

Satan's Sieve

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Date: 14 March 2020

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[0 : 0 0] From the New Testament, and it's taken from the Gospel of Luke in chapter 22, Luke chapter 22 from verse 14 to verse 34.

Luke 22 from verse 14. And when the hour came, he reclined at 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.

Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.

[1 : 0 6] For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. And began to question one another which of them it could be who is 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 table or one who serves? 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 and 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.

[2 : 1 2] 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 rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

Amen. And this is the word of God to us this afternoon. Let's again draw near to him in prayer. Lord, we have sung together of the precious nature of your grace and the precious nature of your salvation.

And we thank you and we bless you that you give us those seasons in the year when we can especially focus on that mercy, that grace, that salvation. We thank you and we bless you for bringing us into another communion weekend, when we can feast on your word and when we can feast on the elements of bread and wine that convey the glorious truths that are presented in your word.

Lord, our prayer is that you would bless this congregation over this weekend. You know it's maybe not the weekend that they would have expected, but we pray that there would be a blessing for each and every one.

We remember those who could not be here. We remember Paul Gibson in Perth. We thank you for him, for the friendship that we have with him, for the ways that you have used him and are continuing to use him.

[3 : 39] And we pray that your hand of healing might be upon him in these days and that you would restore him to full health. We remember Ian McCritchie stepping into the breach, into the void that Paul has left behind.

And we pray for Ian. We thank you for him, for his warmth and his winsomeness. And we pray, O Lord, that you would bless him and uphold him and strengthen him over this weekend and that he would know liberty and that he would know unction and that you would use him greatly for your glory in these days.

And we remember this congregation. We remember the minister of this congregation. We thank you for him. And we pray that he and the elders would know your hand being upon them over this weekend and that you would give them all wisdom over these days, but also that they would lean on you and that they would wait on you and that they would trust in you and that you would give them clarity as they go about the practical arrangements concerning these services.

And we pray that you bless the congregation. We pray that you bless every member and every adherent. That for your people sitting at the table, that it would be a time of refreshment for them in their souls when they are drawn ever closer to Christ Jesus.

For your people who may be sitting back from the table, that even in these days, even in these moments, you might convict them, you might challenge them, that they would indeed want to nail their colors to that mast and go to that table in obedience to the call and command of Christ.

[5 : 19] And we pray for those who will be holding back from the table because they know they should not be there. And that in these days that you might draw them savingly to yourself, to the place of finding Christ to be that pearl of great price, the one who is all things to their soul.

Bless us now as we come to focus on your word together. And we pray that this word might be a word in the season for each and every one of us, that it might be a word that you would use for your glorious purposes, that it might be a word that would build up your people, and that it might challenge and be a means of grace and blessing to those who may still be strangers to grace and to God.

O lead us in your truth and forgive every sin as we pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Amen. Well, as we prepare to focus on the Lord's word together, let's sing to his praise in the words of Psalm 34.

Psalm 34, this is going to salt our version on page 246. God will I bless all times his praise. My mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God. The meek shall hear with joyfulness.

Extol the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord. He heard and did me from. All fears deliver. Particularly verses 8 and 9. O taste and see that God is good.

[6 : 49] Who trusts in him is blessed. Fear God his saints. None that in fear shall be with want oppressed. Our prayer as we come to focus on the Lord's word together is that we would indeed taste and see that he is good.

That this would be more than an intellectual exercise. But it would be an experiential moment when we can truly see and savor the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Psalm 34, verses 1 to 10. To the Lord's praise and glory. God will I bless all times his praise.

My mouth shall still express. My soul shall boast in God.

The meek shall hear with joyfulness. Exalt the Lord with me.

[8 : 11] Let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord.

He heard and did me from all the air deliver.

They looked to him and glided where.

No shame it were their faces. This poor man cried, God hurt and saved him from all his distresses.

The angel of the Lord. And comes and round and compasses.

[9 : 38] All those of God that do him fear. And them deliver.

God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

[10 : 56] God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

God is good to trust in him. God is good to trust in him.

God is good to trust in him. Peter.

Good to trust in him. I quit, 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 rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

[12 : 04] We all know the story of Peter. We all love the story of Peter. We are familiar with his story of his fall, his great failure, and we're also familiar with the story of his restoration and his being recommissioned by Christ.

But this afternoon, I want to focus on the events leading up to his fall, the events that came before his fall, and I hope as we do so, it would be an encouragement to each and every one of us.

We're looking at the passage under two headings. We're looking at a fearsome adversary and then a faithful advocate. A fearsome adversary and then a faithful advocate.

First, we have the fearsome adversary in verse 31, where Luke draws our attention to the fearsome enemy of every disciple. Before we go any further, let's say it ourselves in this chapter.

In verses 1 and 2, we find the chief priests and the scribes plotting the death of Jesus. Verses 3 down to 6, we find Satan entering Judas and he meets with the chief priests and he makes arrangements regarding how he will betray Jesus and hand him over to the religious authorities.

[13 : 23] In verses 7 to 23, we find Jesus instituting his holy supper, his new covenant meal. This meal will point to his death and all that that death will accomplish.

Then in verses 24 to 30, we find the disciples arguing among themselves about which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest in this kingdom that Christ is inaugurating.

Jesus is now hours away from the cross. In a short while, we'll witness him being arrested in Gethsemane, then crucified at Golgotha, and finally buried in the grave belonging to Joseph of Arimathea.

The climactic moment of Jesus' work of redemption is now in sight. But this is also, as you see in verse 53, the hour of the power of darkness.

Yes, this is the climactic moment in the great drama of redemption, but it's the power, the hour of the power of darkness. That it's during this hour that satanic assaults are going to come full tilt, not only against Jesus, but also against his disciples, his followers.

[14 : 33] And it's at this point that we hear Jesus' solemn word of admonition, his word of warning. Verse 31, we read, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

Jesus begins with the words, Simon, Simon, behold. Jesus means business, as he uses the name of this disciple twice. He only does so on two other occasions in the Gospel of Luke.

In Luke chapter 10, he cautions Martha over her misplaced priorities. As he says, Martha, Martha. Then in Luke 13, he cautions unrepentant Jerusalem with the words, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

There is an urgency as Jesus calls out, Simon, Simon, behold. And it's interesting to note that that is the name that he uses. He's addressing Simon the fisherman.

The man whom he had called to himself and given the name Peter, meaning the rock to. But the same rock like follower will show himself to be a frail and brittle man with frail and brittle feet of clay.

[15 : 42] He will show himself to be a man lacking in stability, a man lacking in dependability and durability. And Jesus says to him, Simon, Simon, behold.

Simon, Simon, take note. Simon, Simon, pay attention. And Jesus carries on with these solemn words, Behold, Satan has demanded to have you.

And Jesus speaks now about this figure called Satan. The word Satan means adversary or accuser. We meet him in Zechariah chapter 3 that we read a little while ago.

And he's there and he's standing before the Lord and he's accusing Joshua, the high priest. And here Jesus speaks about the same figure, Satan, demanding to have you.

The pronoun you is plural, referring not only to Peter, but to all the disciples, all those in the upper room. And Satan is demanding to have Peter and his other disciples.

[16 : 42] It's a strong term. It's the language of a lawsuit. It's as if Satan has come into the throne room of God, come into the courtroom of God, and he's saying, I want Peter, and I want James, and I want John, and I want Andrew, and I want all the others, and I have a right to them.

I have a claim on them because they are sinners. They belong to me. They are mine. In Job chapter 1 and 2, we find Satan coming into the throne room and courtroom of God, demanding the opportunity to afflict and attack Job.

In Revelation 12, we again find Satan accusing the brothers, accusing the Lord's people before the Lord himself. And Jesus says here that Satan has demanded to have these disciples so that he might sift them like wheat.

It's a very vivid image. In Jesus' day, a woman would take a sieve and she would sift it with both hands. She would shake it vigorously to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The wheat would fall through the sieve. The chaff would remain on the surface and be thrown away. The sifting was a process of separation. And Jesus is saying that Satan wants to do that with his followers.

[18 : 00] He wants to take them and shake them. He wants to tear into them and tear them apart. He wants to pick them off one by one and pick them to pieces.

He wants to toss them about in such a way that he will separate them from Jesus and the love and the life that is found in Jesus. And so Jesus lovingly warns his disciples at the outset of the hour of darkness that it's Satan's intention to take them and sift them if he can.

Now as we consider this fearsome adversary, friends, there's some important truths for us to consider. First, Satan's activity in the world is real and it's powerful.

The world laughs at the devil. And sadly I don't think a great deal of Christians give much thought concerning the devil. But the devil is real and the devil is powerful.

In John 12 and 14 and 16 he's described as the ruler of this world. In 2 Corinthians 4 he's described as the god of this world. In Ephesians 2 he's described as the prince of the power of the air.

[19 : 14] In 2 Peter chapter 1 he's described as a prowling, roaring lion seeking someone to devour. And this prowling, roaring lion is always active.

He's active in every selfish move, every conflict, active in every temptation and every sinful impulse. And he is active today. And he is active in this congregation.

And he is active in every congregation. And he is active in every congregation. Prowling around just looking for an opportunity to devour.

Looking for an opportunity to work. Looking for an opportunity to do something damaging to the Lord's cause and the Lord's people. Second, Satan's activity in the world is subject to God.

In this passage he demands to have Peter and the disciples. But that is really all that he can do. We've already noted that in Job 1 and 2 he demanded to have Job.

[20 : 13] But that is all he could do. The unrelenting testimony of scripture is that Satan is subject to God. The God who is sovereign. The God who reigns. The God who sits on heaven's throne.

John Piper has a sermon where he speaks about 10 aspects of God's sovereignty over Satan. And this is what he says. God is sovereign over Satan's delegated world rule.

Sovereign over Satan's angels. Sovereign over Satan's hand in persecution. Sovereign over Satan's life taking power. Sovereign over Satan's hand in natural disasters.

Sovereign over Satan's sickness causing power. Sovereign over Satan's use of animals and plants. Sovereign over Satan's temptations to sin. Sovereign over Satan's mind blinding power.

And sovereign over Satan's spiritual bondage. The Lord reigns. The Lord is sovereign. The Lord as we saw this morning. As we sung earlier this morning. Is the one who is Lord.

[21 : 12] Who is King. Who is great. Who is good. Not Satan. Third. Satan's activity in the world is designed by him to destroy our faith.

Oh he wanted to take the disciples and sift them and separate them away from Jesus. He wanted them to apostatize and completely turn away from the faith. Completely turn away from Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon writes. The point of Satan's chief attack on a believer is his faith. And sometimes he'll attempt to destroy our faith by placing us in his sieve of pain and affliction.

But you know friends I sometimes wonder if he also attempts to destroy our faith by placing us in his sieve of pleasure and comfort. And maybe the Lord is using this particular health crisis to shake sleeping Christians.

Shake those who might be presently in that sieve. Oh the devil is a clever creature. He is a cunning creature who has been studying mankind for thousands of years.

[22 : 22] And he's been studying you throughout your whole life from the very moment you came out of the womb. He was watching you. Looking for an opportunity. How he could devour you.

He knows where we're strongest. Knows where we're weakest. Knows where we think we're strong but we're actually incredibly weak. And he knows how to get at each person.

In his commentary Phil Riken writes. Do you know how much danger you're in? I think of the girl who ran away from God as soon as she went to college. I think of the family that decided they didn't need to be in church because that is not where God is at work anymore.

I think of the man who felt so powerless against Satan that he went back to a lifestyle of sexual sin. The most dangerous thing in the world is to fail to realize the danger that we're in.

Do we realize the danger we're in? Is that a theme in your prayers at the prayer meeting? That's a congregation. You know that you're in danger. And fourth.

[23 : 26] Satan's activity in the world is designed by God to test our faith. Yes the devil wants to destroy our faith. But in God's providence that evil is used to prove the faith of his people.

It is used to strengthen the faith of his people. It can be used for the benefit of his people. And we'll return to that in a few moments. And so as we reflect on these truths friends it's important to remember that we are in a spiritual war zone.

And that we hear Jesus' solemn warning that there is this great enemy of our souls. This fearsome adversary who wants to destroy us. Are we taking that on board friends? This brings us second though to a faithful advocate.

Verses 32 down to 34. Where Luke draws our attention to the faithful friend of every disciple. We just consider Jesus' solemn word of admonition.

He's singled out Peter but he's really addressed all the disciples. And he's warned them that Satan is wanting to sift them like wheat. But now we come to Jesus' strong word of assurance in verse 32.

[24 : 38] Where he says, But I have prayed for you. That your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Jesus begins with the words, But I have prayed for you.

I love the but gods of scripture. It changes and it transforms a whole trajectory. You remember in Genesis 8 we have Noah and he's in the ark. And the world is flooded.

And you wonder what is going to happen. And then we read, But God remembered Noah. Or we think of Genesis 12. And Abram's in Egypt with Sarah. And Pharaoh's trying to take Abram's wife Sarah to be his own wife.

And we read, But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Or we think of 2 Samuel 11 and 12. And we have David and he's so backslidden. And he's taken the wife of Uriah, got her pregnant, and put Uriah to death on the front line of battle.

And then we read, But the thing that David did displeased the Lord. Or we think of Ephesians 2, that well-known passage. We read that we were dead in our trespasses, dead in our sins, objects of wrath following the prince of this world.

[25 : 42] And then we read, But God, being rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ. And here Jesus says, But I have prayed for you. Satan demanded the disciples, but Jesus has prayed for them.

Satan demanded the disciples, but Jesus has interceded for them. Satan demanded the disciples, but Jesus has pleaded on behalf of them.

And Jesus says, I have prayed for you, singular. Verse 31, Satan has demanded you, plural. Verse 32, Jesus says, But I have prayed for you, singular.

It's such a wonderful reminder that Jesus prays for each and every one of his people, individually. He prays for each person as if they were the only person in the world. That's true of you today, friend. He is praying for you, as if you are the only person in the world.

And Jesus has prayed that Peter's faith will not fail. He doesn't pray that Peter will somehow be spared from Satan's sifting. No, he doesn't pray that.

[26 : 53] Neither does he pray that Peter will not fail while experiencing Satan's sifting. Instead, he prays that Peter's faith will not fail while experiencing Satan's sifting.

Because you remember Spurgeon's words. The chief point of Satan's attack is the faith of the believer. And that is why Jesus prays that although Peter may faint and although Peter may fail, his faith will not faint.

And his faith will not fail. He may have very little left. He may only have that thin spider's thread of faith remaining. But if it is lodged in Jesus, if it is lodged in the great object of his faith, then that is enough.

That is sufficient. And you might be saying today, but my faith is frail. My faith is fragile, friend. If it is lodged in Jesus, that is enough. And Jesus carries on and says, and when you have turned again.

Well, Jesus says that Peter will turn again. He will repent. He will once again be found going in the right direction. It is not a case of if. It is a case of when.

[28 : 03] And it is interesting to consider the fact that Peter won't actually turn in the right direction until he sees Jesus turn toward him. Just jump down to verses 61 to 62.

I do hope you still have your Bibles open. We see that Peter is in the high priest's courtyard, denying with curses that he even knows Jesus. And at that moment, the rooster crows and Jesus turns and Jesus looks at him and Peter remembers the Lord's words and he goes outside weeping bitterly.

Peter turns in the right direction, turns away from denying his Lord, but only when the Lord first turned to him. But Jesus isn't finished.

As he says, strengthen your brothers. Peter will be restored. He will turn again and be used once again in gospel service, strengthening his brothers. And John 21, we'll find Jesus recommissioning Peter, feed my sheep, feed my lambs.

And the book of Acts that I know you're going through, I think on your Wednesday nights or Sundays, I can't remember, but I know you are going through the book of Acts and you find Peter and he's taking the lead as it comes to leading the church as the church brings the gospel to Jerusalem and to Judea and to Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[29 : 22] And there is Peter and he's right at the forefront. We find Peter writing these letters to Christians who feel as if they're living in exile and feel that they cannot go on. And he's writing to encourage them.

And you know, friends, what is so important to consider is that Peter could never have strengthened his bruised and broken brothers until he himself had been bruised and broken.

Peter was a loud mouth man, a hot headed man, a man who would have hurt the bruised and broken lambs. But he is placed in Satan's sieve so that he will be bruised and he will be broken in such a way that he will be gentle with the Lord's people.

J.C. Ryle puts it like this, the Lord can use the weakness and infirmities of some members of his church to work together for the benefit of the whole body of his people.

Perhaps today you've known what it is to be placed in Satan's sieve. And looking back, you can see that the Lord placed you there so that you would strengthen your brothers and sisters, the Lord's people.

[30 : 37] Or perhaps today, friend, you're presently in Satan's sieve and it's hurting you, it's breaking you, it's bruising you.

And the only encouragement I can give is that that may be the Lord's way of preparing you for some future ministry, some future service. I love Scott Soules, an American preacher, a man who's very open about his struggles with depression.

And he writes, one season of depression flattened me physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I could not sleep despite taking sleeping pills. I lost 30 pounds.

I could barely eat or get out of bed. In retrospect, I can see the hand of God in that horrid season. Two years into my role as senior pastor, I shared the story of my anxiety and depression with the congregation.

And at the end of the service, a man in our congregation approached me and said, Scott, I think you're a gifted communicator. But today, when you shared with the whole church about your emotional struggle, I want you to know that today you became my pastor.

[31 : 50] sometimes we just need to show the Lord's people that we are those who have been bruised. We are those who have been broken.

We are those who are clay pots who need the Lord's all-sufficient grace. That I don't have my life altogether.

and I don't think the man on my left has his life altogether. And I don't think the elders have their lives together. We are bruised, we are broken, needing all-sufficient grace.

Don't think there's anyone here who's on some higher plane. But look at Peter's sad response to Jesus' strong word of assurance in verses 33 and 34.

We read, 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 rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

[32 : 57] Oh, Peter, Peter can never keep quiet even in such a solemn moment. He's just heard Jesus' solemn admonition and Jesus' strong assurance and now he says, Lord, I am ready to go to prison and even death with you.

Peter really believes that he has enough strength, enough resources in himself to remain faithful to Jesus even in the face of Satan's attacks. It is the Titanic of all testimonies.

Peter is standing there and he's saying, Lord, I will never sink and the iceberg is on the horizon perhaps even under his feet. You know, it's so easy for Peter to give such a strong, passionate word in the warmth of the upper room surrounded by the disciples whom he doesn't think all that much of.

But it's so much harder and it will be so much harder when he's in the chill of the high priest's courtyard and he's surrounded not by disciples but by Roman soldiers.

And Jesus brings a sobering reply to his remarkable self-confidence. Jesus doesn't argue with Peter. Doesn't cut him down to size.

[34 : 07] Doesn't say in front of the other disciples, well guys, listen to what Peter's saying. Don't you remember the day when he began to sink in Galilee when he took his eyes off me? And Jesus simply looks at Peter and says with sadness and with love, I tell you Peter, I tell you Mr. Rockman, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me.

Friends, Satan wants to destroy our faith. Remember Spurgeon's words? The chief point of the devil's attack on a believer is his faith. And think about what we would lose if our faith was destroyed.

According to Romans 3, we wouldn't be righteous before God. According to Hebrews 11, we wouldn't be able to please God. According to Ephesians 6, we wouldn't be able to extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one.

And most of all, according to Galatians 3, we wouldn't enjoy eternal life if we didn't have faith. And that is why Satan will do everything that he can to see your faith destroyed when he places you in his sieve.

He doesn't want to hear the name of Jesus being praised in your pleasure and in your pain. He doesn't want to see Jesus bringing you before his Father and saying, here I am and those whom you have given me the fruit of the covenant of redemption.

[35 : 29] He doesn't want to watch as you join your voice to the heavenly chorus singing, worthy is the Lamb who is slain. He is doing everything that he can to sift and separate you away from Jesus.

But friends, Jesus is praying for us. And he's praying for us as a church and he's praying for us as individuals. Romans 8, we're told that he is making intercession for his people at the Father's right hand.

Hebrews 7, we're told that he lives to make intercession for his people. He's praying. He's praying about our chronic pain, that in our physical weakness we won't stop trusting in his goodness.

He's praying about our troubled marriages, that we won't stop trusting in his love. He's praying about our financial situations that in our urgent and pressing concerns we won't stop trusting in his provision.

He's praying about our secret discouragements, that dark night of the soul, those moments when we feel that darkness is our only friend, that we won't stop trusting in him as the light of the world in whom there is salvation.

[36 : 41] He's praying about our wandering into sin, that in those days when we're like the prodigal and we go our own way and we find ourselves in that far off country, that we wouldn't lose sight of his compassion, lose sight of his grace, lose sight of his love, and that we will come to our senses and say, I will arise and go to my Father.

You know, friends, it's wonderful to know that Jesus has died for us. That's a wonderful thing about a communion weekend, to be reminded that Christ has died for us.

But what a thought it is to know that he has also risen for us, that he is praying for us. What a tragedy it would be if this weekend we simply commemorated a dead saviour.

We are not here to commemorate a dead saviour. We are here to celebrate a crucified and risen and praying saviour. The thought of Christ's faithful, prayerful, preservation, friends, is a wonderful truth.

It is a precious truth. John Piper writes, if my faith in Jesus and my eagerness to know him and his word and my thrill at preaching and my love for the church and my fitness for ministry and for heaven and my marriage commitment to my wife depended decisively on me, I would have ceased to be a Christian long ago.

[38 : 06] If the decisive cause of my faithfulness to Christ must come from me, it will not come because it is not there. we cannot keep ourselves.

And Peter came to know this as he wrote later in life, we are kept, we are guarded by the power of God. Well today I want to ask friend, are you trusting in him to keep you?

Trusting in him to hold on to you? Trusting in him to carry you? Trusting in him to present you before his father holy, blameless, without reproach.

There is a story told about a famous chess player. He went to see a famous painting of Satan playing chess with a young man. Satan is all to pieces.

The queen is in his hand. He is ready to checkmate the young man and claim his soul. And the chess player studied the painting for a long time and then he gasped, young man, there is still one more move.

[39 : 19] Make that move. Maybe today you feel very vulnerable. You feel that you are in Satan's sieve. You wonder how you would cope if you were placed in Satan's sieve.

And friend, there is that one move. And that move is that we repent. That move is that we receive and rest on Jesus and his faithful advocacy, his faithful keeping, his faithful preservation.

Are you trusting in him, friend, to keep you? And rejoicing at the prospect of going to his table this coming Lord's Day. This table that doesn't celebrate our faithfulness but his faithfulness.

What a tragedy it would be if we just felt that we could come to that table saying, well I have been faithful in the last six months since I last took communion. That's not what the table is for.

It is not for us to say how faithful I have been but to say I am resting on his faithfulness. This table where we say together until now the Lord has helped us and because he has helped us in the past we are trusting in him to help us and to keep us in the present and on into the future.

[40 : 30] This table where we sing come and I will tell you what the Lord has done for my soul. Not what I have done for my soul. Not what Myrtle Campbell has done for my soul.

Not what the Kirk Session of Barvis Free Church have done for my soul. Not what my husband or wife or parents or children have done for my soul. But come and I will tell you what the Lord has done for my soul.

And if you are not in that place today friend might I ask what on earth is keeping you back? What on earth is keeping you back from coming to this Jesus who promises and pledges to keep his people?

And if you have come to this Jesus then I want to ask you with all seriousness with all earnestness what on earth is keeping you back from declaring the fact that you are resting on him to keep you?

What's keeping you back? He's not keeping you back. The session aren't keeping you back. The gospel is not keeping you back.

[41 : 51] The saviour in the gospel says come. The saviour in the gospel says come and eat. The saviour in the gospel commands us to come.

So I ask friend what's keeping you back? What is keeping you back from coming to the one who promises to keep his people?

And if you have come to him what then is keeping you back from going to the table of the one who keeps his people?

Amen. Let's close by singing to the Lord's praise the words of Psalm 121 Psalm 121 I to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come mine aid my safety cometh from the Lord who heaven and earth hath made thy foot he'll not let slide nor will he slumber that thee keeps behold he that keeps Israel he slumbers not nor sleeps we'll sing the whole of this psalm to the Lord's praise I to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come mine aid my safety cometh from the Lord to heaven and earth hath made thy foot till nor glad sight nor will he slumber that thee keeps behold he that keeps

Israel he slumbers not nor sleeps the Lord he keeps the Lord thy shade on thy right hand of stay the moon by night thee shall not smile nor yet the sun by day the Lord shall keep thy soul he shall preserve thee from all will and for thy going out and end

[45 : 11] God he forever will oh Lord our God we give you praise and we give you thanks that there is a savior who keeps his people that he is able to keep them from stumbling able to present them blameless before the presence of his glory with great rejoicing that he is the one worthy of glory majesty dominion and authority for all time and our prayer today is that each and every one of us here today would know that keeping that we would know the savior in whose arms and whose hands his people are placed and we thank you that those nail pierced hands are hands that will never let his people go but he will carry his people all the way to journey's end go with us we pray unto this day strengthen our hearts and our souls and forgive all our sin as we pray in

Jesus name amen