

Luke 22: 31-34; Job 1:6-12; Peter's Pride I. Satan's Tactics II. Jesus' Comfort

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are engaged in a spiritual battle. We are part of this war- this battle between good and evil- between the forces of darkness and the kingdom of light. Each army has their commander with their own goals- each army their own weapons. The problem comes when we forget that we are engaged in a battle- with we ignore the fact that we are part of the church militant. This morning we are going to be reminded of the seriousness of our current position- on the front lines of a battle- toe to toe with the forces of darkness. This morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ exposes our pride by revealing Satan's tactics. When playing a basketball game, it always helps to know the other team's tactics. Will they be running a full court press? Do they have a good 3point shooter? Do they run zone or man to man coverage? Knowing their tactics helps you prepare to meet them on the court. Well, today Jesus gives us insight into Satan's tactics.

I. Satan's Tactics

In our first point, we find out what Satan is trying to do with Peter- what is Satan's strategy when it comes to this disciple? Remember that Satan is a deceiver- he is liar and murderer- and he wants to lead God's people into sin as we saw last week with Adam and Eve in the garden. Satan is a real being- a creature who has great power- who is very crafty. He is a fallen, rebellious angel who is known as the prince of this fallen world- or the leader of the armies of darkness. Our text opens in v. 31 where Satan has made a demand- a serious desire. Satan has asked for Peter- wanting Peter to be his own prey. This bring to mind what we read in Job 1- where Satan had asked God for Job- Satan wanted to have Job in his hands- to do to Job as he pleased. We note that Satan has to ask God for permission- Satan is still firmly in the hands of God- and Satan can do nothing if not given the permission from God. In our text, Satan has a desire for Peter- the same word is used to describe a court summons- Peter is going to be summoned- put on trial- tested- his appearance being demanded. And what does Satan want to do with Peter? As v. 31 continues- Satan wants to sift Peter like wheat. Now children, do you remember the last time you were playing at the beach and you had a sift- a strainer- that separated the fine sand from the large rocks. Well, Peter is going to be put in a strainer like that-

and the desire of Satan is to aggravate- separate- and break Peter apart. To trouble Peter so much that Peter would be overthrown- and even separated from God. This is the only time this word is used in the Greek NT- the word is "siniatzo." The image is that of throwing a net in the sea- to pull out the fish but leave the water behind. Satan wants to catch Peter- to steal Peter like a thief would steal wheat from a threshing floor. Peter- whose name means rock- is going to be shaken and troubled- broken apart- and Satan wants to turn Peter to rubble- to shipwreck his faith- to cause Peter to become so scared and later ashamed of his actions- that he would fall into despair. There is a similarity between Satan's request- and what actually happened to Judas Iscariot! Satan wanted to do to Peter what would soon happen to Judas- a grave sin followed by despair and death. Notice that Peter is referred to as Simon in v. 31- Simon- Simon. Jesus is getting this disciple's attention! Note also Satan's tactic- to separate the disciples from Jesus by way of temptation. To use doubt, fear and even despair to trouble these anxious souls. Peter was one of the most self-confident of the disciples- but Satan is going to use that pride and turn it into fear. Sometimes Satan uses the loss of possessions and health as we see in the life of Job. He also uses the death of a loved one, persecution and hostility from others to put us in the flame. His point is to get us to doubt God's presence and care- to blame or curse God- and as we see with Peter- to get us to deny that we know and serve God! The devil knows where we are weak- he can see our pride, our fear, our love of ease, our love of earthly things. And he uses this to undermine our faith, trust and confidence in our God. Notice that Peter said in Mt. 26:35- if everyone would deny you, not I! I would die with you! Or as our text says in v. 33- I am ready to go with you to both prison and death! Peter had a lot of confidence in himself and his own ability! He thought higher of himself than he should! The fact is, we all need to be honest about our own weaknesses. If we think we stand firm, beware lest we fall as I Cor. 10 puts it. Be careful not to overestimate your own strength! I have spent a lot of time thinking about this lately! What if it continues to become less popular to be a Christian? What if someone tries to undermine the Bible in your eyes- or the world continues to paint you as a xenophobe? They already call us prejudice and radical? Are you really so confident- that you would stand firm? That you would not shy away or be silent when called upon? Are you so sure you would not deny Christ if you were placed in

a fire like Shadrack and Meshack? Canada just criminalized conversion therapy- meaning it is illegal to repress and even speak against any sexual attraction or behavior! Our own Supreme Court has just ruled that a person cannot be fired if they decide to change their own displayed gender. The fact is, the Devil is powerful! He is a roaring lion- and to many he appears as an angel of light! He is not to be trifled with or taken lightly! So our foe is strong- and we like Peter are weak- easily overcome! Even in the early church, many bowed under pressure from the Roman government- when only a few days earlier they had boasted that they would not deny Jesus when persecution and the coliseum came. Peter- one of the first, closest and spokesman of the disciples- will deny the Savior 3 times. So we need to be honest with ourselves and our own ability. But that is not all we find in our text.

II. Jesus' Comfort

There is good news to be found- not in Peter and not in ourselves- but in Peter's God and protector! Yes, Peter may think he can walk on the water- but in his fear Peter will sink! The good news is that Jesus will catch him- Jesus will take him by the hand! Peter's hope- and our hope- is found in the work and power of Jesus. Do not fear nor fret- yes Satan desires to have you- but I have prayed for you as Jesus promises in v. 32. In very recent history, Jesus has prayed for his disciples. In John 17- Jesus offers up what is called the High Priestly Prayer. Jesus prays that His disciples would be kept safe in this world. And in v. 39 of our chapter- Jesus will pray for His disciples again on the top of the Mount of Olives. There is good news- because Jesus has prayed for Peter- and He continues to pray for us! Jesus, even to this day, continues to intercede for His people- praying to the Father on our behalf – as Rom. 8:34 puts it- Jesus is interceding for us from the Father's right hand. What is the content of this prayer? That the faith of Peter would not fail as v. 32 ends. Peter's faith will be shaken- Peter will commit a grave sin that will grieve both the Lord and Peter himself. But it will not end in complete failure and death. You see, Satan had hoped to do with Peter what had been accomplished with Judas. Judas Iscariot had not only succumbed to temptation; he had given himself over to the evil one's plan. And after this betrayal, Judas will not turn back to the Lord- rather Judas will take his own life in despair! But not so with Peter- he will sin- but his faith will still remain. In fact, this temptation will end

up being for Peter's good. After denying Christ, Peter will cry the true tears of godly sorrow- repentance that leads to life! Peter will turn- he will repent- in sorrow he will confess his sins- and Jesus will reinstate him. Peter will still be used to strengthen his brothers. The reason that Jesus knows this- and promises this- is because the Holy Spirit has also been sent to live in Peter's heart. By the Holy Spirit's presence and work, Peter will turn again- or be turned- repent from his denial and find forgiveness from his sin. Peter will turn- and be returned. Peter will be turned around by the Holy Spirit- in fact Peter will be one of the first disciples to meet the resurrected Jesus! And seeing Jesus, he will go and tell the brothers! Peter will be the one to preach on Pentecost Sunday- encouraging the church and strengthening the brotherhood as the entered this new stage of redemptive history! Peter will be made a better teacher- a humbler leader- because of this event. Now the reason that the presence of the Holy Spirit is such good news is because of what we find in I John 4:4- He who is in us is greater than He who is in the world! In other words, the Holy Spirit who resides in God's people is stronger than Satan- thus the Devil cannot win and God's chosen people cannot be fully and finally lost! That is the hope that Jesus extends to Peter! Yes, you will sin but there is more work for you to do! Past sins do not disqualify God's people from future service. Remember, that Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit- and the Spirit has equipped us with the armor of God. We have the shield of faith by which to extinguish the fiery darts of the devil as Eph. 6:16 put is. Faith in Jesus who intercedes and the Spirit who equips and produces repentance. That is the good news we find in this text.

To conclude, as God's people we are in a battle. A fight against principalities and power- rulers and dominions- false teaching and fallen angels. But we are not alone- and we need not rely on our own strength. As II Cor. 2:11 says, do not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs! That is why Jesus reveals the pride of Peter- so that learn the lesson of humility and faith in Christ alone for protection in this fight! True faith will not fail- because Jesus is interceding and the Spirit is dwelling within us! So take up the battle- and follow the Savior who has crushed the serpent's head!