

## DEALING WITH THE DEVIL Luke 22:24-34

It was the night before Jesus died. So many things were heavy upon His heart. Yes, His heart was burdened because He was about to die for the sins of the entire world, which would mean descending into the jaws of hell and experiencing all of its torments, and which would mean that He would be separated from the perfect, sweet fellowship of His Father for the first time in eternity. But almost unbelievably, this was not Jesus' greatest concern during most of these dark hours. His greatest concern was for His disciples. And this was His concern: "They must know that all hell will come against them after I'm gone, but they will survive".

In our text this morning we see Jesus' concern for His disciples clearly demonstrated. During the Passover meal the disciples had gotten into a dispute over which of them should be considered the greatest. This must have broken Jesus' heart, first of all because He had already dealt with the same issue twice before, the last time as recently as two weeks ago (Matt. 20:20f). But notice Jesus' compassion toward those He loves. He does not rebuke them for their utter selfishness, but briefly explains one more time that greatness is not in lording it over others, but in serving them. And then Jesus jumps right into what He really wants understood before He dies. He says, "You have remained with Me for three years, through all of My trials. And you will be rewarded for your faithfulness. I am going to give you a kingdom, and you will sit down and eat and drink with Me, and you will judge the twelve tribes of Israel".

What a promise! What hope that it gave them. But notice what came right on the heels of that promise. "Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:31-32) Now, we must understand that when Jesus first spoke He was speaking not only to Simon Peter. For the pronoun He uses in addressing Peter is plural; He is actually speaking to the whole group of disciples. And He told them that Satan was out to get them! To destroy them. I am reminded of what Paul kept hammering home to the churches in Pisidia, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In other words Paul was saying, "Hey, churches! Living out your faith is not going to be easy. There are going to be a lot of hard knocks along the way. Now, when this life is over a glorious kingdom is awaiting you, but before the glory there's going to be the grinder". What a sober, somber reality check. Beloved, this is the big idea that I want you to carry home with you today. **If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you will come under great Satanic attack in this world, but you will survive. Satan will not get the**

**final victory in your life. You will overcome and you will reign with Jesus in Heaven one day forever and ever.**

Now, some of you can say this morning, “Amen, preacher, I can tell you about this sifting thing! I’m getting beaten around right now like a bunch of kids beating a piñata with a baseball bat”. Well, beloved, in our text Jesus said to Peter, “Don’t be blind-sided by Satan’s temptations.” Look at verse 31 again. “Simon, Simon, *indeed* Satan has asked for you....” And that word “indeed” is literally “behold”, or “watch out”. “Watch out, Simon! Don’t think it strange that Satan is after you”. And what Jesus spoke to His disciples He speaks to you and me.

But in addition to what Jesus said, think about the testimony of Scripture concerning temptation. From the temptation of Adam and Eve all the way through the early church in the book of Acts, God’s people have suffered temptations and trials. Noah walked with God when no one else did, but he was tempted and got drunk immediately after leaving the ark. Job was the most righteous man on earth in his day, but Satan stripped him of everything but his wife and his life, and Job said some mighty harsh things about God. Abraham, our father in the faith, was tempted, stumbled in his faith, and lied about Sarah being his wife, not once, but twice. Moses, the meekest man on the face of the earth, was tempted, lost his meekness, struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded, and forfeited his entrance into the Promised Land. David and Solomon’s temptation were women, and their temptation led to the eventual destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. Ananias and Sapphira were tempted, lied to the Holy Spirit, and were killed (Acts 5). And if Satan harassed all of these giants of the faith, why should we think that we are any different?

But praise God, we have some good examples of those who faced temptation and overcame. Joseph was tempted but overcame and became the vice president of all Egypt. Daniel was tempted and refused to bow down to a heathen god and brought great glory to the God of Israel. Paul had a thorn in the flesh that grieved him constantly, and he said it was a messenger of Satan. And for a lifetime Paul overcame this temptation and also brought great glory to God. But the Devil’s greatest temptation was reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, when Satan encountered Him at the beginning of His ministry, and when Jesus utterly, completely defeated him.

So the devil is out to get us all, to destroy us all. And we are going to see briefly that he cannot win. If we are truly God’s child our faith will not fail and like Bro. Jimmy Garner at Skyland Blvd. says, “We’re going to win in the end”. But the question that you and I face this morning is how are we going to deal with the devil day by day? Will he cause us to live in sin and defeat or will we overcome his trials

and temptations, as did Joseph, Daniel, Paul, and our Lord Jesus? I heard a story a few weeks ago about a number of people who didn't fare so well with their temptation. It seems that an older priest was training a rookie priest about how to minister in a confession booth. They sat together all day long, hearing of all their parishioners' faults and failures and sins. And after the booth closed for the day the young priest asked his mentor, "How'd I do?" And the older man said, "OK in some ways. But you're going to have to come up with an initial response other than "WOW!" Beloved, some people are really failing when it comes to dealing with the devil. They succumb to trials and temptations almost every time. How about you?

Well, beloved, I want us to see three things from our text that will encourage you as you deal with the devil's temptations day by day. Three things that will give you victory over his temptations and trials if you will apply them to your life. And the first thing that God would want you to know is that **He is sovereign over all of your temptations**, which simply means the Devil can't tempt you without God's permission. Look again at verse 31. Jesus said that Satan had to ask for Simon and the rest of the disciples. Now, the Greek word that Jesus used indicates that the Devil demanded that Jesus turn them over to him. That's how badly he wanted to sift them. Think of what would have happened if the sifting process had been successful. What would have become of Jesus' plan to build His church, if the foundation stones had all crumbled? But here's the deal. No matter what the Devil demanded, he was powerless to even touch a disciple unless Jesus gave him permission.

So what is it that you are struggling with today? If you are a student, is it the temptation to cheat in school? Young people, I don't have to tell you how rampant cheating is today. But cheating is stealing, and stealing is a sin. And then there is grown-up cheating that is so rampant, cheating on income tax, which is lying, and lying is a sin. And whether you are a teenager or an adult, in this sex-crazed world, is it lustful thoughts, or is it literal adultery, or virtual adultery on the internet that is tempting you? Maybe someone you thought was your friend has stabbed you in the back or you've been deeply wounded by a loved one, and you carry around a heart full of bitterness against them. And here's another one. Guilt. So many people walk around every day with a ton of guilt Satan has strapped to their back. Guilt over things they've done and guilt over things they didn't do they wished they had done. Now, friends, if you are guilty for something don't try to forget it or rationalize it away. Confess it to God, forsake it, and be forgiven! But so often the Devil will beat you up with things that God has forgiven you for long ago. We could go on and on, couldn't we?

Perhaps you are facing more of a trial than a temptation today. Your trial might be financial problems, or a broken heart over a spouse that just doesn't care, or

parents that don't really love you, or wayward children. Maybe you carry a burden of sickness and pain. Well, Satan will seek to turn your trial into a temptation to disbelieve that God will ever help you. And the sin of unbelief is perhaps the biggest sin in a Christian's life of all.

But whatever it is, beloved, whatever fiery dart that Satan has shot at you to cause you to stumble and fall, it didn't leave his bow without God's permission. It may not have been His perfect will. Often it is not. But He allowed it, and He wants to use it for good in your life. It's like Joseph told his brothers who sold him into slavery, "you meant for evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20). And God has promised that in 1 Cor. 10:13. That simply means that many others have been tempted with the same temptations you are going through. And may I say that many have overcome them. And it means that God will not let Satan tempt you beyond your ability to withstand, but that He will always make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 states "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." So rejoice today that God is sovereign over all of your temptations. He has a perfect plan for them and a perfect escape route from them.

And that brings us to a second thing that Jesus says that should encourage us in our temptations today. And that is, **Jesus prays for us in our temptations**. Look again what Jesus said to Peter in verse 32: "I have prayed for you". Beloved, when you are fighting against the Devil, when you are going through a trial or temptation, do you know of anything more encouraging than to know that Jesus is praying for you? I mean, who has more prayer power than Jesus? Has Jesus ever had one of His prayers to go unanswered? NO! He said in John 11:42, "I know that you always hear me". And He prays for you in your trials and temptations.

And what does Jesus pray for you in your temptations? That your faith will not fail. That you will stick it out to the end. And that is exactly what Peter did. You may say, "No, he didn't. He denied Jesus three times". Yes, he did deny Jesus three times. But it was not his faith that failed, it was his courage that failed. Peter always had a heart of faith in Jesus. But that is because Jesus was praying for him. When he denied Jesus three times and then went out and wept bitterly, Satan just knew that he had Peter down for the count. And can't you just hear Satan whispering to him, "Give up, Peter, you worthless fool. Jesus will never forgive you for what you've done. Go back to fishing and forget you ever knew Jesus". But Peter hung on to his faith and love for Jesus, because number one, God was sovereign over Peter's

temptation and would not let him be tempted above that which he was able to withstand; and secondly because Jesus was praying for him.

And here is another blessing about Jesus' prayer for you. When Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for you", this time the pronoun is singular. Jesus speaks to Peter personally, because He knows that Satan is going to attack Peter that very night. Beloved, is it not a comfort that Jesus just doesn't include you in a blanket prayer every morning to His Father saying, "Father, give strength to all of my 678 million children to endure temptation today?" Now, I just pull that number out of the air, but you get the point. Jesus is praying for you by name before His Father's throne.

So we have seen that **God is sovereign** in our temptations. And we've seen that **Jesus prays for us** in our temptations. But there is a third encouragement that Jesus gives Peter and us in our temptations that I want you to see. And that is, **Jesus redeems our failures** in our temptations. Oh, beloved, all of us will sooner or later fall in one way or another. We will sin against a loved one. We will fail to keep a commitment we make at church. We will commit one of those secret sins that no one knows about but us and God. And we will hurt ourselves, others, and most of all, we will hurt Jesus. But, praise God, Jesus doesn't turn His back on us when we sin. He will forgive us, restore us, and He has a marvelous plan for us after our restoration. He certainly had a plan for Peter. Even after predicting Peter's sifting, Jesus encourages Peter by telling him "when you have returned to Me, **strengthen your brethren**" (verse 31).

But Jesus didn't stop there. After His resurrection Luke writes that He made a personal appearance to Peter (Luke 24:34). Why Peter? Why not John, or James, or Jesus' mother? Because Peter was so very discouraged and about ready to drop out of the race, and Jesus came to him to tell him, "It's OK, Peter. I forgive you". But Jesus didn't stop there. John writes that after Jesus' resurrection He prepared breakfast by the sea for His disciples. And around the breakfast fire He asked Peter three times, "Peter, do you love me?" Why do you suppose He asked Peter that same question three times?" So Peter could cancel out every denial with the affirmation, "Yes, Lord, I love You!" Beloved, Jesus went way beyond just prayer to redeem His fallen warrior; and just a sidebar here. That's a pretty good example for us to follow when a brother or sister drops out of the race, when they quit coming to church. We must go after the sheep that's gone astray.

But now fast forward just a few weeks. Remember Jesus' words to Peter, "when you return to Me, strengthen your brethren?" Well, did Jesus ever bring this to pass in Peter's life! Who was it that was the leader of the early church? Simon

Peter. Who opened the door for the gospel to the Jews at Pentecost, where three thousand were saved, and who opened the door for the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans in Acts 8, and who opened the door for the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10 in the house of Cornelius? Simon Peter. And think about it. Who did God use to write the book in the New Testament that more than any other book encourages believers who are going through troubles and trials? Peter! It was Peter who wrote, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...” (1 Peter 4:12), and, “...this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!” (1 Peter 5:12 [NASB]). Encouragement in times of suffering is the major theme of 1 Peter.

Friends, let me tell you, whatever trial you are going through today, Jesus says, “When you have returned, strengthen your brethren! Use the redemption that I give you as an encouragement to what I will do for others.” So take Jesus’ words and claim them as your own and when Jesus strengthens you then go out and strengthen someone else.

Now, before we close I want to give you two handles to grab and apply as you deal with the devil day by day. First of all, **be prayerful**. Look down at verses 39-40 in Luke 22. Jesus told His disciples to pray while He withdrew from them to pray. But what did they do? They took a nap! And when the Roman cohort came to arrest Jesus they all scattered like a covey of quail. Friends, no prayer, no power!

Secondly, **be perceptive**. When you are thrust into a compromising situation, when your faith suddenly faces a challenge, remember Paul’s words, **we are not ignorant of his (the devil’s) devices (2 Corinthians 2:11)**. Realize what is going on. It is something other-worldly, something supernatural. And at that moment you need pray in your heart and ask for God’s wisdom and strength. So many times we do not do this. So many times I do not do this. A temptation will come and I will not even realize until it is over from whence it came. Peter certainly wasn’t perceptive the night of Jesus’ arrest. He dropped his guard and stood around a fire with a bunch of unbelievers warming himself. And when he was challenged about his identity as a disciple he was clueless as to what was happening. We read in Mark that Jesus actually told Peter that before the rooster crowed twice that he would deny Him three times. And after that first denial the rooster crowed, but Peter didn’t get it; he missed God’s warning. And you know the rest of the story. Is it any wonder that Peter later wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant.....” Beloved, we must be **perceptive**.