

An Upside-Down Kingdom (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles this morning and you can open them to Luke 22.

! Luke chapter 22. Remind you that we're working our way, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, through this great gospel account, written by, penned by Luke.

By the way, I probably shouldn't remind you of this, but I preached my very first sermon in this book series on November 21st, 2012.

We've been at this a long time, longer than maybe you even thought. And so we're getting close, okay, to the end of this book, approximately two and a half chapters away from finishing it.

And so we better get to it. Our text, again, this morning is Luke chapter 22. And it is, by the way, the same passage that we started to look at last week.

[1 : 12] And so I want to read the entire passage, verses 21 to 38. Luke 22, verses 21 through to 38. But behold, the hand of my betrayer is with me on the table.

And truly, the Son of Man goes as it has been determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. Then they began to question among themselves which of them it was who would do this thing.

Now there was also a dispute among them as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And he said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them.

Those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But not so among you. On the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger or the least.

And he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater? He who sits at the table or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table?

[2 : 23] Yet I am among you as the one who serves. But you are those who have continued with me in my trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom. Just as my father bestowed one upon me.

That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon.

Indeed, Satan has asked for you. That he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you. That your faith should not fail.

And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren. But he said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. And he said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me.

And he said to them, when I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything? So they said nothing.

[3 : 27] Then he said to them, but now, he who has a money bag, let him take it. And likewise, a knapsack. And he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.

For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors. For the things concerning me have an end.

So they said, Lord, look, here are two swords. And he said to them, it is enough. All right. Now, again, we started to look at this last week.

We want to continue that this morning. And go ahead and say we'll be in this passage one more Sunday. So stick with me here. An excellent passage.

And it teaches us some very valuable things about the kingdom. Some things that maybe we did not know before. Or had not realized. Or as I said last week.

[4 : 30] Maybe some things about the kingdom that we wish were not true. We wish it would be different. But you know, the natural thing. I think you might agree with me.

Biblically speaking. The natural thing. That which seems natural to us. Is quite often not the right thing. It's more often the wrong thing.

I mean, in many areas of the life of the believer. When it comes to how we would naturally do a certain thing.

Or handle a certain situation. Or accomplish a certain task. When it comes to the believer's life. How we would naturally think about a certain issue.

And so forth. We quite often discover that it is the exact opposite. The right thing is the exact opposite. And so the natural thing to do.

[5 : 30] Is quite often the wrong thing to do. The natural way to think about a thing. Is quite often the wrong way to think about it. And so to think biblically.

And to act biblically. Biblically is usually the opposite of the natural order of things. For example. Jesus said the kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit.

Jesus said those who mourn are mourning. They are the ones who will rejoice. He said the meek are the ones who inherit the earth.

Jesus said the hungry and thirsty. Are the ones who are going to be filled. But Jesus said one who acquires wealth. One acquires wealth.

By giving it away. Jesus said one gains life. By losing it. And on and on we could go with the list.

[6 : 28] And these all come from scripture. Not only those things that were said by Jesus. But other points in the Bible. That tell us that things are not exactly the way we would think they would be.

They are often times the opposite of our way of thinking. And in our text for this morning. Jesus said in my kingdom. The greatest is the least.

He said in my kingdom. The ruler is the servant. And so it is an upside down kingdom. And that's something that the disciples needed to know.

Here very soon Jesus is going to be leaving. And are they ready? And no they're not ready. And so here in this kind of last bit of instruction to the disciples.

Before Jesus goes to the cross. He is preparing them for the kingdom. And how they are to understand it. And they need to know these things. And we need to know these things as well.

[7 : 28] Because in our passage it's obvious that the disciples did not yet understand the nature of the kingdom of God. And in a very real sense the kingdom had come. Alright.

It's not future necessarily. It's present. The kingdom had come because the king had come. But the disciples must learn that the kingdom of God is not going to begin the way that they were thinking it would begin.

It's going to be the opposite of that. Really far from what they're thinking the kingdom would be to begin with. And for us 21st century disciples of Christ.

Living 2,000 years after the first disciples. The kingdom is not now what it will one day be. Far from it.

And that's what we're to learn I think from this passage of scripture. Now to remind you. There are three parts to this passage. Three seemingly unrelated parts actually.

[8 : 34] And yet each part is connected to Jesus teaching concerning the nature of the present kingdom. It's present manifestation.

Three things. First of all we have the disciples arguing over who will be the greatest among them in the kingdom of God. And the lesson is the kingdom of God begins with crosses before crowns.

And that's what we discussed last week. Second we have this prophecy. Jesus prophesying that Peter would deny even knowing him. And he would deny him three times.

That's the second part of the story. And the lesson here is the kingdom of God begins with trials before triumphs. And then third and finally we have this issue concerning the need for money bags, knapsacks, and swords.

That's the last part of the story. And that really does seem totally unrelated to what Jesus has been talking about. But we're going to see that this is all connected. Because the lesson here is the kingdom of God begins with swords before scepters.

[9 : 43] You see the kingdom of God does not begin the way the disciples were thinking it would begin. And the kingdom of God today for us today is not what we might think it should be.

Or maybe more significantly not what we might wish it to be as it exists today. It is an upside down kingdom.

It begins with crosses before crowns, trials before triumphs, swords before scepters. And last week we saw the first of these. And so let's look at the second one.

Trials before triumphs. And it centers on this part about Peter. Although as we're going to discover it's not really just about Peter.

It's about the other disciples as well. And not only that, as we shall discover, it's about us too. And so trials before triumphs.

[10 : 42] Now I don't know this for sure. And I guess we could argue that there's a lot of speculation here. But I think that Peter took the lead in this debate over just which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom.

You know that's what they had. They were having this dispute about it. And some were voting for this guy. And some were voting for this guy. And maybe many of them were voting for themselves. You know to be the greatest in the kingdom.

Because they thought the kingdom had arrived. And it's now time for not only Jesus to declare himself. And be the great military leader. And the great Messiah. And put down the sinners. And establish his kingdom and his throne. And we've been chosen to rule alongside of him. And so which of us will be the greatest among the twelve?

And so they have this debate. And I really think that Peter kind of took the lead in this. Based upon what we have coming right after that. What we're going to be looking at this morning.

[11 : 41] And so I think not only did Peter believe he was the greatest. He probably had many supporters as well among the twelve. But Peter also believed personally that he was the strongest.

The strongest among them. That is strongest spiritually. And not only that. Therefore the most committed. The most loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ.

More loyal. More committed. The strongest among all the twelve disciples. Peter thought that he had arrived. And that's just really obvious I think.

From how the fact that Jesus deals with Peter here so straightforwardly. But also how Peter responds to this. It's just obvious to me.

Peter thought he had arrived. And he's ready. Ready to be not only one of the rulers of the tribes of Israel. The ruler of the world. But also the first one in the pecking order.

[12 : 38] Of the twelve disciples. And so he thought he was ready. And he thought he had arrived. And by the way. Quite often we think we have arrived.

That's why we need to study this passages as well. Alright so he thought he had arrived. He thought he was the greatest. Thought he was the strongest. And so in less than a minute.

Jesus absolutely deflated his over inflated ego. Just that quickly. He said Peter you think you're the greatest. You think you are the strongest.

You think you are the most committed among my disciples. Why Peter you're not even going to make it through the night. That's what he said. I'll tell you Peter. The rooster shall not crow this day. Before you will deny three times that you know me. Now we're all familiar with this part of the story aren't we? About Peter. And about Peter's colossal failure.

[13 : 38] And by the way aren't you glad that you weren't around when the Bible was written? You know aren't you glad that the details of your life including all of your failures. Many of which nobody even knows about.

You know aren't you glad those weren't recorded on the pages of scripture for everybody to read down through the centuries? I certainly am. And so we're familiar with this.

And yet when we read this we want to say you know Peter how could you? As if we wouldn't. As if we would not be capable of doing such a thing.

How could you Peter? Peter. And yet certainly Peter could. Couldn't he? And did. In fact even before the chapter is over we're going to read about Peter's denial.

And therefore the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in verse 54 and following. We don't need to go to it now. We'll come back to it as we when we get to that passage. Peter not only could Peter do this.

[14 : 38] But he did. Denied even knowing Jesus three times. Even to some point he got mad and started cursing. And the point I think that we need to get is that we're not.

We would have been no different. We can't look at Peter and say you know how could you do such a thing when we really need to be looking at ourselves. Alright so Peter was not ready was he?

And that's really the point of all of this. Jesus is identifying to Peter his own heart. And he is identifying to Peter that the reality that he is not ready even though he thought he was.

Though often we think we are. Peter was not ready and this passage is all about a gracious Lord getting Peter ready. That's what this is all about.

This utter failure on Peter's part. And that's what we want to focus on. How could he do such a thing? This is all a part of God getting Peter ready for the ministry that he had called him to. [15:51] We've discovered that in the passage as well. And that's the point. Trials before triumphs. That's the kingdom of God. As in his present manifestation.

Trials before the triumphs. And so let's just glean all we can from this part of the text. First of all consider the prophecy of the Lord here.

That's number one. The prophecy of the Lord. Verse 34. Then he said or Jesus said. I tell you Peter. The rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me. Now essentially this is a prophecy. Now in this case Jesus is the prophet. And this is a prophecy. And in this case of course the fulfillment of this prophecy is going to come very quickly. I mean very quickly Jesus is going to be arrested. Very quickly Peter is going to have the opportunity to be tempted to deny knowing Jesus.

[16:54] So the fulfillment of this comes very quickly. But it's a prophecy. Jesus is foretelling Peter's future. But we need to understand that there are at least two things true about biblical prophecy.

By the way that's I say biblical prophecy as if there are other kinds of prophecy. The only valid prophecy is biblical prophecy. Prophecy that comes from God.

There are two things we need to understand about it. Number one and I think we all know this part of it. Prophecy includes the foreknowledge of God. Right. That is that God knows all things before they happen.

And not just some things. All things. God knows all things before they ever happen. And not just the big things but even the little things. Not just the monumental things that happen down through history.

But even the minute things. Even the things that to us would be insignificant. God knows all things before they happen. He is omniscient. Knows all things.

[17:58] Isaiah 46 verses 9 and 10. The Bible says I am God. Really God is speaking through Isaiah. I am God and there is none like me. There is no one like me.

How so? Well specifically in this prophecy. Because I declare the end from the beginning. Now that's incredible when you think about it. That God declares the end.

And the implication is everything in between the beginning and the end. I declare all things from the beginning. All things. I know all things. And so we can kind of picture this.

That God is at the beginning. And he is able to see all the way down through the corridors of time.

And he sees all events. All things happening. And that's true isn't it?

Although I really would rather kind of imagine this as God being able to take all of time and putting it out in front of him. And he's able to see every bit of it.

[18:57] All of it. Every detail. God is omniscient. All right. So prophecy always includes the foreknowledge of God.

God knows all things before they happen. And so Jesus here in our passage, who is God, of course, knows what Peter is going to do before he does it.

All right. At the very least we can say that, can't we? I mean, that's obvious. God knows all things before they happen. So it includes the foreknowledge of God. All right.

But prophecy also includes the foreordination of God. We need to understand that about biblical prophecy.

It includes not only the foreknowledge of God, but the foreordination of God. And the more I talk about this, the more you're going to possibly feel a little bit uncomfortable.

[19:54] That is that God ordains things to happen before they happen. And when it comes to specific biblical prophecy, that's the case every time.

God foreordains things to happen, to take place before they happen. In many cases, and in most cases, long before they happen. Hundreds of years before they happen.

Now, with Jesus' prophecy, his not only foreknowledge, but foreordination of what Peter is going to do. We're just talking about hours from now.

Maybe not even hours. Minutes, perhaps, at this point. But it's not just foreordaining. It's foreknowledge. It's foreordination.

Let me read the rest of all of Isaiah 46, verse 10. And I quoted the first part of it, declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times, things that are not yet done.

[20 : 55] Not yet done. Things that are not yet done saying. Now listen to this. My counsel shall stand. Counsel concerning what?

The things that are going to be done in the future. Between the beginning and the end. That my counsel shall stand. And I will do all my pleasure.

See, that adds a different element to the foreknowledge of God. As it comes to prophecy. It is the foreordination of God. My counsel shall stand.

And I will do all my pleasure. God said in Amos chapter 3, verse 7. Surely the Lord does nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servants, the prophets.

So God has foreordained to do certain things down through history. And he is gracious. And for a purpose, he reveals those things to his prophets before he does them.

[22 : 01] All right, now, what is the point of all this other than to teach a little lesson on the substance, the reality of biblical prophecy? The point of this is Jesus not only foreknew that Peter would deny any knowledge of him, but he ordained it.

He foreordained it. All right, now this is where we start to feel uncomfortable. All right, so I guess that means that God forced Peter to deny Jesus.

That he made Peter to sin. And it brings up the whole argument down through the ages about whether or not God is the author of sin. Is God the author of sin?

The answer to that is an unequivocal no. Absolutely not. God forbid. You see, listen, Peter was perfectly capable on his own of denying any knowledge of Jesus.

He already had that in him. It was already there. No one had to make Peter deny that he knew Jesus in that particular circumstance.

[23 : 17] No one had to make him do that. Just like no one has to make you sin. Or me sin. Sinful is what we are. We're good at it.

We're naturals when it comes to sin. But it would have been great if God would have intervened in Peter's life at that one moment.

Giving him grace to say no to the temptation to sin. Would have been great if God would have removed that temptation at that time. Protected him from those temptations.

It would have been great if God would have intervened in his history. And removed the potentiality of the sin at that time. To remove that scenario.

But he didn't, did he? He ordained this to happen. So, just because Jesus ordained that Peter deny him does not make Jesus complicit in his sin.

[24 : 23] Romans 9 is perhaps a good place to go in this. Although, I want to say to you that Romans 9 sometimes creates more questions than it answers.

If we don't really study it as we ought to. But in Romans 9 is where Paul basically takes up the whole argument about God's pre-ordination or foreordination.

I want you to listen to a part of it. In Romans 9, starting with verse 18. Therefore, he has mercy on whom he wills. And whom he wills, he hardens.

And this comes right after Paul recounts the fact that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God hardened his heart.

He didn't make Pharaoh a sinner. He was already a sinner. He didn't make his heart hard. It was already hard. God hardened his heart so that he would do what he wanted to do.

[25 : 28] And naturally would have done. And that is to persecute God's people. And so it comes right off of that. Therefore, he has mercy on whom he wills. And whom he wills, he hardens. And you say to me then, Paul goes with this argument.

Why does he still find fault? So if God has mercy on whom he wills and hardens whom he wills, then why does he make us accountable then? Isn't God the author then of sin?

No, that's not the point. But that's kind of the question. And why does he find fault for who can resist his will? If it's going to be, it's going to be. And why then are we accountable?

This is the argument. But indeed, oh man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, why have you made me like this?

Could Peter come back and say, you know, this is what you ordained, so I guess I'm not accountable. You made me this way. But can the thing made reply that way to God?

[26 : 35] Does not the potter have power over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Does God have that power? Absolutely. Absolutely. You say, well, that means he makes us to be sinners. No. No, see, the one lump, the same lump is, we're all of that same lump. Sinful. Sinners. And to change that reality, God has to intervene with his grace. You see. So, didn't the potter make the same lump from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

What if God wanted to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had prepared before for his glory? You see, here's the point, and though there's a lot of theology in this chapter that we really need to understand, and I encourage you to study it. But here's the point as it intersects with what's going on here in our passage.

[27 : 54] The point is that Peter, like all of us, was just a sinful lump of clay. That's what he was. Now, God did not make him that way, a sinful lump of clay.

God is not the author of sin. But God did allow Peter to act according to what he was. A coward. A sinner. A sinful lump of clay. God allowed the scenario to come into play that would try Peter, test Peter's faith, and God chose to let Peter fail that trial.

That test. Not only that he knew he would, he allowed him to. Could God have intervened? Could God have changed the whole scenario, situation, so that no one would have come to Peter and asked the question, you know Jesus, right?

God could have done all that, but he did not. He allowed Peter to act according to what he was. He tested him and allowed him to fail the test.

[29 : 12] Allowed Peter to be exactly who he was so that Peter would learn exactly who he was. He does the same for us.

Why do you think, by the way, that Jesus called him Simon? He said, Simon, Simon. That was his old name. That was his BC name, before Christ's name, because Jesus changed his name to Peter, the rock.

But he brings up his, he invokes his old name, Simon, Simon, because this is going to be Simon acting according to who he really is.

He doesn't know that he's this way. He doesn't know that he's weak. He doesn't know that he is a coward. And so God is going to allow him to discover.

It's ordained. And so to explain that further, let's consider a second thing about the text. First of all, consider the prophecy of the Lord, but second, consider the permission of the Lord.

[30 : 20] The permission. Jesus said in verse 31, Satan has asked for you. This is interesting. You think about it. Don't just pass over this.

Peter has, excuse me, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as weak. When we read this, we can't help but remind it about Job, right?

The Old Testament. Similar scenario. You know, the Bible says in Job 1, you know, Satan comes there into the presence of God.

And God says, by the way, where have you been? And Satan says, I've just been walking to and fro in the world. That's what Satan does.

And God says, have you run across Job down there? Have you considered old Job down there? He's a great man of God.

[31 : 28] Man of faith. Righteous. And Satan says, oh, he's only that way because you put a hedge around him. You take that away and he'll curse your name.

Essentially, saying, you let me have him a while. So what does God do? Okay. do whatever you want with it.

Except destroy his life. And so we have the whole book of Job. Similar kind of thing. I mean, really, in both cases, like with Job, also with Peter, Satan is asking to sift them.

To sift them. He's asking for permission. permission. And though we don't have it in words, the implication, of course, is that God gave permission. In fact, you know, don't ever get to thinking that, you know, God and Satan are kind of up there on similar planes.

Maybe Satan's just a little bit under God. God is sovereign over Satan. Satan can't do anything outside of the sovereignty of God, the sovereign permission of God.

[32 : 45] They'll think that this one got away from him. You know, like Jesus saying to Peter, you know, Satan's going to come after you. We kind of tried to stop it, but we just didn't catch him in

time.

And just give you a heads up, this is coming. No, actually, God is going to test, going to place a trial upon Peter's life that is going to reveal the truth about himself and at the same time prepare him for something great in the kingdom of God.

And how's God going to do it? He's going to use Satan to do that. He's sovereign. Sovereign even over Satan.

And that leads us to a third thing, not only the permission of God, but now consider the prayer of the Lord. And I love this. It gives me great encourage.

Should all of us. Verse 32, Jesus says, but I have prayed for you. That's important. Did you know that Jesus prays for you?

[33 : 56] If you're a believer, he prays for you all the time. You can go to John chapter 17 and we'll not turn to the passage here this morning, but in John 17, the Lord's high priestly prayer.

And he spends a lot of time there praying for his disciples specifically. I pray for them. Not that you would take them out of the world, but you would keep them safe from the evil one.

You guard them. Keep them. And we might read that and say, well, I wish I were one of the twelve. But then we go on in the chapter and we find Jesus saying, I not only pray for them, but these, these twelve, but for all those who will believe because what they have said.

That's all of us. And so the very thing, the same thing that Jesus prays for his twelve disciples, he's praying for every one of us. Jesus prays for us.

Now, the question is, getting back to Peter, for what did Jesus pray? Did he pray that Peter would not deny him? Well, no.

[35 : 13] I mean, if that were the case, then Jesus' prayer was either unanswered by God, unheard or unanswered by God, or it was answered in the negative. And I'm pretty sure, as I look at scripture, that Jesus never had a prayer unanswered, and he never had a prayer answered in the negative.

Jesus' prayers are always heard. In fact, at one point he said, I know you always hear me, when he's praying to the phone. And I wish I could say that. And so, no, I don't think so.

I don't think Jesus did not pray that, you know, looking out in the future and knowing that he's going to be tempted by these, who are going to test his faith, he did not pray that Peter would stand strong and testify boldly that he knew Jesus.

He didn't pray for that. Otherwise, that prayer would have been answered. Right? I mean, we just have to believe it. So, for what did he pray?

that gets us to the fourth and final thing to consider in our passage, and it is, in my opinion, the most important thing. The prophecy of the Lord here, the permission of the Lord, we have the prayer of the Lord, and then consider the purpose of the Lord in all of it.

[36 : 34] And I've alluded to some of it along the way, but the purpose of the Lord. And by the way, this is a good time to point out something about the grammar here that's not really very evident in the English, in fact, not evident at all in the English.

When Jesus said, Simon, Simon, indeed, Satan has asked for you, or desired to have you, the pronoun you is plural.

It's plural. Literally, you all. What would that mean? Satan all of you all.

Satan desired to sift all of the disciples. And I really believe it's not part of this particular passage that God allowed that to. Not just Peter, but all of the disciples.

See, listen, that is Satan's desire for all of the Lord's disciples. To have us. So that he can sift us and destroy us.

[37 : 48] That's his desire for every single one of us. For you, for me. In fact, I think I can make a case from Romans chapter 8 that Satan is constantly coming before the Lord.

You see, we have that scenario in Job chapter 1, and I think that just simply indicates that this is Satan's method. that we have him always coming to the throne and bringing accusations against God's people.

Always, constantly. In Romans chapter 8 verse 33, Paul asks the question, who shall bring a charge or an accusation of sin against God's elect?

And literally it means keep on charging or keep on accusing who? And the who, the implication is Satan.

Of course, Paul goes on to say, it's God who justifies. That is, he's the one who declares you just as though you'd never sinned. So, Satan is coming and coming and coming and he's saying, look at what Don Coleman did.

[39 : 04] He sinned. See, his accusation. But he goes on from there in verse 34, he says, who is he who condemns?

So it's not just enough for Satan to keep coming before the throne of God and accusing his children of sin. He also comes thinking he's the judge and he condemns.

Judges. God's people. And again, he keeps on condemning. Satan keeps coming to God's throne and he's pointing his ugly bony finger at God's people and he is saying, I accuse them of sin and I judge them condemned.

It's an incredible scenario to think of. A reality that this is what Satan is doing. He's the accuser of the brethren. not just is he through his devilish works accusing you of sin and condemnation and trying to destroy your assurance of salvation and destroy your confidence in the salvation of the Lord, but he's constantly coming to the throne and he's saying, and God's saying, where have you been lately?

Oh, I've been just walking around and I've noticed old Don Coleman and he's a sinner and he is condemned. God says, hold on. Who made you judge?

[40 : 40] This is what Paul says. God is the judge. He said, I'm judge and I on the basis of my son's blood declare all of his disciples, his blood bought children, I declare them blameless.

sinless. This is the amazing thing about salvation. God has declared us as righteous as Christ. Sinless and saved.

But that does not then take away from the reality that Satan continues to accuse us and condemn us before the Lord.

And all of the Lord's disciples are included then here in the purpose of the Lord and I see a three fold purpose in this trial this text.

Number one to keep us from total faithlessness. That was the purpose here. Verse 32 I prayed for you Simon that your faith should not fail.

[41 : 51] And what does that mean? Because Peter certainly failed. Yeah Peter is going to fail. He would fail, did fail. But his faith would not fail. His faith, his saving faith, his salvation, who gave that to Peter?

God did. As he did to all of the disciples and as he has to all of us who are saved here today. You didn't come up with that faith.

It's the gift of God. Anything that will happen to you or anything you can do that will cause that faith to fail.

Now you may fail, but the faith will never fail. That faith cannot fail. And why is that? Well, because of the prayers of Jesus. Hebrews chapter 7 verse 25, one of my favorite passages in Hebrews. Therefore he, speaking of Jesus, is able also to save forever, forever, or if you like the King James, to the uttermost, that means forever.

[42 : 59] He's able to save forever those who draw near to God through Jesus. Forever, that means that faith can't fail.

He's able to save and keep you saved forever those who draw near to Jesus, those who place their faith in Jesus.

Since he, that's Jesus, always lives, he constantly lives to make intercession for them, or for us.

The purpose here is to keep us from total faithlessness. Second, to reveal our spiritual weakness, or weaknesses, because there's more than one.

That's what God's doing here in Peter's. Reveal his weakness. He didn't think he was weak.

Because verse 33, but Peter said to him, let me set you straight, Jesus.

[44 : 07] Jesus, I will, I'm ready, he said. That's what he said, verse 33. I'm ready. I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death.

bold. I think Peter really meant it. It sounds pretty good.

But you know, there's something missing here. Peter was ready to go to prison for Jesus. Peter was ready to die for Jesus.

He proved that. Proved that to be true when they came to arrest Jesus and Peter drew his sword, you know, and he's ready to defend his Lord and Master.

Come what may, go ahead and kill me, but I'm going to protect my Jesus. Maybe you'll arrest me and throw me into a deep, dark, dingy, damp dungeon.

[45 : 12] Okay, I'm ready for that. And so what was his week? He was just not ready to live for Jesus. I'll ask you something.

You really have to think about this and be honest about it. Which is harder? To go to prison for Jesus? Or to die for Jesus?

or to live every day, day in, day out for Jesus? Which is harder?

Now think about it. Isn't it the third one? I mean, if they put you in prison, then it just kind of removes all decisions.

They just have to go with it. it may hurt, it may be hard in that sense, but it's done, it's done, and they arrest you, and they put you in prison, and they make all of your decisions from that point on.

[46 : 22] And what about dying? Well, you say, well, dying, I'm afraid of that. It'll hurt. but only for a little while.

I mean, you think of it in those terms, and you know you're going to heaven, and so you get captured by some terrible terrorists, and they take out a big knife, and I mean, the thought of that, it just, man, what would it feel like?

Well, I don't know, obviously, but I know it won't last long. I don't really get down to it.

Comparatively, it's much easier, because you don't have any choice of the matter, to go to prison for Jesus, and to die for Jesus, than it is to live day in and day out for Jesus.

I don't know that you, but I find that hard. Peter's weakness, you see, was his, in his spiritual courage, or the lack thereof, to stand strong in his testimony of faith in Jesus.

I mean, how quickly that weakness was revealed. Hey, you're one of Jesus' followers, right? Huh? Me? No.

[47 : 47] Or, you're a Christian, right? Well, not really. you're one of those narrow-minded, Bible-thumping bigots who thinks that Christianity is the only true faith, right?

Well, I wouldn't exactly put it that way. I mean, can't you even begin to feel the resistance to that coming up inside of you?

if you're really pressed on it and the point is made. But really, those are easy things, aren't they?

Comparatively. Living for Jesus, especially when no one's looking.

No one would ever know. So, which is harder? Which takes the most strength? To die for your faith? To go to prison for your faith?

or to live? Live for it. Every day, day in, day out, for Jesus. And this is what had to be revealed in Peter's life.

[49 : 04] And that's what he learned, his weakness. Then there's a third purpose here, of course, number three, to prepare us for usefulness.

For usefulness. not only to guard us from faithlessness, and not only to reveal what's true in us, our weakness, but to prepare us for usefulness.

Usefulness in God's kingdom. Verse 32, and when you have returned to me, and you will, that's not in text, but it's implied. He said, when you return, not if.

And when you have returned to me, do what? Strengthen your breath. I've got a job for you, Peter, and Peter is going to be very successful in all of that.

The argument about who will be the greatest among the twelve, really later answered, it is Peter. Not because Peter chose him, but because God chose him.

[50 : 17] And he took Peter through the fire in order to prepare him to be one of his choice servants. He said, well, I can never be like a Peter, but God has a purpose for you.

And the trials come before the triumph. Trials before triumph. What if God, I mean, just think about this, what if God were to take away all temptation? Have you ever wished for that?

I mean, why do I have to have this temptation? I mean, God, you're sovereign and mighty, just take all temptations away from me. Just don't ever allow me to be tempted. Or maybe we could take this a step further.

Well, God, just destroy the devil. Just kill him. Can God do that? Have you ever wondered why he hasn't? Well, other than the fact that he has a long-range purpose for things, and those things are going to be fulfilled, but Satan serves his purpose here now.

I don't know if you've ever thought of it in those terms. And so what if God just took away all temptation, took away all scenarios where you might be tempted to sin, removed all of that from

your life so that you would never be tempted and God would just destroy the devil, or maybe at the very least keep him from ever having any contact with you or any influence, attempt to influence you or anything, just took all of that.

[51 : 49] We could wish for that. Then we would never ever know the depth of our own sin. So that God could purge us and strengthen us and use it.

So we're talking about God's upside-down kingdom. Kingdom of God begins with crosses before crowns, trials before triumphs, and then one more, swords before scepters. We'll take that up next week. . Thank you.