

New Hope Sermon Power of Jesus's Prayers March 3, 2019

At New Hope we obviously take prayer very seriously, so much so that we take time in the worship service and in the Bible studies to share prayer requests and pray for one another and for global issues. Plus we have a separate prayer meeting each week to go deeper into these prayer needs and take the commitment to pray for these needs throughout the week. This is wonderful and very Biblical. But today I want to shift that emphasis



away from our prayer lives and look at the power of Jesus's prayers FOR US.

The first truth we need to understand as we think about Jesus's prayers for us is His authority. His is the Name above all names. His is the authority over all other rulers and principalities and powers (Phil. 2). He cast out evil spirits and healed diseases and stilled storms on the seas because of His authority. He even bequeathed his authority to the

disciples before He died (Luke 10). *"I saw Satan fall...I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to over all the power of the enemy"* (Luke 10:18-19). It was an amazing claim that proved true as the disciples went out on their preaching mission. They experienced Christ's authority over every evil spirit they encountered.

And that authority wasn't just for them, centuries ago. It is for all believers since then. You remember that just before His ascension He told the disciples: ***All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples***" (Matt. 28:18). We live out our lives in obedience to Him because of His authority.

Understanding Christ's authority is foundational to our theme today: Jesus our intercessor.

Jesus prays for His people, including those who will believe in Him throughout history, from His position as the Sovereign Lord of the universe. His authority is over all the power of the enemy. And that's part of the wonderful good news of the gospel. Today I want us to explore the implications of Christ's intercession ministry for our lives through 3 Scripture passages: first through the incident with Simon Peter recorded in Luke 22, then in terms of His High Priestly prayer in John 17 and finally in terms of His ministry in Heb. 7.

We start with Peter's story in Luke 22:31-34. Jesus knew His own sacrificial death was imminent AND He knew how His death would confound and even terrify His disciples. He told Peter *Satan has demanded to sift you like wheat*. It's interesting that verse 31 is plural. Satan wanted to sift all the disciples like wheat. But verse 32 is singular. The New Living Translation gets this right in its translation of this passage.³¹ *"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat."*³² *But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."* Before I recognized this distinction, I thought Satan had just asked to sift Peter as wheat, but no, he had asked to sift all of the disciples as wheat. Then Jesus zeroed in on Peter, praying that his faith would not fail.

But let me ask you: Did Peter's faith fail?

Yes and no.

Peter did deny Jesus – vehemently three times. But he also repented and turned back and we read of his final restoration in John 21. Darrell Bock in his *Luke NIV Application Commentary* says, "Peter will not face the Satanic sifting alone. At his side stands Jesus who intercedes for him and for his faith. That does not mean that success in the middle of the test is guaranteed...but it is guaranteed in the restoration (that Jesus prayed for and was assured would happen as Peter repented and turned back). The ultimate success of Jesus' succession emerges, showing how even after a disappointment, his work can lead to recovery (NIV Application commentary, Darrell Bock, Zondervan 1996, pg. 560).

The notes for the *Life Application Bible* from this verse say, “Satan wanted to crush Simon Peter and the other disciples like grains of wheat. He hoped to find only chaff and blow it away” (Luke 22:31-32). But Jesus is assuring Peter that Satan will not take control of him as he did of Judas. Though Peter will still deny Jesus, his faith will not ultimately fail. He will repent and after that repentance Jesus gives him his task to strengthen the other believers.

We are not puppets, beloved. God has given us free will so we can buckle under pressure, be afraid and fail God and others and ourselves. But Jesus is invested in us and prays for our turn around and restoration. And that is our great comfort and consolation and part of the power of the gospel. That’s the first example.

Secondly, Jesus’ prayers for believers are also seen in Christ’s high priestly prayer (John 17). In this prayer, right before his arrest and death, He tells the father about his prayers for his disciples: We start in v. 9.

- *Verse 9:* The Passion Translation of John gives us important insights here that are not in the NIV. The Passion Translation includes the Aramaic and here is how this verse is translated: *So with a deep love I pray for my disciples. I am not asking on behalf of the unbelieving world, but I pray for those You have given me those who belong to You.*”
- Then His prayers shift to the issues believers will face because of Satan – just like the early disciples faced. Look at v. 11. *I am coming to You but they will remain in the world. Holy Father protect them and keep them safe by the power of Your name so that they may be one.*



And again in v. 15:

- *Verse 15:* My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. The Passion Translation includes “watch over them, guard their hearts from evil.”

I like this graphic for v. 15. It is a wolf but the predatory nature of Satan is clear. Peter calls Satan *a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*(I Peter 5:8) Both images are stark and show us how vital it is

that Jesus is praying for our protection against this destroyer of our faith.

Then Jesus adds two more prayer requests for the disciples:

- *Verse 17:* Sanctify them by your truth as you sent me into world so I am sending them into the world.
- *Verse 20:* *I pray for those who will believe in me through their message that they may all be one.*

The theme that is repeated in Jesus’ prayers for His people is that God would protect them from the evil one. Protect them by the power of God’s name, watch over them. Guard their hearts. Jesus recognizes the power of evil that comes against believers and so He is praying for their keeping in the midst of the attacks that will come against them.

So the question that comes to my mind is “What does God’s protection look like?” And for this I would like to go back to the Passion Translation and quote a number of verses particularly from the Psalms which talk about the protection of God for His people.

- *Psalm 18:30* describes God’s shield as “the wrap around God giving grace to me.” In a note, the Passion Translator says, “The Hebrew word here used for shield means to wrap around in protection. God himself is our shield of grace” (Dr. Brian Simmons, *Passion Translation, The Psalms, Psalm 18:30 Note*, pg. 41). That theme of God as our shield and our wrap around presence is repeated throughout the Psalms.
- *Psalm 115:9-10* So trust in the Lord all His people. He is...the wrap around God who is our shield, God-wrapped-around-us as our shield.
- *Psalm 84:9* God, Your wrap around presence is our defense.

- *Psalm 32:10-11 When you trust in the Lord for forgiveness, His wrap around love will surround you. So celebrate the goodness of God!*
- *Psalm 18:35 You empower me for victory with Your wrap around presence.*
- *Psalm 18:1-3 Lord I passionately love you!...You are like a castle on a cliff, my forever firm fortress, my mountain of hiding, my pathway of escape, my tower of rescue where none can reach me, my secret strength and shield around me...all I need to do is call to you singing to you the praiseworthy God and when I do I am safe and sound in You.*
- *Psalm 7:10 God, Your wrap around presence is my protection and my defense. You bring victory to all who reach out to You.*
- *Psalm 3:3 In the depths of my heart, I truly know that You have become my Shield; You take me and surround me with Yourself. (The note in the text is the implication is that God shields us by taking us into Himself).*

I love this imagery of what God’s protection looks like. So I made a simple hand-out to remind you of these truths. (pasted at the end of the sermon). We need to remember that this is the kind of protection that Jesus prays for all believers. Satan and his forces are real and will continually try to kill, steal or destroy believers. Jesus Himself faced all those attacks and said to the disciples *Satan has no power over me. Jn.14:30*. Through Jesus’ prayers for us, Satan does not need to have any power over us either.

This promise of Jesus’s prayers for protection and the imagery from the Passion Translation reminded me of a song I want us to sing together. It is called “The Hiding Place.”

Verse 1: In a time of trouble, in a time forlorn, there is a hiding place where hope is born.

Refrain: There is a hiding place, a strong protective space, where God provides the grace to persevere; For nothing can remove us from the Father’s love, tho’ all may change, yet nothing changes here.

Verse 1: In a time of sorrow, in a time of grief, there is a hiding place to give relief.

Verse 2: In a time of danger, when our faith is proved, there is a hiding place where we are loved

Refrain: There is a hiding place, a strong protective space, where God provides the grace to persevere; For nothing can remove us from the Father’s love, tho’ all may change, yet nothing changes here.

Verse 2: In a time of weakness, in a time of fear, there is a hiding place where God is near. Amen.

(Bryan Jeffrey Leech, The Hiding Place).

The third passage which talks about Christ as Our Intercessor is in Hebrews ch. 7. Verses 21-26 say:

“Jesus became a priest with an oath when God said to him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever. Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.’”

Notice verse 25, which says, *Jesus always lives to intercede for His people*. The Passion Translation describes Christ’s ministry like this: ²⁵ *“So he is able to save fully from now throughout eternity, everyone who comes to God through him, because he lives to pray continually for them.”* To pray continually for them. How amazing.

F.F. Bruce, noted Bible scholar explains this role of Christ thus: “Those who have Christ as their High Priest and Mediator with God, have in Him a Savior whose saving power is available without end....He lives eternally, eternally engaged to bless and protect those who have committed themselves to Him. In ch. 2:17f we have been told that He became high priest to *make propitiation for His people’s sins and strengthen them in temptation*; in ch. 4:15f we have been told that He *sympathizes with their weakness and supplies the mercy and*

grace to help them in time of need. Here in ch. 7 His High-priesthood function is summed up in terms of intercession: “*He is always living to plead on our behalf.*” The intercessory work of Christ at the right hand of God is not a doctrine peculiar to our author of Hebrews. It also appears in one of Paul’s great lyric outbursts: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that condemns us? It is Christ Jesus that died...that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who always makes intercession for us.*” (Rom.8:33f). (New International Commentary on the New Testament, Hebrews, F.F. Bruce, Eerdmans, 1964, p.154).

So what does this mean for you beloved that Jesus lives to pray continually for you and for your nation and for your family and for believers everywhere?

How does His prayers for Peter and for believers everywhere encourage your walk with Him? I love it that Jesus knew of Peter’s great failing – in his three-fold denial of the Lord he had promised to love and defend to his own death? Jesus knew the depth of Peter’s weakness that Peter himself did not understand. And He knows all that about each of us. Yet, his prayer for Peter was what kept Peter from falling into the despair that drove Judas to take his life after he realized his mistake. Peter was able to repent, to turn around, and Jesus’s prayer was the victory that assured that redemptive end to Peter’s story. Peter became the spokesman for the whole church and His confession: *You are the Christ, the son of the living God* became the bedrock of the church.” God had purposed that special calling on Peter’s life and God made it possible – even with Peter’s failings – all because Jesus prayed for him. Isn’t that wonderfully encouraging, beloved?

Plus, I am eternally grateful that Jesus is praying for each of us as we face Satan’s lies and distortions and efforts to steal our joy, kill us literally or destroy our faith and integrity. He prays continually for us that God be our shield, our wrap-around presence, our safety amid the efforts of the enemy.

This also the power of the gospel, beloved. We have a Savior, a Lord of the universe and a powerful intercessor who will assure our victory and ultimate restoration, when we turn back to Him after we fail. This is good news indeed. Thanks be to God!

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 3/3/19

The Passion Translation of God as our Shield

“The Hebrew word for shield (Ps. 18:30) means to wrap around in protection. God Himself is our shield of grace...He shields us by taking us into Himself.” (Dr. Brian Simmons, The Passion Translation)

- *You empower me for victory with your wrap-around Presence. Your power within me makes me strong to subdue...My Savior-God lifts me up high and keeps me out of reach, far from the grasp of my violent foe. Ps. 18:35, 46. 48 TPT*
- *Because You are close to me and always available, my confidence will never be shaken for I experience Your wrap-around Presence every moment. (Ps. 16:8) TPT*
- *God-wrapped-around-us is our shield. Ps. 115:10 (TPT)*
- *God, Your wrap-around Presence is my protection and my defense. You bring victory to all you reach out to You. Ps. 7:10 (TPT)*
- *In the depths of my heart, I truly know that You have become my Shield; You take me and surround me with Yourself. Ps. 3:3 (TPT)*