

# THE REAL JESUS: HIS CROSS

Week Four | September 9, 2018 | Betrayed (Part 2)

## PREPARATION

### GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 22:24–62. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

The human heart is fickle and weak and the enemy is out to destroy, but God is faithful to hold us fast and accomplish His purposes.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

Mature Christians don't grow more spiritually self-reliant, they grow more spiritually dependent on Christ.

### MEDITATE

*"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" (Luke 22:31-32).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Have you ever said the words, “I will never ...”, only to then do that very thing? For example, “I will never let the dog in the house!” That probably lasted one night. “I will never let my kids play with battery-operated toys!” Probably didn’t last long either. “I will never work a job where I have to wear a business suit every day!” Life tends to be ironic. Or, “I’ll never eat sushi!” Never say never!

Jesus’ disciples were really confident about one thing—they would never fall away from Jesus. They couldn’t even imagine how it would be possible! But in the very same chapter, we see them breaking their promise. Do you have this same confidence? Is the idea of flat-out denying Jesus, or at least functionally denying Him, unthinkable to you? Is it even hurtful to you?

The disciples show us that even those who are the closest to Christ and the most grounded in their faith must not presume they will never stray from Him. From them we learn we must never become spiritually self-reliant. As we grow in faith, we grow more aware of our own fickle natures, our own frailty, and our own neediness. We become more mindful of the fact that we need Jesus to hold us fast. In this text we also see that while we are faithless, God is faithful. Praise God that our position before Him does not depend on the strength of our faith but on the object of our faith, Jesus Christ.

## ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Today we will finish our two-part study of Jesus’ betrayal. Last week we studied His betrayal by Judas. This week we will see Peter betray Him as well. We will be reminded that we cannot hold ourselves fast in the faith. Mature Christians don’t grow more spiritually confident, they grow more spiritually dependent.

### 1. JESUS PROTECTS US FROM SATAN

### 2. BECAUSE OF JESUS, GOD WILL NEVER ABANDON US

### 3. BECAUSE OF JESUS, WE HAVE HOPE

## GOING DEEPER

*+ This next section will help show what God’s Word says about this week’s particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week’s biblical truth.*

## JESUS PROTECTS US FROM SATAN

### ■ LUKE 22:24–34

Q: *What were the disciples arguing about and how did Jesus correct their thinking?*

Q: *What big news did Jesus reveal to Peter?*

This scene is a continuation of the one we studied last week. Jesus is celebrating the Passover with His disciples. After a powerful evening revealing what His broken body and shed blood would accomplish, Jesus announced that there was one among them who would betray Him. But then, the scene crumbles even more. The disciples end up in a debate about who will be the greatest in the kingdom. They prove they still think the way the world does, vying for positions of power and esteem. They wanted to use the fact that they were part of Jesus' "inner circle" for their own gain. In many ways, this logic makes perfect sense. It's the way the world works. But Jesus turns it upside down when He says it is really the one who is the least in the kingdom who is the greatest, the one who serves rather than the one who is served. Jesus was about to personally illustrate this truth.

Then, Jesus announced yet another disciple would betray Him—Peter, one of Jesus' most trusted friends and followers. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Jesus' ministry and deeply committed. Peter was the disciple no one would have ever expected.

In verse 40, Jesus tells the disciples there is another element at play. There is a spiritual struggle going on, provoked by Satan himself. This spiritual struggle has been present all along, even in the disciples' earlier conversation about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. Jerry Rankin insightfully writes, "Satan doesn't have to create religious opposition and government restrictions to inhibit the kingdom of God from being established among all peoples. If he can just get us to live like the world, indulge the flesh and treat sinful behavior as normative, he has deprived God of His glory and diminished the potential of others receiving the gospel." We often think of spiritual warfare as something that happens in satanic cults or in physical persecution of Christians. And Satan wants us to think that. He doesn't want us to be aware of the fact that he works best under the lull of everyday life.

Thinking the way the world thinks doesn't even have to include immoral lifestyles. It can be shaping our ambitions and ideas of success the way the world does. It can mean allowing pride and self-centeredness to reign in your life. It can include living a nominally Christian life where you claim to be a Christian, attend church, and agree with basic moral stances, but the main pursuit of your life is your own desires or comfort

rather than knowing Christ more and seeking first His kingdom. If Satan can just twist our ambitions, he can render us unsatisfied in Christ and ineffective for the kingdom.

In verse 31, Jesus speaks directly of the specific spiritual battle centered on Peter. He says Satan has demanded to “sift” him as wheat. “Sift” is an agricultural term, used to describe the process of crushing the newly harvested wheat kernel and tossing it in the air so the chaff would blow away in the wind. The grain that remained would be put in a box covered with netting and shaken, “sifting” out the dirt and debris and leaving the clean grain behind. This is exactly what Satan wanted to do to Peter—turn him upside down and shake him until he was blown away in the wind.

We learn several things about the nature of the spiritual battle from these verses. First, we see that Satan is not ultimately in control. God is. It is important to recognize that the battle is between God and Satan, but it is not one of two equal and opposite forces. John 1:4–5 says that “In [Christ] was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” The battle may be strong, but it isn’t “close.” Jesus is the victor, always. Satan can do nothing outside of God’s complete control.

We see this reality in the book of Job when Satan must get permission from God to inflict pain and calamity on Job (Job 1:6–12). God puts limits on Satan, telling him what he cannot touch. God allows Job to be tempted and to face trial, but He stands above it all. What happens in Job’s life is by no means outside of God’s complete control and ultimate protection. Then, in Job 38, God gives Job the power of His presence. He reminds Job of His power, His goodness, and His nearness. These things allow Job to persevere in trial and to remain faithful in the midst of it.

Likewise, in Luke 22:31–32, we read that Jesus intercedes for Peter before the throne of God that there would be a limit set on Satan so that no matter how hard he shakes Peter, his faith would not ultimately fail. Peter’s soul would not be lost. He would be held by a faithful God. What Satan meant to destroy Peter, God would use to shake out the chaff of his pride and false sense of security in himself. What would remain would be a Peter who was humble and dependent on God. He would see his own frailty and experience God’s strength. He would recognize the depth of grace in His own life and rejoice all the more in Christ. God would use the “sifting” in Peter’s life for His own purposes.

Yet Peter does not see from this vantage point. He hears Jesus say Peter will deny Him and immediately responds, saying, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” In other words, there is no way Peter will ever deny Christ! He is willing to die alongside Him! He cannot even imagine betraying Jesus! Peter teaches us that when you think you are above a thing is when you are most vulnerable.

Q: *The enemy prefers that we either don't think about him at all or think about him too much; either we have no fear of him or we have too much fear of him. Which extreme do you usually fall into? What are the dangers of both extremes?*

Q: *Are you going through a "sifting" right now? How is this passage particularly encouraging for you? What are some truths from it you can cling to during this time?*

## BECAUSE OF JESUS, GOD WILL NEVER ABANDON US

■ ■ LUKE 22:35-46

Q: *Who took care of the disciples when Jesus sent them out?*

Q: *What is most remarkable to you about Jesus' prayer?*

Jesus is fully aware of what awaits him in just a matter of hours. He will suffer greatly both physically and spiritually. He will experience being abandoned by God. But He also knows what the result of His suffering will be. Because He was abandoned by God, those who are in Him will never have to be. Jesus already begins to talk about what life will be like for the disciples after the cross. It will be a life free from the fear of abandonment by God and of confidence in His care for them. Imagine how differently someone would live life under these conditions!

In verse 35, Jesus reminds them of earlier occasions when He had sent them out (Luke 9:3 and 10:4). He had told them to pack light. They were to not find their comfort and security in the things they brought with them, but to trust that God would provide for their every need. And He always did! Now, however, Jesus tells them that the terrain will be much more difficult. People will take great offense at Christ on the cross. They will be hostile to His followers. They will not always be met with favor, but they can be confident they will never be forsaken. Commenting on this passage, Matthew Henry says, "Christ is a good Master, and his service a good

service; for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will he not leave them. Jehovah-jireh.”

Jesus Himself was about to suffer, as was long foretold. He would die the death of a criminal. He would be hated and reviled. Matthew Henry continues, “It may be the comfort of suffering Christians, as it was for a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and determined in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly determine in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and they will have an end, and will end well, everlastingly well. They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think now to have such an easy and comfortable life as they had; no, the scene will alter. They must now in some degree suffer with their Master; and, when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his Lord.” While Christ’s followers would follow Him in His suffering, they would not experience the fullness of what He experienced on the cross. Instead of experiencing the absence of God of His suffering, they would experience the presence of God in their suffering.

This time was soon to start for the disciples because Christ’s hour was about to come. They don’t feel safe without a sword by their side. So, they gathered all they had with them and found they had only two swords, one of which was Peter’s. Their sparse weaponry seems ridiculous given the fact that they knew they would face a group of men who each had a sword in hand! But Jesus told them what they had was enough. Their hope must not rest in swords or other forms of protection, but on God. Matthew Henry concludes, “Yet two swords are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency.” This great gift was purchased by Christ on the cross.

Then, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray and instructed to the disciples to do the same. “Pray that you may not enter into temptation,” He said. Jesus was about to suffer more than anyone has ever or will ever suffer. And what does He pray about in the wake of that suffering? That the disciples would not fall under temptation but would be firm in the faith. And He tells them to pray the same thing. When you are about to enter into a difficult season, what is your prayer? Do you ask God to fix everything so you won’t suffer? Or do you pray He would protect you from the temptation to doubt His goodness in the midst of it?

We see in Jesus’ example in verse 42 that it is not wrong to ask God to alleviate suffering! In fact, the other gospel accounts tell us that Jesus made this request three times. He was praying in agony, from the depths of His soul. His prayer was so strenuous He was sweating drops of blood. An angel came to strengthen Him. I’m not sure any of us have ever prayed that intensely! The point is that we are not called to face suffering in a sadomasochistic way. We aren’t called to like suffering, we are called to trust God in suffering. We are to trust Him enough to freely come to Him and ask Him to stop the storm. But we are also to trust Him enough to persevere through it with the help of His strength and the comfort of His presence.

Jesus refers to a “cup” in verse 42. Isaiah 51:17 uses the imagery of a cup to symbolize God’s wrath that is stored up against sinful man. Rather than that wrath being poured out on us, Jesus drank it. He suffered the wrath in our place. He took all of God’s righteous anger over sin on Himself.

What was God’s response to Jesus’ prayer? No. Has God ever told you no? If so, be encouraged by this passage. Instead of being spared the pain, Jesus was called to see what God would accomplish through the pain—the salvation of many souls from every part of the world. God saves countless sinners through a denied prayer. Prayer is not about getting what you want. It is about submission to the will of God and trust in His plan above your own.

But God denied one of Jesus’ prayers that He will never deny for us. In praying He would be spared the cup, Jesus prays He would not have to experience being abandoned by God. God said no to that request. But because He said no to Jesus, He will never have to say no to us. Every time we ask God to be with us, in seasons of joy and in seasons of pain, the answer is always and only *yes*.

Q: *What “swords” do you find yourself turning to for comfort and security?*

Q: *When you experience suffering, what do you pray for? How can you pray more like Jesus?*

## BECAUSE OF JESUS, WE HAVE HOPE

### LUKE 22:47–62

Q: *What things happened exactly the way Jesus said they would?*

Q: *How did Jesus treat His betrayers?*

The time came. Judas, “one of the twelve,” betrayed Jesus and brought a group to arrest Him. Judas knew Jesus so well that he knew exactly where to find Him. He exploited the trust that had been built between the two of them for his own gain. What’s worse, when Judas saw Him, he gave Jesus a kiss. This would have been a gesture of friendship, of familiarity. In many countries around the world, people greet one another with a kiss. In Italy and France, for example, friends greet each other with a kiss on both cheeks. The American equivalent would be a side hug, a friendly handshake, or a fist bump. Regardless, this gesture expressed familiarity and closeness, making the pain of the betrayal even more acute.

When the disciples realized what was happening, their first impulse was to take violent action to protect Jesus. The other gospel writers include the detail that it was Peter who sliced off the ear of the High Priest’s servant. From the world’s perspective, violent retaliation makes perfect sense. In fact, it’s expected. But not only did Jesus stop the violence, He healed the damage caused by it. The One who made the ear put it back on the man’s head. What a powerful picture. The fallen world only knows how to tear down and destroy, but the Creator knows how to heal.

You would think the servant who experienced healing would stop what he was doing and call the crowd off! But that’s not what happened. They were all lost in the dominion of darkness. John writes, “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:9–11).

By this act of healing, we are also reminded that Jesus is still in control over everything. This was an hour of darkness, but it’s only an “hour,” a brief time. This hour is fully in line with God’s purposes.

In Luke 22:54–62, we read about Peter’s denial of Jesus. He is a man who never imagined finding himself in such a position, but it all made sense in the moment. Peter denied he knew Jesus once, twice, three times, each time more emphatic than the last. When he heard the rooster, Jesus’ words came back to mind and he wept.

While both Peter and Judas were tempted in the same way, there is a major difference between them. Judas betrayed Jesus and never repented. Peter betrayed Jesus and was immediately full of remorse. Judas showed no fruit of having a regenerated heart, not only in the moment of his betrayal, but throughout his time with Jesus. Peter has much room to grow and many old patterns to weed out, but there are many examples of fruit in his life, perhaps the most powerful of which is seen in this moment. His brokenheartedness over what he did is proof that his heart of stone had been replaced with a heart of flesh. He had a sensitivity to sin and a love for Jesus that Judas never demonstrated.

Ligon Duncan suggests that “underneath the non-repentance of Judas and the repentance of the faith of Peter is the prayer of Jesus. We don’t understand how at all times we stand in need of the intercession of our Savior. You see, it’s not just that He died for us, it’s not just that He was raised for us—He ever lives to intercede. He is whispering into



the Father's ear, 'Keep her from sin. Keep him from breaking, Lord. Keep their faith from failing, Lord. Bring them to repentance, Lord.' He is ever living to intercede and the one thing that stands between us and an ancient personal evil of incalculable power, the enemy of our souls, and our souls, is Jesus' intercession. But His intercession is more powerful than that ancient evil one."

In Jesus' hour of betrayal, we see signs of the glorious reality that is ours on the other side of the cross. We see Him heal and restore what was violently broken. We see hearts that are sensitive to sin and quick to repent. We see evidence of Him holding His church fast and being faithful to grow it more into His likeness. As we follow Christ in suffering, we do so as those who have great hope.

Q: *In what ways do you "betray" Jesus in your life? When you realize what you have done, what is your reaction? Is it like Judas' or Peter's?*

Q: *In what ways can you mirror the Savior by being a healing presence rather than one that accomplishes goals, even good ones, by tearing down?*

## NEXT STEPS

+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

Q: *What are some of your own patterns of thinking that subtly align more with the kingdom of the world than the kingdom of God?*

Q: *How does this passage help shape your prayer life? What can you practically implement?*

Q: *How does this passage help you think about suffering in a more godly way? What*

*are some practical ways God is calling you to trust Him right now?*

**Q:** *What does this passage teach you about greatness and humility? How does your life need to change to reflect those truths?*

**Q:** *In the last two weeks, we have looked in-depth at three different people—Judas, Peter, and Jesus. Who do you identify with the most? Who demonstrates the same patterns of behavior you see in your own life?*

## PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*

- Father, thank You for denying Jesus's prayer to let the cup pass. Thank You for hearing and responding to prayer, even if the answer is "no." Give me grace to trust You more.
- Jesus, thank You for interceding for me moment-by-moment. Thank You that I can follow You without the fear of abandonment because of what You accomplished on the cross.
- Holy Spirit, I pray I would be sensitive to Your presence, especially during suffering. Thank You for being the Great Comforter and giving me strength to persevere as I follow Christ.

## COMMENTARY

**LUKE 22:32** While Peter's faith "fails" in his denial of Jesus, it does not fail completely. Because of Jesus' intercession and Peter's regeneration, he is held fast and restored. His heart is quick to repent as the Holy Spirit reveals his sin.

*\*All exegetical content and commentary resourcing for this lesson was provided by the ESV Study Bible Commentary Notes, the Christ Centered Exposition (Luke), and Preaching the Word (Luke).*