

# 'I have prayed for you.'

By William J. Sturm

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Luke 22:24-34  
**Preached on:** Sunday, February 19, 2017

**Sandy Ridge Baptist Church**  
3702 16th St NE  
Hickory, NC 28601

**Website:** [www.srbconline.net](http://www.srbconline.net)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/sandyridge](http://www.sermonaudio.com/sandyridge)

We're in Luke 22. Hunter, are you here this morning? Alright, we're going to need you in this service. Hunter Walsh is deploying this week and Hunter is a faithful member of this church. He's stationed at Camp Lejeune. When he comes back whenever he can and when he's in town, he worship with us and he's been a member here since, well, since Rick was young, and so it's been a long while.

So Luke 22 and I want us to read, please, verse 24 and following. Yes, I know this is not in Mark. I know it's not even in 1 Kings. If the Lord will allow me to have that message travel about 18 inches south to my heart, you'll get it next week, but you're not getting a message that doesn't start in my heart.

Verse 24. It is the night before the Lord dies for our sins. Our sins, the ones that we don't think are all that bad; the ones that we relabel as mistakes, shortcomings, habits; and the bad ones that maybe you're wondering if there's any forgiveness for you. No one has to talk you into knowing that what you've done is sin and you can't imagine anyone forgiving you. These are murderers. These are rapists. These are, in their mind, not even maybe that bad civilly or criminally but in their hearts they're just unforgivable for things they've done to their spouses or things that they've done to their coworkers or things that they've done to God that hurts them, and you're wondering, "Will the Lord forgive me?" The reality is that the Lord died for that too. All of it.

The day after this episode, they just had the Lord's Supper, you can see that in verses 14 through 23, they've just had the discussion about who is going to betray Jesus, and in verse 24, "Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest." It's almost comical that the betrayer has left, we find the betrayer has already left the room and yet we have, still, 11 people that love themselves in the room.

Who will be the greatest? And he said to them, this is what Jesus said, "The kings of the Gentiles," the outsiders, they "exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors. But not so among you.'" We are completely different than that other world. Just totally different. We don't think anything like the Gentiles. In this day, the only people who were considered people of God were Jews and so to say Gentiles meant anyone who is not Jewish, but as the New Testament wore on

and the apostles started calling Christians the chosen people of God, it became kind of normal then for Gentiles to become anybody that wasn't a Christian. So here in this immediate context, Jesus is referring to non-Jews because in the economy of God, Jews had not yet been reached, I should say Gentiles had not yet been reached. You have to get well into Acts before that concept is introduced. That's pretty powerful. If you're European, if you're Far Eastern, if you're African, you are gifted with a blind Israel. I am too. I think I'm 1/128<sup>th</sup> Jewish. It hardly counts.

So when it says that the Gentiles act this way, he's saying that to the epistles of the apostles later on in the New Testament, he's saying to those of you who are not Christians, we expect you to lord over one another and to have say in one another's life. We expect there to be power struggles and Jesus said, "But it's not the way it is among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves." Forgive me, verse 26, "not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater," this is a good question, "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." Jesus is saying, "Clearly you folks know that if anyone deserves to have notoriety, it's me." Jesus has no trouble saying that. No trouble at all saying, "If anyone deserves to be honored as the leader around this joint, I do. If anyone deserves to be called the greatest, it's me, and yet you will find nobody who is so thorough a servant as I am."

How amazing for Jesus to say that. He had, first of all, no undue braggadocio. He was absolutely qualified and expected to know who he was and to be secure in who he was. Jesus had no, no, no unneeded confidence and he also had no false humility, no false undue modesty. You know how it is, any of you who have served in front of a church when someone comes up to you and says, "That was a great song," you're struck somewhere between, "I know," or, "It was nothing. It was all the Lord." But there's a lot of space in between and I fear that our false modesty has become a sort of quasi-humility where we almost want the glory for giving God the glory. "Oh, it was nothing." "Isn't that guy spiritual? He gives all the glory to God."

Verse 28, "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, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Again, if I were Jesus, I would not have responded that way. I would have waited several hours and told them, "Now that you feel stupid about thinking you were great, I will tell you your reward for actually doing something decent." But Jesus follows his immediate rebuke up with some wisdom that I'm thankful for and some grace. He says, "You actually will help me reign in the kingdom to come."

Now all of that is splendid but it leads me to the point of this morning's message of which I have some notes written down from last evening when I was tangling with the Lord about this, and when you tangle with the Lord, you're going to lose. "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.'" Maybe you have worked in the fields, have worked with wheat, are aware that there is wheat and

then there is the shell of the wheat and Jesus said, "Simon, Satan wants to make you nothing but an empty shell." That's so discouraging. Anyone in this room who feels that they have some authority or power to talk to Satan like they teach it to you on some of the weird religious television shows? You don't understand who you're dealing with there. We're talking about an archangel who in Ezekiel 28 is known as the anointed cherub who covers the throne of God. "Just talk to Satan and tell him...." You're dumber than a box of rocks if you think Satan is afraid of you. The only way that Satan would be afraid of you and me is if we are represented or represent somebody else. Satan has no reason to fear a fallen son of Adam. He only has a reason to fear the only unfallen Son of Adam.

So we shroud ourselves in the name of Christ which is just good talking points until you read verse 32. Listen to what Jesus says. "Yes, it's true, Satan hates you. Yes, it's true, Satan has had conversations about you. Yes, it's true. Everything that you feel in the area of pressure in your life is nothing but the wickedness, the powers of darkness trying to make you an empty shell, a former you. It's true. Peter, when your mother was sick, it was Satan desiring to sift you. When it was things that were within your control when you rebuked me, Satan was desiring to sift you. Simon, it's true, when you felt like you were going to go out of your mind fishing for your father, when your life is ticking away, you were discontented, Satan was desiring to sift you, Simon Peter. It's true. When your loved ones were dying, Satan was desiring to sift you."

Now don't you fade away. The reality of Satan is not omnipresent. He is not everywhere all the time so to blame Satan for our shortcomings is not only dishonest, it's actually unscriptural. But if you mean by Satan an extension of Satan, that is to say, his angelic assisters, his assistants, then you are somewhat biblically correct for he has many many myriads of fallen angels and they desire to sift you and me. It is as true of us as it was Satan and I want you to consider the fact that Simon has bad news so far and some of it is from Jesus and some of it is in his own conscience. All week long, you and I have been struggling not only inwardly against our own flesh but outwardly against the powers of darkness that sometimes manifests themselves in the forms of human beings. There is an amazing amount of things we could talk about when it comes to spiritual warfare and how that person who seems to hate you is probably at least temporarily controlled by someone who is on the other side of the team and it's not that human being, we actually wrestle not against flesh and blood but principalities and rulers of darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places.

Brothers and sisters, members of Sandy Ridge and those who have been with us for some time and are still considering yourselves to be born again, I'm thankful for you. I need you to know today that all week long Satan has been talking about many of us. I wonder who in hell knows you. I wonder if you're even worth talking about. I wonder if you and I matter at all when it comes to our efforts for the Lord, and this is not an opportunity, "Oh, I could feel it right in my spirit." This is not an opportunity for you to leave the building feeling awful, this is an opportunity for now at this point in the message to identify with Simon Peter, one of 11 men that walked with Jesus through his ministry and finished

relatively well. When your King gets up from the dead and gives you a mission to complete until he returns, you're on the winning team.

After all that bad news, look what Jesus says in verse 32, "But I have prayed for you." Now that verse right there has had me wondering for years and years and years and years why does Jesus have to pray about anything. There are a lot of questions that I wonder if you're asking. I wonder if you're kicking aside... I see many wonderful faces, that means you're not being distracted, that's great, at least not that I can tell. So why is Jesus praying? And we sit here and we analyze it to the point where it almost, the passage of Scripture makes us wonder if it means what it says. Jesus said, "Peter, I've been praying for you that your faith would not fail; and when you have returned to Me," the King James says, "when you're converted," it's a word that need not have the same meaning as what you and I mean when we say converted. "Peter, when you're changed, when you're turned around, when you've returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

That is so powerful. I need you to see every bit of what we just read because the why Jesus prays is not really as important as what he prays or that he prays. The idea that the Son of God has to ask for anything from his dad blows my mind. You think that it's just his, all things are his, Hebrews 1:3. He has been given all things, Philippians 2:9. All things. We're the great name above all things. I mean, Colossians 1, all things are his and by him. All things consist, Revelation 5. By him are all things and for him and by him they are all for him. I don't get it. Why does Jesus have to pray for anything? The why is mysterious. The fact that we don't know the answer is powerful. The fact that we don't have an explanation from this physician Luke is powerful. It doesn't matter why he has to pray, it's that he does. [unintelligible]

You read the book of Job and you find that Satan is so audacious as to pass himself off as a son of God, that he passes in front of the throne of God and he is talking to the Lord about the Lord's servant Job. "Have you considered my servant Job?" Of course he has. God knows everything and he's messing with Satan. Satan is in the hand of God and Satan does nothing unless the Lord vets it personally. He does nothing to any of God's servants unless the Lord God personally vets that action. Satan can't even breathe today without the permission of the Lord.

So I want you to consider, first of all, an overconfident Simon. You'll look in verse 31 and you'll see how Simon hears the bad news and in verse 33, "But he said to Him, 'Lord,'" this is a mystery, "'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death. Lord, I'm thankful You're praying for me. Thank You for Your prayers but I'm good. Lord, thank You for praying for me but I'm good. I am with You all the way through the prison cell. I'm with You even to death.'" And Satan works through Simon apparently to always correct Jesus. Matthew 16, Jesus says, "You know, I'm going to give my life the third day and people are going to take me from you and I'm going to crucify and be raised again rather, the third day after being handled by Romans, by Gentiles and crucified." And Peter says, "No, you won't. No." And we have an overconfident Simon who's always unsuspecting of himself. Do I have your attention? The greatest sinner, men, that you will ever face is the one that you shave every day. We should always be suspecting ourselves

as the very worst sinner we know. Deep within our bones lie cavernous tombs of self and selfishness where even if you peel back your wonderful actions, oftentimes we will find a love for self usually even when we find ourselves with this desperate need to apologize to make things right, often it's so that we feel better.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Am I the only wicked one in the room? The reality is I'm pretty sure we're made out of the same stuff. I wonder if you and I are anything like Simon, "Oh, Lord, I'm with you the whole way." Now remember, they just had a conversation a few minutes earlier about how great he was. Peter says, Peter is one of them discussing who would be the greatest in verse 24. Peter apparently does not know just how bad things are.

I'm working with a couple that will be married very soon and we are going through a book slowly, we're going through a book called "When Sinners Say I Do," and the reality is many of us in this room are pretty sure that if our spouse would fix her or himself, that life would be a little sweeter at the house. We never suspect that we really are culpable people, we are a people who are sinful in our very core.

Now that's not the end of the story but it is part of the story. It's at least part of the story, brothers and sisters. We are not as bad as we feel sometimes but it's still part of the story. So we have an overconfident Simon. Then we have an overactive Satan. What's he doing? I don't know which is the bigger mystery to me here, that Jesus is having a conversation about us with Satan or around Satan, or let's say he was actually dumb enough to have a conversation with the Lord about us, even if Satan is having a conversation with God the Father, as it says in Job, and Jesus is there as our intercessor, Romans 8:34, and by the way, we are looking forward to a day when this little drama stops. Revelation 12:10 tells of a day, "And I heard a voice in heaven saying, 'Now has come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ for the accuser or the prosecutor of our brethren is cast down.' And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of his testimony and they loved not their own lives even to death."

So these people in the future are seen as overcomers of this wicked adversary, this prosecutor who still finds plenty of things to talk about in front of the Lord. And so this is true, he has conversations before God about us, he has conversations. This is a very bold Satan and he is apparently having conversations about people that's not near as... Now wait a minute, I'm not trying to say that everyone in this room, I'm not trying to say everyone in this room has had Satan mention their name before the throne. Here is what I'm saying is the timeless truth about everyone in this building who says that they are a Christ-follower: Satan, whether he is talking about you or not, still desires to sift you. "But I don't feel it. I got a raise this week." He will use that to sift you. "I was passed over for a raise." He'll use that to sift you, to make you [unintelligible] and hollow and purposeless, wake up on Mondays and hate that it's Monday and wait for the next vacation day.

You are being sifted and I'm tempted with it too. Another loved one passes away and we don't know what's happening, what's going on in here. "I can't get over how I felt about this thing in the past." Brothers and sisters, Satan is desiring to hollow you out and we go about our day without even praying to our great God. I will not act as though I have prayed for hours on any morning but I don't mind admiring the Martin Luthers of history that said, "With all that I have going on this morning, I cannot but start my day with three hours of prayer." Maybe we could start with three minutes.

So we have an overconfident Simon, an overactive Satan, how about an ever-compassionate Savior. The reality is that he sees us, he sees the other world, he sees the economy of the Lord. There is this faith. Look what Jesus is praying for in verse 32, that Peter's faith should not fail, and that word in the original does not just fail like an up and a down, you know, like everyone that has ups. Are you still with me? Alright, ups and downs is not what we're talking about here. We're talking about a permanent failure of faith. Satan has asked to sift you and I prayed that your faith, think through this now, the fact that he didn't choose a particular word in the original language shows that he's trying to communicate to what he didn't say. Satan is desiring, he's trying, look, I'm having my mind blown. I'm having my mind blown. When we are easily distracted from the things of the Lord, don't you see we're being sifted in this very room? And I'm not trying to make you afraid but I've got to do something for us to be happy about the good news. If we don't see ourselves as vulnerable to the wicked one, we will never one time be happy that we're not vulnerable to the wicked one.

So Jesus says, "I pray for you that your faith won't fail." And so I ask you, have you felt the Lord Christ praying for you? Look what he says, "when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." We have an ever-compassionate Savior. We have an ever, ever-compassionate Savior and we have ever-receiving saints. What do I mean by that? What do I mean by that because so far it's all theory. None of you are Simon. None of us have seen Satan talk about us in heaven. None of us have had Jesus look at us and say, "But I've been praying for you." We haven't had that so is this just theory or is it a reality that the Lord Jesus has in his character that he looks at each of us in the soul and says, "I have been praying for you"? That's powerful. I don't know if you're encouraged today by knowing that Jesus prays for you. Romans 8:32, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for us."

It is the character of Christ first introduced in this passage that you and I are glad Christians because we realize that it doesn't matter what the powers of darkness convey to our hearts and souls as they trouble us from day to day, and if you have felt nothing, the chances are you're not even in the battle. The chances are if you haven't felt any kind of conflict this week, you're probably not even a part of the kingdom of God. Why would you attack someone that's over on the bleachers? Not in the fight. The reality, brothers and sisters, is that you and I have a Christ that all day long, all week long as you're saying

goodbye to your loved ones from this life, as your dreams seem to be slipping away, as life is not happening the way you would have planned it if you could have planned it, your kids are not perhaps becoming what you wish they would, there are developmental issues and in your mind you're wondering is there a problem with you, is there a problem with your child, there are continual things and questions, "Am I really worth anything to my employer? Am I worth anything to my customers? Will I be okay next week, next year? Will my cars keep running? Will my house fall apart?" We have these things that are continually nothing but tokens of onslaught from the wicked one and what is happening is that you are just being tempted to be just straight sifted.

You need to have the same confidence that your Lord Jesus and mine knows where you are this morning. Brother Ron, he knows about the return trips. You know that. I know that. Everyone else needs to know it. He knows about the continual sicknesses that many of you are dealing with and he says it's just the wicked one and he's just trying to sift you. You say, "But I thought some things were brought to the hands of my great heavenly Father?" Certainly. Hebrews 12 says that but if you know anything about your heavenly Father, it is that Satan will seek to distort your view of your heavenly Father and he will use that hardship, brothers and sisters, he will use that hardship for you to be bitter against your great God.

He will take that which is a present from the Lord and try to sift us and make us as wheat, but there's more to the story and that is have you considered the fact that Jesus' prayer was answered? Have you considered the fact that Peter was restored to Christ? Have you considered the fact that you and I are kind of recipients of this faith of Peter? We're recipients of this answer to prayer from Jesus to the Father on behalf of Simon, have you considered that? Have you considered Hebrews 7:25, he ever lives to make intercession for us? Have you considered the fact that you have no greater friend in heaven today but Jesus himself? If that's true, then I can think of no more comforting words than those of you who name the name of Christ to be able to look at someone in the eyes and say, "I have prayed for you."

I fear, I fear that we've gotten so deep that we have forgotten some of the easy answers. I fear that we believe that the cure for everything is another Bible study. Stay with me. This is a pastoral moment. I'm trying to help. I fear that we think that another book will fix us, another Bible study will fix us, another accountability partner will fix us. I fear that we think that another social media outlet will fix us, another retreat will fix us. Brothers and sisters, looking at someone in the eye and saying, "I have prayed for you," is earth-shattering. But we are so good. We take someone out to dinner, we sit over here, they sit over there, there, there. I've been to preachers' fellowships, folks, I've been to preachers' fellowship for all of that, sitting around a dinner table and they'll text, "Praying for you, brother," but they won't look me in the eyes, Brother Ken. "Satan hates you but I love you and I pray for you. I can see what's going on in your life, Satan is trying to hollow you out, but I've prayed for you."

Hunter, come on up here. Is mom here? Dad here? Come on, mom and dad. Rodney, Michelle. Stand right here. This man is about to deploy and he doesn't need to hear, "I'll

pray for you." They don't need to hear, "We'll pray for you." Starting right now at this moment, they're going to hear it differently. They're going to hear the investment done, not the investment promised.

Stand with me.

I'll be the first to lay my hands on them. I wonder how many of you will join me while we pray for Hunter's safety. Come. If you'll join me, come right now. Face the front, please. Please face the front. Mom and dad and Hunter. Come, join them, if you will. If you don't want to, if you don't want to be embarrassed, that's fine. If you can't get to them, come on, we'll come around in front here. If you can't get to them, put your hand on the person in front of you.

Brother Rick, are you ready to pray? And after we're done, brothers and sisters, after we're done, every one of us that have prayed for this man, every one of us are going to go by and look him in the eyes and say, "I have prayed for you." That is how our service will close and if you know someone else in here this morning that is struggling with something, oh, I know we didn't have a normal run-of-the-mill invitation and as soon as you show me where we have to have that in the Bible, I'll say sorry. I'll pray and then I want you to pray for Hunter. Nicky and I are going to go by the front door and see people on their way out, okay? Angie, sorry for the audible. We'll not have a closing song. I think the Lord will still be happy with what we're doing and, brothers and sisters, this is but one of the needs in the room this morning and some of us need to get good about looking at someone and realizing they've been fighting hell by the acre all week. Satan hates them but we stand here instead of Jesus as Christians, little Christs, and we dare to look at people in the eyes and we say, "Satan hates you but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not."

*Lord, hear our prayers and bless this great time of church life, body life. Look after these parents, O God, Rodney and Michelle, and I pray you would help them to know they're in mighty good hands, and as much as the Lord, as much as they love their son, oh, there's one at the right hand that loves him more.*