

In The Garden
Luke 22:24-62
Pastor John Miller

All the way back in Luke 9:51, it says that Jesus “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” From that point on to the end of Luke, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. And He has now been in Jerusalem for seven days when we get to our text. Without skipping a beat, we pick up the narrative in Luke 22:24, when Jesus is actually still in the upper room.

Now we’ll move from the upper room to the garden. The first section of our text is verses 24-30, in which the disciples dispute over who is the greatest in the kingdom of God. “Now there was also a dispute among them...” referring to the disciples. Here they were in the upper room, and Jesus had just shared the Passover and now He institutes the Lord’s Supper.

arguing which of them would be the greatest. They had done this before, and they were doing it again. Perhaps they were motivated by the fact that He told them, “One of you will betray Me” (John 13:21), or maybe they were motivated by the way they were seated around the dinner table; they were upset because they didn’t get the place of honor. Or maybe it was because Jesus made reference to the kingdom of God; that He would “not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:18). So they heard the word “kingdom” and immediately thought they would be right up there at the top and be one of the leaders in the kingdom of God. Needless to say, they were arguing, bickering and fighting.

That was not very different from Christians today. We argue, “I’m going to be the greatest!” We have problems in the world, in our marriages, in our families and in the church. We all want to be the greatest. But we don’t argue over who gets to be a servant! We argue over who gets to be the leader. God, have mercy on us and help us to follow Christ’s example of a humble servant!

So there was strife among them “as to which of them should be considered the greatest.” So Jesus had to teach and instruct them. “And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles...’” referring to the heathen world around them in the Gentile nations “...exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called “benefactors.” But not so among you...” In other words, “That’s not how we do it in My kingdom” They were to be servants to others.

Verse 26, “On the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.” The younger was always servant to the older. “For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”

Who are we to follow as our example? Jesus Christ. So if Jesus was a servant, we should be servants. It doesn’t mention it in Luke, but in John 13:3 in the upper room, Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet. It was a powerful example He had given them that we should serve one

another.

It doesn't mean we should literally wash the feet of those in the church. If you want to have a washing ceremony, that's fine. But who shows up at a foot-washing ceremony with dirty feet? No one. So why do we need a foot-washing ceremony? We don't. But what we do need to have is a heart attitude of service.

Look up all the references in the Bible to "one another." You as believers are to serve one another (Galatians 5:13), pray for one another (James 5:16), forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32). Look up the "one anothers" and put them into practice.

So the overarching theme here is that we are to be like Jesus; be a servant.

In verses 28-30, Jesus tells his disciples that because they are servants and have served Him through this time of testing, that they will be rewarded. Those who serve the Lord in this life will be rewarded in the world to come. There is reward for you if you humbly, faithfully serve the Lord. Serve the Lord, and the Lord will reward you.

Jesus, speaking to His apostles in verse 28, minus Judas, said, "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me." I am amazed at this narrative of the Passion. I'm amazed at how many times Jesus makes reference to His "kingdom," which I believe is the future kingdom known as the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth. It will be the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, in which David's greater son, the Messiah, would sit on David's throne and reign. In Revelation 20:4, it will be for 1,000 years, and then there will be "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Verse 30, "...that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom..." referring to His kingdom again "...and sit on thrones..." referring to the apostles "...judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The Bible also says that in the foundation of the new Jerusalem will be engraved the names of the twelve apostles, minus Judas. You won't get to heaven and find Judas mentioned in the new heaven and new earth. It probably will be Matthias, who was elected in Acts 1:26.

This also indicates that there is a future for the nation of Israel. Romans 11:26 says, "So all Israel will be saved." God will restore Israel back in the holy land, He will have a kingdom and they will be co-reigning with Him. We, the church, will be reigning with Him as well.

In Acts 1:6, when Jesus was ready to ascend back into heaven after His Crucifixion and Resurrection, He was asked, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" They were still looking for that future, actual kingdom.

Are we living in the kingdom right now? Yes; as God's people, we are living in the kingdom of God. But will there be a future, literal kingdom on earth? Yes; when Jesus the King returns at the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

But some Christians have abandoned the idea of a future, literal kingdom and the restoration of the nation of Israel. Sadly many so-called Christians are getting swept up today in this replacement theology and the antisemitism that goes along with it. Seeing the increase in antisemitism in America is an indication that we are living in the last of the last days. This theology has been around a long time, and it's going to reach its apex in the tribulation period.

The second section of our text, in verses 31-38, is Satan asking for Peter. They are still in the upper room and haven't gone out to the garden of Gethsemane yet on the Mount of Olives. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.'"

Can you imagine that Jesus turned to Peter and said this to him?! Peter has already heard that one of them is going to betray Jesus. He already heard that Jesus is going away. Everyone is sad. That's why Jesus said in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me....I go to prepare a place for you....I will come again and receive you to Myself." So now Jesus turns to Peter and says that Satan had asked Him if he could have Peter!

What would you do if Jesus looked at you and said that Satan had called Him last night and asked for you?! You would say, "What did You tell him, Lord? You didn't say he could have me; did you?!"

An interesting point is that Satan has to ask for permission to attack a child of God. He has to get permission from God to come after you. You think, Why doesn't He just keep him away?! God uses it for our good. He uses it to teach us lessons we need to learn; by resisting the devil, by drawing near to God, God will draw near to us (James 4:8). The Bible says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

So Jesus said to Peter, "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat." That means to destroy you. They would winnow the wheat and take the chaff out and burn it. Satan wanted to destroy Peter. Satan wants to destroy you. When you become a Christian, you find out that there really is a devil.

I heard a story of a man who was out street-preaching one time. He mentioned the devil, and some heckler in the crowd said, "I don't believe in the devil. There's no devil! I never met the devil!"

Then the preacher said, "That's because you're going the same direction he is. If you turned around and repented and went the other direction, you'd run into the devil."

When you become a Christian, you find out there really is a devil. He wants to "sift you as wheat," but notice verse 32. "But I have prayed for you." Thank God that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father praying for us. Read John 17:20 where Jesus prayed and said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." Then Jesus

said, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail."

When Peter denied the Lord, his faith did not fail; his courage failed. He still loved the Lord and believed in the Lord, but in a moment of weakness, he was afraid and denied the Lord. So his faith didn't fail—he had just prayed for that—but his courage failed in the area of his own strength.

"And when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Peter was already saved. This refers to when Peter was turned back. Peter fell and would need to turn back. As Christians, when we fall, we just need to confess our sins and turn back to God. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Jesus told Peter, "When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." That's exactly what Peter did in 1 and 2 Peter. He encouraged and strengthened his brethren.

Peter's response is in verse 33. "But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.' Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'" Peter was basically saying, "I know You're God, You're the Messiah, but I have to inform You that You don't know what You're talking about. You say that I'm going to deny You?! No! I'm ready to die for You! I'm even ready to go to prison for You."

I want to give you the steps to Peter's fall. Number one is self-confidence. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Be careful, Christians, when you become overconfident in your own strength and in your own ability, when you argue with the Lord and don't submit to His authority in your life. It's a dangerous thing to become self-confident. We should all be constantly praying, "Lord, keep me humbly dependent on You."

And when God does that, many times He does that by allowing a thorn in our flesh. He allows the messenger of Satan to buffet us. "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul then learned about the all-sufficient grace of God. So thank God for the bitter things; they become a friend to grace. They drive you to the secret place to rely upon God.

Peter was wrong; he was self-confident, boasting and proud. He said he was even ready to die for Jesus. "Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'" It was past midnight, they were still in the upper room and it was now early Friday.

Be careful, Christians; we often fall in the area of our greatest strength. We are most vulnerable in the area of our greatest strength, because we aren't depending on the Lord.

Verse 35, "And He said to them, 'When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals,

did you lack anything?' So they said, 'Nothing.' Then He said to them, 'But now...' they were going to have a new relationship with Him and with the world "...he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.'" He's not telling them to literally go out and buy a sword; He's telling them that they would have to work harder to deal with the opposition and persecution in the world. Just as Jesus was persecuted, others will persecute His disciples.

Verse 37, "For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'" Jesus is quoting Isaiah 53:12 Jesus continues, "For the things concerning Me have an end," meaning that they will be fulfilled. "So they said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords.' And He said to them, 'It is enough.'"

Jesus said that with kind of a sigh of disappointment, because they basically didn't get it. When Jesus said, "It is enough," He was saying, "Enough is enough; you guys haven't a clue what I'm talking about. Enough of this discussion about swords. Let's move on."

By the way, God's kingdom is not advanced by the sword. Rather we pick up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word, to advance the kingdom of God. "The word of God is...sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

So Jesus is basically saying that there was going to be a new dispensation. When Jesus would go back to heaven, the disciples would be persecuted as Jesus was. It would be hard and rough. Take a purse if you have to, carry a sword, but that's not how we advance God's kingdom. It is not through physical violence.

The third section, in verses 39-46, is Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane. All four Gospels record this agony in the garden. This to me is the most moving and agonizing. Luke doesn't mention Gethsemane; he mentions this took place on the Mount of Olives, but that is where the garden of Gethsemane was. The word "Gethsemane" actually means "oil press." The Mount of Olives was to the east of Jerusalem. They were going to leave the upper room, go down the Kidron Valley, then to the garden of Gethsemane, which is on the west slope of the Mount of Olives. There Jesus would agonize in prayer.

"Coming out..." that is, Jesus left the upper room "...He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'" The same thing holds true of us today. Pray that you don't become a victim of temptation in a time of trial or testing.

Verse 41, "And He..." when Jesus was in the garden "...was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father...' or 'Abba, Father' "...if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me."

This is the cup of the wrath of God. This isn't just His physical death on the Cross; this is God's holy wrath, soon to be poured out on God's own Son. I know that is hard to fathom or comprehend.

God the Father sent the Son, and He went voluntarily and submissively to the Cross. But the real agony He had is that He would bear the sin of the world, and because of that sin, the wrath of God would be poured out on Him. Jesus would drink that cup so that we could be forgiven. That's the grace of God.

"Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Only Luke's Gospel mentions this angel. At the beginning of His public ministry when He was tempted in the wilderness, an angel came to strengthen Him (Matthew 4:11). And at the end of His public ministry on earth, an angel came to strengthen Him.

Verse 44, "And being in agony..." a very strong word; He was in great anguish of soul "...He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow." The disciples were so sad that they went to sleep. Jesus was so grieved that He actually stayed awake to pray. "Then He said to them, 'Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.'"

There is such a mystery to this event in the garden of Gethsemane. Being the Son of God, Jesus knew He would go to the Cross. You say, "Then why was He so upset?" Jesus was also the Son of Man. He was truly man and truly God. In His humanity, Jesus was recoiling. In His humanity, He was perfectly holy and sinless. We can't relate to that; we are sinful human beings. We struggle against sin and desire to be holy; He was holy and struggled to bear sin. There's a great difference there. So in this holy, sinless body when Jesus was tired, it was His humanity. When Jesus was thirsty, it was His humanity. When Jesus wept, it was His humanity. When Jesus slept, it was His humanity.

That's why this touches me so much; to think that God would come all the way down from heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ and take on a humble body—a sinless body but a humble, human body. Jesus was thirsty, weary, tired, lonely, sad and Jesus wept. That's His humanity.

The other Gospel says that Jesus was grieving. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38). Some believe that Jesus almost died in the garden of Gethsemane. Hebrews 5:7 tells us that when Jesus was praying in the garden, "...who, in the days of His flesh..." or "His humanity" "...when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, although He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

The other Gospels give a more full account of this event. Jesus went into the garden, He left most of the disciples there but took Peter, James and John, known as the inner circle, with Him deeper into the garden. Then He said to them, "Watch..." or "stay awake" "...and pray" (Mark 14:38), and then He went even deeper into the garden. He knelt down (Mark 15:35), which was not the normal posture of prayer for the Jews. Normally they would stand and raise their hands in prayer. But Jesus knelt down in broken humility. Matthew 26:39 says that Jesus "fell on His

face" prostrate in the dirt, crying, praying and sweating as it were "great drops of blood."

What a picture of the Son of God in tears and agony, because He didn't want to bear the sins of the world! He basically asked God the Father, "If there is any way possible that we can save humanity, redeem fallen man back to Ourselves, without Me going to the Cross and bearing their sin, let it be." But there was no other way.

If you could be good enough to get to heaven, do you think Jesus would have died on the Cross? If you could just be religious, get baptized, perform some rite or ritual to get to heaven, do you think Jesus would have died on the Cross? If you could get to heaven by your good works or good deeds, God the Father would never have allowed His Son to die on the Cross and bear the sins of the world.

There was only one way to heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). If you want to get to heaven, you can't go around the Cross. It is only through Jesus Christ, who died for our sins.

Then Jesus prayed fervent prayer in His humanity. It was a real prayer of faith. Never, ever be afraid when praying to God the Father, your Abba, to end your prayer, "Not my will but Yours be done."

You say, "But I really want it!" Don't you want God's will more?

"Yes, but I think I know better than God! This is really, really something I want! Doesn't the Bible say, 'Ask and you shall receive'?" Yes; but the purpose of prayer is not to get my will done but to get God's will done. And the purpose of prayer is to bring me into alignment with God's will.

By the way, Jesus prayed the same prayer three times. Some say that shows a lack of faith. Not so. Three times Jesus prayed, "Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Genuine, true faith submits its prayers to the will of God.

It only takes walking with the Lord long enough to be able to look back and thank God for prayers He has said, "No" to. I thank God for the prayers He said, "No" to. I've prayed for some stupid things. I'm so glad God is smarter than me, and He said, "No" to those things. I whined, I threw a temper tantrum, but God said, "No." And many times if you keep persisting, God will give you a spanking, spiritual discipline in your life to humble you.

So never be afraid to say, "Lord, this is what I'd like to see, this is what I'm praying and asking for, but not my will but Yours be done." The purpose of prayer is to get God's will done on earth.

Three times Jesus prayed. Paul also prayed three times to get the throne in his flesh removed, but God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

So this is the episode where Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. And when He went back to His disciples, they were sleeping.

Number two of the steps to Peter's denial is prayerlessness. Peter should have been depending on God and showing that by praying to God. When we begin to lack in prayer, that's when we need to be careful not to fall.

The fourth section of our text, verses 47-53, is the betrayer's kiss. "And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'" The word "kiss" here means to kiss repeatedly and passionately.

Verse 49, "When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear." John 18:10 tells us it was Peter who cut off Malchus' ear. Good move, Peter. Jesus is going to have to fix things. "But Jesus answered and said, 'Permit even this.' And He touched his ear and healed him." Only Dr. Luke tells us Jesus healed Malchus. It was God's grace to him. This is a miracle where there was no request, it was performed on an enemy and it was to correct Peter's mistake. I'm sure Malchus was so amazed that perhaps he began to believe in Jesus.

Verse 52, "Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.'" God had preordained and designed this from the beginning of the world, but man is responsible for his actions.

The fifth and last section of our text, in verses 54-62, is Peter's denial. "Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house."

In truth Jesus said, "No one takes [My life] from Me, But I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). So He was voluntarily giving Himself up. After Gethsemane when the victory was accomplished, Jesus was really empowered; an angel strengthened Him to voluntarily give Himself up to die on the Cross.

"But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them."

Number three in Peter's denial is that he followed "at a distance." He didn't follow close to Jesus. He was trying to be incognito. We should follow close to the Lord and not at a great distance.

Maybe you are in danger now of falling, because you are self-confident, you are not praying and you're following Jesus from a great distance.

Number four in Peter's steps to denial is he "sat among them." Peter sat down with the enemy. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes we fall prey to temptation, because we're in the wrong place. Sometimes God has made a way for you to escape the temptation by giving you two feet; just run and get outta there! Peter shouldn't be sitting in the enemy's camp.

Verse 56, "And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him..." Peter is sweating bullets "...and said, 'This man was also with Him.' But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.'" This is Peter's first denial. This was a little, maid girl, and big, strong Peter freaks out and sins in the area of lack of courage.

"And after a little while another saw him and said, 'You also are of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!'" This is Peter's second denial. "Then after about an hour had passed..." God was giving Peter opportunity to get outta there. "Peter, you're going to fall! Peter, you're in danger!" "...another confidently affirmed, saying, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.'" Actually Matthew 26:73 said that his speech betrayed him. Galileans had a certain dialect.

Verse 60, "But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!'" This is Peter's third denial. "Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter." The Scriptures indicate that Jesus was being led out of the court of Caiaphas, the high priest. He was on His way to see Herod, when He looked at Peter and made eye contact.

How do you think Jesus looked at Peter? With disgust or disappointment? I think Jesus looked at Peter in love. Peter then realized when he heard the rooster crow what he had done. Then he became overwhelmed with his sin. "Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' So Peter went out and wept bitterly."

Judas had betrayed Jesus but was only remorseful. He wasn't sorry for his sin; he was remorseful. He threw the money down on the floor, and then went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

When Peter "wept bitterly," it was true tears of repentance. Because of the love of God, because Jesus looked in love at Peter, Peter was brought back to a place of repentance, bitterly weeping and grieving over his sin.

So Peter fell. How did it start? Peter should have been praying. He shouldn't have been so self-confident. He shouldn't have followed Jesus from so far away. He shouldn't have been at the enemy's camp.

Maybe some of you have fallen from the Lord, because you were self-confident. You lacked prayer. You were following at a great distance. And maybe you hang out with people you shouldn't be hanging out with, and you're denying the Lord.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus rose from the dead, He actually said to His disciples, “Go, tell his disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you” (Mark 16:7). Why did He single out Peter? Because He knew that Peter needed to be restored and forgiven. And I believe Jesus had a personal encounter with Peter after His Resurrection. Peter was sorry for His sin, and He forgave Peter.

And then in John 21:15-17, Jesus restored him back to service at the lake of Galilee. It is an interesting study. Peter had denied Jesus three times in the courtyard around the fire. In John 21, Jesus had a fire at the sea of Galilee with His disciples. Peter was there, and three times Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me?” And Peter said, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” Peter denied Jesus three times, and three times Peter was given an opportunity to say that he loved Jesus.

The first two times Jesus used the word “agape” for love in asking Peter if he loved Him. In his response, Peter used the word “phileo,” which means a fondness for Jesus. And the third time Jesus came down to Peter’s level and asked, “Peter, do you really even phileo Me? Do you even like Me?” Peter was grieved that the Lord asked him three times. Peter’s response is so moving to me. Peter said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Then Jesus said—I think He had a smile on His face when He said it—“Feed My sheep.” So Peter was restored, and after being restored, Peter was restored to service.

God can forgive your sins and your iniquities and remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12). “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

If you repent, God will forgive you. Don’t let the devil tell you that you’ve sinned too many times. Don’t let the devil tell you that God won’t forgive you. God always forgives.

Jesus even restored Peter back into the ministry. He told Peter to “Feed My sheep.” What a blessing God’s grace and mercy is!

George Morrison said—and I love it—“The victorious Christian life is a series of new beginnings.”