift Peter like wheat and to sift wheat was to shake what came in from your fields in such a way that that the grain would separate from the chaff.

- a. When Satan wants to sift Peter like wheat, he's certain he can get Peter to fall out and away with the chaff, but instead, and here's the great irony, God is using Satan to get the chaff out and away from Peter.
    - i. In other words, this whole ordeal will only make Peter the better for it when it's all done.
- C. To put more imagery on it . . .
  - 1. Satan may at first appear to us as a sort of dreadful fire-breathing dragon. But, in the end, the only fire he successfully lights is that of the refiner, which only serves to make us purer, more useful to the kingdom, more like our heavenly Father.
  - 2. The devil takes up a shovel, thinking he's digging our graves, but he soon realizes he's only been digging the dirt out from our hearts and enlarging our capacity to be filled with the fullness of God.
  - 3. Our trials are God's taxicabs. They are the way He gets us where He wants us to go and makes us who He wants us to be. The devil thinks he's pushing us backwards, but he's only ever driving us forwards.
- D. The devil tromps in esteeming himself a formidable opponent but, in the end, to his great dismay, God always proved him to be nothing more than a loyal servant of His own holy purposes.
  - 1. It's a particular glory I tell you, that our God can accomplish such wonderful ends even with such seemingly contradictory means. And it's a particular embarrassment of Satan that try as he may, even his greatest efforts to overcome our God only work to enhance His triumph!
- E. Surely you've experienced this. If you've walked with Jesus for any amount of time at all, surely you've seen how God does some of his best work during some of your hardest seasons.
  - 1. Maybe some of you are in one of those seasons right now. You feel like Job, like God is just letting Satan tear into your flesh and bone. Admittedly, it may not feel all that encouraging in the moment, but I am telling you on the authority of this text, where God lets the devil run, He has good and beautiful design. And it shall all come forth in due time. Hang on and trust.
- F. We can't ever really be filled with Him until we are emptied of ourselves. We can't ever really be used by Him until we realize we are useless in our own strength. It's only when once we finally end that God can truly begin.

## (2) To Fill Him

### Jesus Looks And Pursues

- A. I'll have to be quick on this one. But rest assured, God is not going to leave us empty.

- B. Consider it with Peter. When the rooster crows after his third denial, when Peter realizes just how little he has in himself, when all the ego is emptied out on the floor, the rock is cracked and crumbling, what happens? Do you remember what Luke says? “<sup>60b</sup> And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.<sup>61a</sup> And the Lord turned and looked at Peter” (Luke 22:60b–61a). Only Luke records this look.
1. I can’t linger long here now, but I do want you to consider what you make of this look, how you imagine it. I think we tend to imagine it a look of letdown, or frustration, or bitterness, or “I told you so,” or that sort of thing.
    - a. But I’ve come to believe it wasn’t like that at all. I think it is the look of love and of longing. Perhaps even a look of anticipation, of all that Jesus knows can finally get started in the man now that he’s coming to the end of himself.
- C. I say all this because of where the gospel narrative goes from here. Peter isn’t sidelined or shunned . . . he’s pursued and lifted up!
1. Indeed, the Scriptures seem to indicate he was the first one Jesus appeared to after his resurrection (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor 15:5). Why?
    - a. To give him a talking to? I don’t think so.
    - b. I think it’s because Peter probably had a particular sense of shame, maybe feeling like he didn’t even belong with the other apostles, and so Jesus had particular grace to share with Him, to fill Him, to restore Him.
- D. And again all of this is clearly implied, I think, in the way Peter responds later when Jesus appears to them all this time on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-8).
1. Peter and the boys are out fishing, and when Peter learns it’s Jesus on the shore, he throws himself into the sea and swims just to get there first (v. 7).
    - a. And I’m thinking, if this look was one of frustration, and that first visit was one of scolding, well word of Jesus’ presence here would send Peter to the back of the boat, he’d hide, he’d be the last one off. “I don’t want to see Jesus anymore. He’s just going to rub my face in my failures.”
      - i. But that’s not it. He leaps off into the water and swims towards Him, why? Because there’s no more guilt, there’s no more shame, Jesus has filled His cup up with grace and love.
- E. And that’s what He does with us. He empties us of our self-confidence and arrogance and ego and things, but not to leave us deflated on the floor, to fill us with joy, true and lasting joy, and with the knowledge of One so much greater than ourselves who is for us and with us and in us. It’s a beautiful thing.

## 1 Peter 5

- A. And it's the sort of thing Peter writes about actually in his own epistle. Listen to it, I was so amazed to see how perfectly his words here map onto our text back in Luke. [1 Peter 5:5b-11](#): “<sup>5b</sup> ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”
- B. Wow, look at that closely. Do you see it? The incredible overlap here?
1. Satan is on the prowl. Instead of sifting imagery, now it's that of a wild beast.
  2. And the central issue is still one's faith: “[Resist him, firm in your faith](#)” (v. 9).
  3. And God is still sovereign in it. There's a boundary line to it all: “[And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace . . .](#)” (v. 10)—He's going to break in.
  4. And he has a clear and good purpose in all of this. To humble you, but to exalt you. To empty you, but to fill you. To lower you, but to lift you. To try you, but to strengthen and establish you. To bring you to the end of yourself so that He can really begin.
- C. Don't you see it? Peter is speaking from experience here. This is not just his theory. This is his story. And it's our story as well.

## (3) To Use Him

### “Strengthen Your Brothers”

- A. Beyond just personal filling and joy in the Lord, Jesus lets Peter and us experience these sorts of things so He can really begin to put us to use.
1. So with Peter He says there in [v. 32b](#): “[And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.](#)”
- B. I found this stunning, almost scandalous. In the midst of this discussion concerning Peter's arrogance and faith-faltering denials, Jesus speaks also of the significant ministry He has planned for him. It's crazy.
1. I would be kicking Peter off of the team at this point. Jesus is appointing him captain. “[S][trengthen your brothers.](#)” “You're going to minister not just to the people out there who don't know of Me yet, but to these other apostles—these A-listers. You're going to be the captain of this team, the pillar, the rock.” And I'm thinking: “What?!”
- C. But what a lesson for us in this. One commentator writes: “[How instructive that the one ordained to strengthen Jesus' followers will not be strong and invincible \[himself\], but weak and fallen](#)” (PNTC). And he lists out a bunch of texts that reaffirm this point. I'll give you just a couple:



1. 1 Cor 1:27: “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”
2. 2 Cor 12:7-10: “<sup>7</sup> So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.<sup>8</sup> Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.<sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.<sup>10</sup> For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

- a. There are so many more we could add, but you get the point. Before you can really be used and elevated by the Lord, you must first be broken and humbled.

D. “But why?” you might still be wondering . . .

## Two Very Different Ministries

A. Well, imagine for a moment that Peter had not passed through this breaking point. Imagine he spoke boldly and arrogantly about his willingness and ability to stand up for Jesus whatever the cost and this time, he actually did, he stayed strong. He didn’t deny. He was faithful.

1. Well, now you tell me, when he is later sitting across the table from a wounded and weary brother or sister, a doubting and struggling saint, how gentle and patient will he be?
  - a. Will he not slant down his eyes a bit and speak gruffly: “I got through it why can’t you? Pull yourself up man, quit your whining. Jesus helps those who help themselves. You want to be like me don’t you? How do you think I got here? Grit and hard work.” The self-confidence and self-centeredness, far from being uprooted would be all the more established and intoxicating.
    - i. And Jesus and His grace would be pushed further and further into the margins.

B. But, instead, Jesus permits that Peter, this one whom He will appoint highest of the apostles, should fall the lowest. So that when he’s lifted up he knows only God and His grace could have done such a thing.

1. Oh what a different approach he would have now with those hurting and sin-sick saints sitting across the table from him now.
  - a. No longer would it be look at me! Because I know this isn’t me. Because you know this isn’t me. So I’m not looking down my nose at you. You’re not looking up at me. Instead we’re both looking in amazement at the cross, in awe that grace is made available to all—whether you’re clean or dirty, rich or poor, religious or secular, Jew or Gentile . . . we all desperately need it, and He is ready and excited to supply it!

- C. Listen to me: So long as you think you are better than another person you can never truly minister to them. You will contradict the gospel you proclaim with the way you live your life, the self-righteous air about you, the way you roll your eyes, and speak down and things.

### “What Does ‘Trust’ Mean to You?”

- A. You know, Megan and I had a little stay-at-home date night a couple weeks ago and someone in the church actually gave us these little cards for us to use for discussion and connection. And the question was: “What does ‘trust’ mean to you? Which of your friends can you trust the most? Why?”
  - 1. I wonder how you would answer the question. It was interesting, you know, Megan and I, at least, both said essentially the same thing.
    - a. The person you can trust is the person who sees you at your worst and is still there. You don’t feel judged by them. You don’t feel shamed by them. You don’t feel like they’re rolling their eyes at you or raising an eyebrow or cracking a smirk or taken aback by your sin. You don’t feel like they’re thinking they’re made of different stuff and better than you. You feel safe, you feel like they’re in it with you. You can be real, you can be lame. They see you’re junk and they’re still by your side. Those are people that you trust.
- B. And you say, “Okay, I agree.” But then the big question comes in: So how do you and I become this kind of person?!
  - 1. Well this is it. That’s what Jesus is doing with Peter.
    - a. No longer is Peter going to be impressed with himself. He’s impressed with Jesus.
    - b. No longer is Peter going to be surprised by your sin. Man, he’s got the same stuff. Instead, together you can be surprised by grace.
- C. That’s how you become one who can truly strengthen your brothers. That’s how you get a ministry, that’s how you start bearing fruit in your life for the gospel.
- D. It’s crazy, you know, Peter says here I will go to prison and die for you Jesus.
  - 1. And you know that’s precisely what will end up happening, He will be faithful through imprisonment unto death.
    - a. But the first thing that had to die, if he was going to get there, was His pride, His self-reliance, His ego. Jesus would make him faithful, but he’s got to empty us before He can really fill us and use us.
- E. I’ll leave us with an image. Paper airplane. YouTube, world-record, glider.
  - 1. For a glider, constantly balancing center of gravity (pulling nose down) and center of lift (lifting nose up) to get that perfect flight.