

# But I Have Prayed For You

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Preacher: Rev Iain Macritchie

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you, James, for the warm welcome. Once again, it's lovely to be with you, to be back amongst old friends, and we pray that indeed we'll know God's blessing by his spirit over these days as we come around word and sacrament.

Well, friends, we're going to begin by singing to God's praise. We're going to worship his name from Psalm 146. This is a Sing Sam's version on page 191.

Psalm 146. We can read at the beginning of the psalm. Praise the Lord, my soul, O praise him. I'll extol him all my days. While I live to God, my saviour, from my heart I will sing praise. Do not put your trust in princes, mortal men who cannot save.

All their plans will come to nothing when they perish in the grave. Then down to verse 9 and 10. He frustrates the wicked's purpose, so the Lord through endless days reigns to every generation.

[ 1 : 10 ] Praise your God, O Zion, praise. We'll stand to sing the whole psalm to the praise of God. Praise the Lord, my soul, O praise him.

I'll extol him all my days. While I live to God, my saviour, from my heart I will sing praise.

Do not put your trust in princes, or tell men who cannot save.

All their plans will come to nothing when they perish in the grave.

Blessed is the one who truly works for help to Jacob's call.

[ 2 : 32 ] Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

He who made the earth and heaven and blesses with all their store.

He who keeps his every promise who is faithful evermore.

He delivers from oppression and releases the hungry's plight.

He releases those in prison to the blind the Lord his side.

[ 3 : 47 ] Those who are bowed down he raises. God delights in righteousness.

He protects and cares for strangers, widows and the fatherless.

He frustrates the wicked purpose So the Lord through endless days Praise to every generation

Praise your God, O Zion, praise.

Praise your God, O Zion, praise. Amen. Let's join together and unite our hearts in prayer. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Gracious and eternal God, King of kings and Lord of lords, the God of heaven and the God of earth, the one who inhabits eternity, we gather this evening out before you, O Lord, with that longing in our hearts to truly know what it is to worship.

[ 5 : 31 ] You are truly worthy of all praise and adoration of your name being high and lifted up. You are the one to whom we seek to sing praises and even exalt in our hearts.

And yet we are so aware that even for this short time as we come together as a people, that without you we can do nothing.

We are completely reliant upon you in all that we seek to do in terms of worship, worship, and in service. And in light of this, O Lord, we pray that you might be pleased to fulfill that promise to your people that where two or three gather in your name, you are there in their midst, that for all of us here, we could truly say that we come not in our own name, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you would honor this by your Holy Spirit coming and applying this word to our hearts and our minds, so that all the more we might bow down before you.

And as we reflect upon who you are and what we have from your hand day by day, we cannot but come and give thanks. You are the God who is supplying all of our needs according to your riches and glory, the one who gives unto us health and strength and daily food, the one who's lavishing upon us such an abundance of blessings day by day.

Forgive us, we pray, O Lord, for the fact that we are so slow to return thanks to you, that all too often as a people we find ourselves taking from the hand of God, yet are so reluctant to give back. [ 7 : 36 ] Forgive us, O Lord, for such, and grant unto us that true and that right spirit of thankfulness, not least for these spiritual blessings, the blessings of our soul, that for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, so that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

What a wonder it is that we can lay hold of this promise by faith. What a wonder it is that when our health, our strength, and our daily food passes away as it will, that we can lay hold upon the eternal promises of Christ that are indeed yea and amen.

And as we gather these days and as we seek to remember, we pray, O Lord, that our hearts and our minds might be taken to Calvary's hill, that we might be enabled to a fresh gaze upon the beauty of our Saviour, the one who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief.

There was no beauty in him that we should look upon him. But yet there is beauty there, inexpressible beauty, beauty that enables sinners such as us to cry out, He died for me.

O Lord, we praise you then for the wonder of what it is to be brought into the royal household of faith with that spirit of adoption whereby we can cry out, Abba, Father.

[ 9 : 28 ] And if there are any here this evening hour who are yet to know what it is to take their place in the banqueting house of the Lord, who perhaps, as we once were ourselves, are strangers both to grace and to God, who know not their danger, who sense not their load, who are quite content going through the realms of time without a word of eternity.

We pray, O Lord, that tonight and in the days that lie ahead, your Holy Spirit might be pleased to touch them at their point of need, taking them to that place of darkness to your own most marvellous light from death to life.

And if there are any here this evening who do know you in their hearts and love you, but are yet to come and to profess your name for the first time, through perhaps fear of man or whatever reason they are perhaps following from a distance, we pray, O Lord, that you would impress upon them, even through the preaching of your word this evening, the blessing that follows obedience.

We know in many ways that the easiest thing is to stay away. We know that all that we are called to do in the name of the Lord appears to be so difficult, a mountain set before us.

But yet we know that these thoughts come not from yourself, but from the evil one who seeks to distract us and to destroy our peace and to lead us on a path that does not honour your name.

[ 11 : 10 ] And so help our dear friends here who perhaps have even been on the road for many a year, who are yet to come and to take this step of faith, to know in a very real way that they will not walk on water until they step out of that boat, keeping their eyes upon Jesus, the author and the finisher of their faith.

And we thank you, Lord, that you do not call us to go it alone, that you give unto us that helping hand every step of the way. As for many of us here tonight, perhaps we are so acutely aware of the challenges that face us in this wilderness, but yet you've not promised an easy path for any of us, but what you have promised is that you will be with us, that your rod and your staff, that they will comfort us and lead us and guide us as we navigate our way through this scene of time.

Be with us, dear congregation, we pray. We give thanks for them and their witness in this town. We pray for all their efforts to reach out with the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in a world that in many ways is so dark and is so needful of the light of your gospel.

We pray that you may give unto them that boldness to go out, not in their own strength, but in the strength of the one who cried out, it is finished, the one who promises to us that he will be with us, that he will honor those who honor them.

We pray now that you will lead us in your truth, that you will open our hearts and our minds to incline your voice, to hear what you have to say to us this evening hour.

[ 13 : 05 ] To all we ask, we ask for the forgiveness of our many sins. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, friends, we're going to sing once more to the praise of our Lord and Savior from Psalm 46, this time in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 46. We can pick up our reading at verse 7 of the Psalm. The Lord of hosts upon our side doth constantly remain, the God of Jacob's our refuge us safely to maintain.

Come and behold what wondrous works have by the Lord have by the Lord been wrought. Come see what desolations he on the earth hath brought.

Down to verse 10. Be still and know that I am God among the heathen. I will be exalted. I on earth will be exalted. I will sing verses 7 to 10 to the praise of God standing to sing the Lord of hosts upon our side.

Amen. The Lord of hosts upon our side hath constantly hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me hath lost me  
The evil desolation he on the earth hath thrown.

[15:20] Until the ends of all the earth, wars into peace he turns.

The glory break, the spear he cut, in fire the child burns.

Be still and know that I am gone, upon the hidden eye.

Will be exalted, thy honour will be exalted high.

Friends, we're going to turn now to read God's word together from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22.

Luke, chapter 22.

[16:44] We're going to read two sections of this chapter. Firstly, from verse 14 through to 34. And then we'll pick up our reading at verse 54 through to verse 62.

So that's Luke 22, 14 to 34, and 54 to 62. Let us hear the word of God. And when the hour came, he reclined at a table, and the apostles with him.

And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And he took a cup. And when he had given thanks, he said, take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

And he took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you.

[18:06] Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise the cup, after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is a new covenant in my blood.

But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined.

But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.

But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at a table or one who serves?

[19:14] Yes, is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. You are those who have stayed with me in my trials.

And I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you, both to prison and to death. Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

Then on to verse 54. Then they seized him and led him away, that is Jesus, bringing him into the high priest's house. And Peter was following at a distance.

[20:29] And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, This man also was with him.

But he denied it, saying, Woman, I do not know him. And a little later, someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not.

After an interval of about an hour, still another insisted, saying, Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I do not know what you are talking about.

And immediately while he was still speaking, the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.

And he went out and wept bitterly. And so on. Amen. We pray God's blessing on that portion of his own holy, inspired and inerrant word.

[ 21 : 48 ] Friends, before we come back to this passage, we're going to sing once more. This time from Psalm 9, again in the Sing Psalms, Psalm 9, 9a.

We'll pick up our reading at verse 7.

Psalm 9, verse 7. This is on page 9 of the psalm book. The Lord forever reigns on high. His throne for judgment stands. He'll judge the world in righteousness.

With justice rule the lands. The Lord will be a hiding place for those who are oppressed. And he will be a strong defense for those who are distressed.

We'll sing down to the end of the verse marked 11, to the praise of God, standing to sing, The Lord forever reigns on high. The Lord forever reigns on high.

[ 23 : 00 ] His throne for judgment stands. He'll judge the world in righteousness.

He'll judge the world in righteousness. With justice rule the lands.

The Lord will be a hiding place for those who are oppressed.

And he will be a strong defense for those who are distressed.

All those who know your name, O Lord, In you, there trust will place.

[ 24 : 19 ] For you do not abandon those. For you do not abandon those who are afflicted.

Sing praises to the Lord who sits in Zion on his throne.

Among the nations of the world proclaim what he has done.

Well friends, for a short time, let's turn back together to the chapter that we read in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 22. Luke, chapter 22.

If we were to take a text this evening, perhaps we could consider the words of verses 31 and 32.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat.

[ 25 : 50 ] But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Well friends, over the course of the weekend, what I'd like to do, or God willing, what I hope to do, is to lay before you something of that great plan of God's redemption.

That is, after all, why we are here. What I'm going to do is ask for questions. Tonight we're going to think about why we are here this weekend.

And we're going to focus our thoughts and answering this question upon the narrative that we have before us. Why are we here? God willing, tomorrow night, we're then going to answer the question, how has this been made possible?

On Lord's Day morning, we'll think about what we've received as a result of that which has been made possible for us. And then God willing, on Lord's Day evening, we'll close by thinking about who this is for.

[ 27 : 13 ] Why, how, what, and who. Now I'm going to begin this evening by asking another question. And as we think about the answer to this question, we hopefully, by the end of the sermon, and we'll be able to answer the overarching question that we're considering, why are we here?

And the question I have for you friends is this. Tonight, on Friday the 17th of February, 2023, how is your walk with the Lord?

It's a searching question. It's a probing question. It's a question that causes us to stop and to think. And were we to go around this building this evening and ask individuals that very question, I dare say that we would have many different answers.

Some of you would say, well, my walk isn't as it should be. It's not what I would like it to be. In fact, if I'm being honest, I feel like I'm following the Lord from afar, and I have been for a while.

I present myself outwardly as following the Lord, but in my heart there's something not quite right.

Perhaps others of you might say, well, I actually feel close to the Lord at the minute.

[ 28 : 36 ] I'm enjoying sweet fellowship with him in his word, in prayer with his people. I would say, yes, I am walking closely with the Lord. Yet if we're being entirely honest, all of us, myself included, those of us who are Christians here tonight, we can identify with both of these feelings and everything in between at one time or another, being close to the Lord or perhaps walking at a

distance from him in our heart.

But of course, and we'll see this tonight, there's nothing new under the sun. Because here we have our friend Peter.

Here we have Peter who, in the space of a few hours, he thought in his own mind's eye that, yes, he was walking closely with the Lord.

But then soon after, within a matter of hours, he shows that, in fact, he isn't. So tonight we're going to think about Peter and his denial of Christ under three headings.

Firstly, we're going to think about Peter's confidence in himself. Secondly, we're going to think about how he is confronted by Satan.

[ 30 : 03 ] And then lastly, we're going to close by looking at that commitment that is shown to Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confidence, confrontation, and commitment. And after having considered these three points, we should be able to answer the question, why are we here this weekend?

So here we are in verse 31, 32. And we find ourselves in the upper room. This is, of course, the night before Jesus is crucified.

And here he is spending time with his disciples. He's having fellowship with his disciples. He's breaking bread with his disciples in the form of the Lord's Supper.

He's having a blessed time. But what do we notice, friends? We notice that no sooner has our blessed time of fellowship had with Jesus and his disciples that it's broken.

[ 31 : 11 ] It's broken. What we see here is that something comes in that seeks to destroy that blessing.

The problem? Well, the problem is that very quickly after having had the Lord's Supper, the disciples, what they do is they forget. They take their eyes off Jesus.

They neglect to remember exactly what they've just been doing and who they've been doing it with. And instead, their eyes are focused upon themselves.

See, in verse 24, I have here.

Yes, 24. A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

[ 32 : 09 ] Isn't this just so like us? After a time of great blessing with God's people, around sacrament, around word, isn't it so like us just to be distracted, to be embroiled in disputes and discussions which in reality have no real importance?

That's what we see here. And of course, this has consequences because when we're in that heady frame of mind, what we find, friends, and we know this knowing what human nature is like, when we've had a dispute over something, something we're intently focused on, what we find is that we have this confidence in ourselves, this assumed confidence, whether it's genuine or not is another thing, but we have this confidence.

We're sure that we're right. We're sure that our point of view is the point of view as the disciples themselves were eager to find out who would be the greatest.

Would it be me? And that's what we see with Peter because no sooner has this dispute taken place that Jesus announces the unthinkable to him.

Simon, Simon. Just notice that. Simon, Simon. What's Jesus doing here? He's referring to Simon Peter by his old name.

[ 33 : 39 ] Jesus had given to him the name Peter. Now he's been referred to as his old name. Why? Because he was going to go back very soon to his old ways.

And just look at how he says it. Simon, Simon. There's that tone of disappointment. That tone of a loving heavenly father speaking to a son, of a brother speaking to a brother.

Simon, Simon. I don't want you to do this. Simon, Simon. Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

And it goes on to say, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

I wonder, friend, tonight, if you were told that this very evening you would deny the Lord three times with cursing and with swearing. If I was to tell you that, what would your reaction be?

[ 34 : 43 ] Well, you would no doubt, and me with you, our natural reaction would be to say, never, never would I do such a thing to my Lord. Never would I deny my Savior, certainly not with cursing and with swearing.

Peter certainly had that confidence. And in Matthew's account of what we have before us here, he responds by saying, even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

You've all heard the saying, never say never. And of course, as the Lord's people, as Christians, this is something that we continually need to take on board.

You know, one of the most dangerous things for us to do, friends, as Christians, is to look upon others who have perhaps fallen into sin and to look upon them with disgust and with disdain and confidently saying out hearts, although we might not articulate it with our lips, saying out hearts, I would never do that.

Whatever I would do, I would never do that. It's lethal. It's lethal because it shows that we've lost sight of who we really are by nature.

[ 36 : 03 ] It's lethal because this way of thinking, it overestimates our own strength and ability to resist sin. It's lethal.

We see this with Peter because at its center, this way of thinking is one of the most ugliest sins of all. The sin of pride.

And of course, as an aside, when we see our brothers or sisters falling into sin instead of looking down upon them from our ivory tower, what are we to do?

We are to draw alongside them. We are to seek to restore them in that same spirit of restoration that has been granted to us as undeserving sinners by our Lord and our Savior.

We forget, don't we, who we are in Christ and what he's done for us. And so, such unfounded confidence that here Peter has it only goes on to make him weaker.

[ 37 : 12 ] He who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls. And that's what happens. His confidence leads him, and this brings us to our second point, to be confronted by Satan.

Remember what Jesus said, Satan has desired to sift you as wheat. What a vivid and clear picture this is.

When the wheat was harvested, the wheat and the chaff, they were shaken, they were tossed up into the air, and as it was being tossed up into the air, what would happen was that the wind would blow the chaff away and the wheat would be left, the good grain would be left.

And that's what Satan's deciding to do with Peter. That's what he's deciding to do with all of us, if the truth be told. That's what he's deciding to do with Peter. He wants to violently shake him to see if really, really this faith that he professes to have is through.

After all, look at the many times Peter has blundered. Look at the many times he's let the Lord down. He certainly doesn't look like one of the Lord's people. Let's shake him, let's sift him, let's get to the root of the matter and show him for who he really is.

[ 38 : 33 ] And so he confronts Peter. But what does he confront him with? Does he confront Peter with an obviously glaring sin that would instantly derail Peter, discredit Peter?

Is that what he does? Leading Peter into this obvious, heinous sin? Is that what he does? No, it's not, because that's not how Satan operates. He's far more subtle and clever than that.

What he does is this. The next day, when Jesus is being led away, we missed out some of the chapter, when he's being led away by those, of course, who are going to crucify him, he confronts Peter.

Satan confronts Peter. What does he confront him with? Well, he confronts him with a temptation. What's the temptation? Well, it's such a subtle temptation, but one that I believe is so real to all of us, that temptation of comfort and of ease.

You see, Peter had a choice. Here's his Lord and Savior being led away to be crucified. He has a choice. He can either boldly and publicly identify as a follower of Jesus, or he can remain in the shadows.

[ 39 : 56 ] He can go to the side. He can somehow show that he doesn't really know this man Jesus. Verse 54. Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house.

And what does Peter do? And Peter was following at a distance. That's the first temptation. The subtle temptation.

Following at a distance. Having so been confronted with that temptation of comfort, of ease, of taking the easy way out, he does so.

He follows Jesus at a distance. No doubt he's embarrassed or he's scared to identify with the Lord Jesus Christ because in doing so, he knows there will be repercussions.

There were repercussions, but perhaps not in the way that he expected. Because in following Jesus from a distance, friends, he was putting himself in the perfect place to be confronted further by Satan.

[ 41 : 08 ] And that's again what happens. Because not only does Peter follow Jesus from a distance, but then he goes on further to identify with the enemies of God.

Verse 55. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them.

Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, This man also was with him.

At this crucial, pivotal point in the life and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, instead of actively being involved with what's going on, instead of spending time with the disciples, perhaps in prayer over the situation that was unfolding before their very eyes or fighting the cause of Christ, trying to be there for his Savior, instead, what do we see?

we see Peter abdicating all responsibility and warming himself at the fire of the faithless.

[ 42 : 23 ] This was one who had been so confident and now compromised, weakened in his witness, so that having been confronted by that temptation of comfort and ease, by distancing himself from Jesus, things begin to snowball, to get out of all control.

Verse 57, but he denied it, saying, Woman, I do not know him. I don't know this man, he's saying. And a little later, someone else saw him and said, You also are one of them, but Peter said, Man, I am not.

And it's not even as if he regretted what he said and wished he hadn't said it. You know, sometimes we say things in the heat of the moment and we wince at the thought that we've just said it, we wished we hadn't said it, we wouldn't say it again.

Well, we see that another hour goes past and what does Peter do? He goes on to deny his Savior again. Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat and Peter agreed.

As it were, he signed on the dotted line. An important point for all of us to remember, it's so easy, I suppose, for us when we're confronted with the suggestions of Satan that we blame Satan, that we blame Satan for our sins.

[ 44 : 01 ] He made me do it. And of course, Satan does whisper in our ears, sometimes very loudly, sometimes very convincingly, sometimes even as an angel of light.

So it's hard to discern if it's from the Lord or if it's from Satan himself. But at the end of the day, we cannot blame Satan for our own sin.

So friends, what we have before us here is, is it not a heartbreaking scene? A scene that ought to lead all of us, myself included, to examine ourselves and to remind ourselves that the only confidence we can ever afford to have, it's not in ourselves, it's not in our own estimation of things in this world.

The only confidence that we can ever or should ever have should be in the person and in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maybe tonight you're sitting here or perhaps you're joining us online and you're saying with a heavy heart, that's me. That's me.

[ 45 : 24 ] People around me don't know it, but that's me. You're talking to me. I see myself in this whole situation. Well, friends, if that is you tonight, dear struggling Christian friend, and I'm sure there are some of you here, that is the reality of what it is to be the Lord.

We're not good at talking about that, are we? Building one another up, being there for one another, but yet it's so part and partial of what it is to be called from darkness into his marvelous light, that we are warring against principalities and powers each and every day.

and if you are in the center of that warfare, if you're so aware of it and you're succumbing time and time again not to make excuse for sin, we do not make excuse for sin, we see the result of sin, we see where it leads us here, and as heartbreaking as this scene is, we can't leave it there, we can't leave it there because we come here tonight around a message of hope, and so as heartbreaking as the scene is before us here, it's not a hopeless scene, this brings us to our final point, the commitment, the commitment shown by the Lord Jesus Christ to a weak and weary sinner, Peter, and to a weak and weary sinner, you, and to a weak and weary sinner, me, and as we reflect upon that commitment, we're led to answer that question, why are we here this weekend?

Verse 31, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but, but, aren't we so thankful for that word, but, but, I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, because although Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat, and Peter said yes, Jesus said no, just like with Job, the Lord allowed Satan to go so far with Peter in that whole rendezvous that they have here at this time, but no further, no further, Satan might for a time have God Peter's service, he might for a time have your service, but he won't get his soul, he won't get your soul, if you're in Christ tonight, why?

Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world, and so no matter how low we go, and maybe tonight you are very low, I don't know, maybe you're very low in your walk with the Lord, and at times you feel like as it were throwing the towel, and giving up, turning your back on the whole thing, it's just too difficult, no matter how low you go, you can have confidence in the one who has committed to you, the one who will never leave you, never forsake you, the one who died on that cross for a reason, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see that commitment, do we not, in this very statement, I have prayed for you, that your faith fail you not, and what's wonderful about this statement is that it's said before Peter even fell, before Peter fell, he prayed for Peter before Peter sinned, isn't that something, the Lord is always a step ahead of his people, does this mean that [ 50 : 00 ] Jesus' prayer wasn't answered, you might say well his faith did fail him, did it not, look at what he's just done, he's denied the Lord Jesus three times, and so maybe, maybe Jesus' prayer wasn't answered by God the Father, of course that's not true, we know that's not true, Peter failed himself undoubtedly, but his faith never failed, because his faith is in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that can never fail, our faith can flounder, it can waver, that is true, but it can never fail, ultimately, it can never fail, I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail, why is he praying, why is this intercessory prayer necessary, we might ask, was Peter's sins not going to be defeated once and for all on the cross on Calvary's hill, why pray at all, what's the point of this, it's a good question, well one commentator put it like this, this is not a supplemental work adding to his sacrifice of himself on the cross, but rather a consequential work based on it, this is a fruit of the cross, this prayer is as a result of what's to take place on the cross, a prayer that we see also in John 17, and this is one of the most wonderful chapters whereby we see the care and the commitment that the

Lord Jesus Christ has for his people. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, this is a high priestly prayer, that they may all be one, just as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. In verse 24, Father, I desire that they also, that's us if it is tonight, Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

He prays because he loves, because he's committed, committed to that cause, that cause that had been set out from all eternity.

eternity. And so we can put an amen to the psalmist when he says, my flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never.

[ 53 : 13 ] And so to answer the overarching question of tonight, why are we here this weekend? Well, friends, we are here, are we not, to remember and to rejoice in the glorious reality of what it is to be safe and secure in Christ.

Not to excuse our sin, far from it, but still to remember that we are safe and secure in Jesus, a glorious reality that we're not to keep to ourselves.

Jesus says this to Peter, and when, not if, notice that word when, and when you have returned to me. He had his eye on Peter, he knew that Peter would return just as he has his eye on any wandering lamb of his.

When you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren. Strengthen your brethren.

Maybe this is a picture of someone here tonight, I don't know, someone who perhaps hasn't been walking closely with the Lord for some time, has strayed, someone perhaps joining us online, I don't know.

[ 54 : 33 ] But what I do know is this, is that you're not to stay away, you're to come back, you're to profess your faith publicly again.

He has prayed that your faith will not fail. why don't you come back? Come back and strengthen your brethren. We are a family.

We are a church family. And as a family, we long, do we not, and if we don't, there's something far wrong, we long, do we not, to see a long-lost family member coming back to the table. And when they do, what do we do? we rejoice. We praise God. We ourselves are strengthened in our faith. It does our hearts good to see those who perhaps haven't been with us for many a long year, they're back in their rightful place.

Because Christ has prayed for them. Their faith will not fail. Maybe you're here tonight and you've never professed and you wonder where you fit into all of this.

[ 55 : 53 ] You might say, well, how can I return when I never went away in the first place? Well, you did. You did go away. Because we've all got that image of Christ within us.

That's how we've been made, to serve and to worship. And so for every single man and woman, boy and girl in this world who is not in the way, they've gone astray.

They've chosen to go away from their creator. And so the same plea goes to you tonight. Come back. Come back to the Lord.

Come back to that place whereby you can come to know not just the creation, but the creator. The one who died on that cross so sinners like us might live.

Or maybe tonight you do know him in your heart. Maybe you are one of the Lord's people, but still you haven't professed his name. I'll just look at Peter.

[ 57 : 08 ] You might think, well I've got plenty time. I'll profess in my own good time. Just look at Peter. He followed from afar and what happened?

He fell. He followed from afar and he fell. So dear Christian friend, if you haven't professed, if you follow from afar, if you're scared of the consequences of coming out on his side and for everyone knowing that you are a child of God, beware because Satan desires you also.

Friend, we know that the blessing follows obedience. Not to say that when we come to the Lord's table somehow our lives are going to be miraculously smooth, sailing, plain sailing, that is not true. But what is true is this, that when we obey we will have that strength that comes from the one who tells us that if we come and if we profess his name publicly he will honour them who honour him. Does that mean you'll be perfect? No it doesn't. Maybe that's what you're waiting for. Maybe you look at yourself and you think well what about this sin in my life and what about that? And you're waiting until all of these sins are eradicated and then you'll come.

[ 58 : 35 ] Well you'll never come. You'll never come. Peter was far from perfect, you are far from perfect, I am far from perfect but still we can profess the one who is perfect.

If we love the Lord that is our calling tonight hope to come forward and to show to all those around us that we love the one who has interceded on our behalf, the one who tells us that our faith will never fail us.

I wonder if you're waiting. Don't wait. there is no perfect time apart from tonight because today friend is a day of obedience.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. We come oh Lord and we praise your name that you've given unto us a mirror in your word whereby we can see ourselves so clearly.

but yet often times we neglect to focus on it. We neglect to look into the realities of what we see therein.

[ 60 : 03 ] But yet it is there for us to know that indeed there is nothing new under the sun that you are God and that you have prayed that our faith will not fail us.

We thank you oh Lord for that anchor for our soul sure and steadfast that is to be found in you and you alone. And so help us one and all to be strengthened by this as we go forward into this weekend as we perhaps are so aware of our unworthiness to come and sit at your table that we would have one eye at ourselves that we would have our vision set firmly upon you the one who is worthy for worthy is the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Go with us then we pray. Forgive us for Jesus sake. Amen. Well we're going to conclude friends singing together from Psalm 73 in the Scottish Psalter reading at verse 25 Whom have I in the heavens high but thee O Lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none my flesh and heart doth faint and fail but God doth fail me never for of my heart God is a strength and portion forever for lo they that are far from thee forever perish shall them that are whoring from thee go thou hast destroyed all but surely it is good for me that I draw near to God in God

I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad standing to sing these verses to the praise of our Lord that SEMPEVE Him somewhereize in the heavens heaven up but the O Lord alone and in the earth

whom I desire besides thee there is none.

My flesh and heart, a kingdom here, but God will fail thee never.

[ 63 : 15 ] For, O my God, God is the strength and portion forever.

For, Lord, may that our power profit forever perish thou, then that the warring wrongly go, thou hast destroyed all.

But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 65 : 24 ] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.