

Importance of Strengthening One Another

by James Jennings

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Scripture: Acts 14:22, Matthew 26:75, John 17:9, 1 Peter 5:10, Hebrews 3:13, Ephesians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:1, Romans 16:25, Hebrews 13:9, Psalm 119:28

Topics: "Restoration after Failure", "Strengthening Others in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

Well, let me ask a few questions. What was the goal of Paul and Barnabas' return visit to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch? In Acts 14, what did they return to go and do? Anyone? It goes on to say that Paul's next trip was to go see how they are. That would fall under the heading, but in Acts 14, you don't have to turn there.

We're going to go through multiple verses real fast just to make an opening point. But they were strengthening the souls of the disciples. Strengthening the souls, not the bodies.

They weren't helping the physical health, but the spiritual health of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith. And what did they encourage them with? What was their encouraging statement? What did they impart specifically to those people? What did they say? Through many tribulations. You've got to go through to enter that kingdom.

You've got to go through many tribulations. So Paul strengthened them how? Through truth. Right? Through truth.

What was one of the reasons Paul wanted to visit Rome? In Romans 1, what does it say there? What was one of the reasons Paul wanted to go to Rome? "...I long to see you." For what reason? "...That I might

impart to you some spiritual gift..." Why? To strengthen. That's the key word. Strengthen.

Strengthen. "...To strengthen you, that is that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." What was the church at Sardis? In Revelation, they had a good reputation, but they were not really alive. That was all they had was a good reputation.

What were they told to do? What did they need to do to themselves there? Strengthen. Strengthen. "...What remains and is about to die, for I have not found your words complete in the sight of God, remember then what you received and heard." So how are they going to strengthen themselves? They're going to remember what they have seen and heard.

I go through my sermon. It's very similar to Bobby's. And I know Craig was teaching the kids, so he missed Bobby's message in the back.

But Bobby talks about the importance we need to be reminded. And in Craig and the Lord's Supper, near the end, he made the emphasis on that point that this is remembering what Christ has done. This is to be done in remembrance of Him.

Why did Paul visit Galatia? It was one of the reasons. To do what? To strengthen. Acts 18, after spending some time there, he departed and why did he go on to another region? Strengthening all the disciples.

In Ezekiel, the false shepherds are condemned because what was one of the things the false shepherds did not do? What did they not do to the sheep? To the weak? Yeah, you should be able to guess it by now. That's what I'm going to hit on. The weak you have not strengthened.

The sick you've not healed. The injured you've not bound up. When David was in hiding, why did Jonathan visit him? To strengthen him.

Right, very good. 1 Samuel 23, And Jonathan saw sun rose and went to David at Horash and strengthened his hand in God. Right, this is a spiritual strengthening that is taking place through truth being imparted.

In Revelation, they're being reminded of truth. Or in Acts 14, they're being told specific truth about suffering. What did Jesus tell Peter to do after he turned from denying Christ? After you turn again, what are you going to do? What mission? What's one of the missions I'm going to give you, Peter? Strengthen your brothers.

Strengthen your brothers. And that's what I want to look at. So turn to Luke 22.

I could go on with many more references of the Bible talking about people being strengthened. And you'll notice here, one of the primary goals behind many conversations in the Christian life is to strengthen believers. Strengthen.

Not to hinder them. Not to do the opposite. But to strengthen them and you strengthen them with the truth.

So back to Bobby's message, it's important that we know the truth, right? Or we can't strengthen. And you notice here, the reason behind many of these trips, whether it's a trip out into the field to talk to David or a trip across the sea, was to strengthen believers. There's a massive emphasis in your Bible on strengthening other Christians with the words that you share, the things that you say.

That's a primary activity for the Christian is to strengthen other Christians' faith and impart a spiritual gift by imparting biblical truth to them. What I want to look at is Peter. Specifically, I want to consider Peter, because Peter is told by Christ to go and do this, but Peter, like us, in order to be in a place where he could go strengthen others, Peter had to go through certain things.

Training, so to speak. He had to get a certificate to be able to go and strengthen others. And Bobby pointed out, why did Peter write 1 and 2 Peter? He wrote these things as a reminder to them.

He was writing these things to strengthen them. There's multiple things in 1 and 2 Peter that he said to strengthen the church that if he didn't go through what he went through in Luke 22, he would not have been able to write and would not have been able to say. The same thing in you and I's life.

There are things that we are going through that will teach us in order that we will be able to strengthen others in the future with the comfort and strength that we ourselves have received from the Lord. So, Luke 22, we're going to find where Peter got enrolled in a class and we're going to find that after going through what he went through, he was in a place where he could go and strengthen the brothers. And let's look at Luke 22.

Luke 22, let's read v. 24 briefly just to get some of the context. A dispute arose among them as of which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And so they have this whole dispute.

Then v. 28, Christ says to them, you are those who have stayed with Me in My trials. Now, that's not going to last for a lot longer there. Here, v. 31, Simon Simon.

Behold, Satan demanded to have you. Why? That he might sift you like wheat. But, I have prayed for you.

Why? That your faith may not fail. What do I go do next? And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. V. 33, Peter said to Him, Lord, I'm ready.

I'm 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 Me three times. You deny three times that you know Me.

And then just briefly, v. 54, this is where it happens, then they seized Jesus, the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light, and looking closely at him, said, this man also was with him.

But he denied it, saying, woman, I do not know him. A little later, someone else saw him and said, you also are one of them. Peter said, man, I'm not.

And after an interval of about an hour, another still insisted, saying, certainly this man also was with him, for he is too a Galilean. But Peter said, man, I do not know what you are talking about. And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times. And Peter went out and he wept bitterly.

Let's pray. Father, we all know about Peter. Most of us at least, we've heard about him.

We've thought about him. We've read this passage before. But as Bobby taught on in the first hour, Lord, I pray that as I give these reminders, You would make something very fresh and real to different brothers and sisters here that they could see it and apply it in their own life.

Lord, my hope of preaching on the importance of strengthening one another is to strengthen the saints to do that very thing, to remind them to do that very thing, Lord. And so I just ask for Your help. You quicken this word by the power of Your Spirit.

Lord, help. In Jesus' name, Amen. So Jesus tells Peter, when you've turned again, go strengthen the brothers.

That kind of implies something in Peter's life was preventing his usefulness in that specific area. At least in certain ways. But after he went through this trial, this test, he'd be more useful.

That's vitally important to remember in the trials that you're going through, believer. God is using them to all the more purify you and make you like gold. So the first thing, I want to look at six things here.

Six things. The first is this. The first step of achieving your certificate and being able to strengthen one another is you have to enroll in a class that purifies you more.

You've got to get enrolled. You've got to get enrolled. Who enrolled Peter in this class? Who? Jesus? That's right.

That's the right answer. Look at the text. Simon Simon, verse 31, Behold, Satan demanded to have you.

What does that remind you of? Satan asked to have you. What should that bring to mind? It should bring Job. The ironic thing is in Job, though the Lord is the one who mentioned Job to the devil.

And then the Lord gave permission. The Lord did not tempt Job. But He allowed the devil to do that very thing and there were purposes behind that.

And in the same way here, the Ultimate One who enrolls Peter in this test and allows it to come to pass and allows it to happen, it's the Lord. The Lord. Behold, Satan demanded to have you.

Now, Satan's purpose was that he might sift you like wheat. Ultimately, that he might violently shake you to the point where you deny Christ completely. As he goes on to say, Jesus says, I've prayed your faith may not fail.

Ultimately, the devil wanted his faith to fail. His faith ultimately did not fail in the ultimate sense. It didn't.

We're going to look at why it didn't fail. But Satan demanded before the Lord, just like in Job 1, the Lord said to Satan, behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.

So the Lord is the one who permitted Peter to enter into this trial. This did not just happen. Your trials, my trials, they don't just happen.

It might feel like it just happened. But there's someone intricately involved in that situation to bring it about and there are purposes and something for you to do after you've endured through that trial. You don't want to lose sight of that.

And amazingly here, Jesus is telling Peter in advance about everything that's going to happen. We often don't get that privilege, do we? Peter gets it. Jesus is saying what's going to happen.

You'd think you wouldn't fail the test if you knew what was going to happen. But Peter, as we'll see, was proud. This was intentional.

It was God's assignment to Peter. Right? Maybe God's giving you an assignment right now. As I mentioned weeks ago in this sermon on are you content in your local church, don't drop the class.

God's given us all tests. Don't just move that to the side. If He's given it to you, take it.

Take it. Learn from it. The Lord is directly involved in your trials.

He's allowing you to be tested. That's why He can say in 1 Corinthians 10-13, that's why Paul can say, brother, sister, no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. But God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with temptation, with the test, it's the same Greek word for trial, with the test, He will give you a way of escape that you might endure it.

Why can we have such a promise like that? That there's always a way of escape out of the trial where you don't have to sin? It's because God's involved in the trials and the tests that come about in your life. It's not accidental. It is intentional.

Don't forget that. Now look, it's also true. Not only is God involved, but we do have an enemy seeking to destroy us.

Satan's intention was for Peter's faith to fail. We have a real enemy. He wants you dead.

He is seeking someone to devour. Of all people, who would write that in 1 Peter 5? Peter! Peter, no! Jesus had told him. Someone's out to get him.

Someone's demanding to have you. And he goes on later to say the devil is seeking someone to devour. We have an adversary who's like a lion.

Now, I mention that, but just to balance it out, are there people who will often attribute happenings to Satan that have no connection? Sure, that's a problem. It can frustrate us shepherds when we hear someone say, oh, it was the devil who made me do it, or it was Satan, or it was that. It might just have been you sinning and you need to take ownership for that.

Not attribute that to the devil. At the same time, you don't want to forget the spiritual war that you and I are in. There's a devil and he's got demons, even legions of them, and we wrestle against not flesh and blood.

Don't forget that. Just because someone abused that language, you think about Satan towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, he was out to get Christ, wasn't he? Luke 4, verse 13, after the temptations in the wilderness had ended, it says this of Satan.

He departed from Christ until what? He departed from Christ until an opportune time. Satan is an opportunist. He's looking for an opportunity.

He's not looking for an opportunity to make it big with money in the financial and the stock market. Satan is looking for an opportunity to find a crack in the midst of your faith and get you to fall away from the living

God, get you to have an evil, unbelieving heart and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. He's looking for that.

He's an active enemy. That's point number one. You've got to get enrolled, and the good thing is you don't have to go sign up.

God's going to sign you up. He's going to. If you're His child, He will sign you up for discipline at some point, and that will prove you are a legitimate child when you're having that rod on your back.

I remember years ago, people said when do you have the greatest assurance of your salvation? And Brother Tim said when God is disciplining him, it's one of the times he has the most assurance he's a Christian. And there's truth to that. You see, God loves you enough to take off that sharp edge and hone you more to make you like His Son.

So second thing, what was Peter's attitude when he heard about the assignment? And that matters. Because you and I, we've got an attitude. We've got a perspective.

We've got a way that we look at something when we hear about an assignment. Again, we're thinking about this because we want to get to the point to see how did the Lord refine Peter to get him to a point where he can strengthen the brethren? Because that's what I'm calling you and I to do. To strengthen one another.

Whether it's in this fellowship meal to come, during the grace group, during the week, things happen in your life to get you to that point to more effectively strengthen people. So what was Peter's attitude when he heard about the assignment? Verse 33, in Luke's account, look at just after hearing this, what's Peter's response? I'm ready. I'm ready.

I'm ready. Your statement somewhat implied that I'm not ready. But I want to let you know that I am ready.

And what am I ready for? I'll make it clear. I'm ready to go to prison and to death. What an attitude.

And he said this shortly after what had just been happening among the disciples. A dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And Peter wanted to be very clearly known that he's the greatest.

And if that doesn't convince you, listen to Matthew's account of this. Matthew 26-33, Peter answered him, though they all fall away, because of you, I will never fall away. Look, all these disciples, they're going to fall away.

Not me. I'm better than them. I'm more godly than they are.

I'm more superior than them. Peter's having that type of mindset. Though they all fall away, I will never.

Incredible. Incredible. And what happened to Peter? Luke 22-56, then a servant girl.

And I realize he wasn't just alone, it was just her. There were a bunch of troops around there as well. Sure, it wasn't a guard asking him the question.

It was a servant girl. And he denied Christ. He denied Christ.

So why did the Lord enroll him? I think it's safe to say the Lord enrolled Peter to crush him of his pride. To give him humility. And he writes about humility in 1 Peter.

It's very interesting what he says there. He says God opposes the proud. That's what just happened in Luke 22.

God will oppose the proud, but He will give grace to the humble. Peter saw that happening in his very life. Peter was not prepared for this trial.

He wasn't. But Christ was preparing him through the trial for future tests. He was being made ready.

Peter said, I'm ready. He was being made ready. And there's another point.

You know what happens later on in Peter's life? James gets killed by the sword. And then what happens to Peter? He gets arrested. And if James just got killed, what's probably Peter's fate going to be? Peter's about to get killed.

But you know what happened? The Lord delivered him with an angel supernaturally and took him out of that place. But Peter was ready. He was ready to go and die.

James had just died. Peter looked like he was about to die. So he grew through this.

So what was Peter's attitude here? Yeah, he wasn't prepared. He was proud. And you know what Peter lacked? He lacked a fear of the Lord.

How do you see that there? He took Christ's words in a light way. To indicate you fear God is you take God's Word seriously. Look what Christ had just told him there.

Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith not fail. When you turn again, strengthen your brothers. And Peter's saying, Lord, I'm ready to go with You.

It would have been much better to say, oh, Lord, please help me in the midst of this. I'm not ready. I need Your grace.

Lord, I'm going to hold on to that promise that You've given me. Peter lacked fear of God in this place. He didn't take the Word as serious as it should.

And who is the one to whom the Lord looks? What does Isaiah 60-60 say? This is the one to whom I will look. He who is humble. Humble? Is it a humble man who says I will never deny You and he's boasting in himself and saying all those others are going to deny You and I'm not going to deny You? That's not a humble man.

He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My Word. Peter did not tremble at Christ's words. Peter did not manifest humility here.

The Lord pulled the carpet out from under his feet. Let him fall flat on his head. But he grew.

He grew to the point where listen to what he says in 1 Peter 5. Look at one of the things God brought about in his life that he's able to remind and strengthen the believers with. He says in 1 Peter 5, clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. Why? For God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Peter learned that through experience. God opposed him. Third thing.

Third observation here. The purpose of the assignment was meant to test Peter's faith. It was meant to test Peter's faith.

Now, the enemy's purpose was for Peter's faith to fail and for him to be destroyed, but in the end, it only strengthened his faith. Why? Pride and faith don't mix and go together. Pride is opposed to a life of faith.

What is faith? Faith is trust and commitment in the Lord Jesus Christ. You're committed, you're trusting, you're looking to Christ. It's confidence in the Lord.

What's pride? Is pride confidence in the Lord or is it confidence in what? Confidence in yourself. That's exactly Peter's statements reveal. A confidence in himself.

And through this trial, he comes out of it with what? More confidence in self? No. More confidence in the Lord. More recognizing his absolute inability to deliver himself by his own power and his total essential need to rely upon the Lord for apart from whom he can do absolutely nothing.

Now, Jesus says here, I pray for you that your faith may not fail. Can your faith fail? Can your faith die out completely? I mean, momentarily, did he trust Christ and in that moment, he didn't? He didn't. He sinned.

He had lacked faith because of his pride. Did he abandon the faith? No, he did not abandon the faith. But can you abandon the faith? Can you have faith for a little while and then at a time of testing, you fall away? Yeah, absolutely.

Trials test what's true of you. It tests how you've actually received the Word of God. Luke 8.13 And the ones on the rock are those who when they hear the Word, they receive it with joy.

But these have no root, they believe for a while, and in a time of testing, they believe for a while. In a time of testing, they fall away. There are people who hear the Word, it's not truly planted in the heart, there's no birth, there's no true salvation, and a test comes in their life.

And they don't turn again. They turn away and abandon Christ. Hebrews 3, For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

Now how is he going to be tested here? The text says that he may sift you like wheat. And this refers to the last step in producing usable wheat that could be ground into flour. And so Satan wants Peter to not be usable.

He wants to violently shake him where he is separated completely away from the Lord in that sift. As he's being shaken violently, that he will get away from that which is the wheat, that which is the good, and be removed. But the Lord actually uses all that violent shaking to purify him all the more and all the more prove that he is of the wheat.

That he is not a tare. That he is not a pebble that is caught in the midst of it. So Satan is wanting to shake his faith to the verge of an overthrow.

That's what the devil wants to happen in your life. He wants to shake you violently to get you to the point where your faith is overthrown. Where you stop believing in God.

Where you start doubting the faithfulness of God. Now how did he do on the assignment? How did he do? What happened? Well, the man who boldly declared his commitment to Christ denied him. You know one

of the phrases that Peter had heard prior to this encounter? He heard Matthew 10.28. He went into this knowing Matthew 10.28. And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.

Rather, fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. And Peter did the opposite. He did fear Him who can kill the body.

He didn't fear God who can kill the soul. He feared man. This is a man who heard about the test ahead of time.

Hours later, he takes it. I mean, this is all in the same day. Verse 34, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny me three times that you know me.

I mean, this happens hours later. He faces the very test that Christ has told him about in advance. Look at v. 59.

He's already denied Christ two times. Look what v. 59 says. How's Peter doing here on this assignment? V. 59, after an interval of about an hour.

What was going on in Peter's mind for that hour? You already denied Him two times. I mean, this is not like a back-to-back denial. It's not like I walk across the room and by the time I get to the back wall, three of you have asked me if I know someone and I deny all three of you.

An hour. I mean, that must have been some of the longest 60 minutes of Peter's life. What was going on in his mind? Whatever was going on in his mind, it wasn't enough to convince him when this third question came up to finally tell the truth.

And even yet still, Christ restores this man and uses him. The Lord is very merciful. And you know what He said the third time in the last denial? Well, it really captures it.

In Matthew 26.74, it says, then He began... this is Peter. The third time, He has the most serious renouncing of Christ compared to the other two times. Then He began to invoke a curse on Himself and to swear, I do not know the man.

Immediately, the rooster crowed. Isn't that incredible? The third time, an hour of thinking about it. And it's not like Christ is just over there, nothing's happening.

Christ has just been tortured and all sorts of things have happened. He's not over there sitting in a nice way. He's in suffering and pain and agony.

You see your Lord there. You have an hour to think about it. And He denies Him a third time.

The very thing He promised He would never do, I'll never deny you, He does three times. Just passive humility being brought about in this man who tells us to clothe our mind with humility because God opposed him because he was proud. God dealt with Peter here in this passage.

Invoke a curse to anathematize on Himself and to swear, I don't know the man. And then what happens? Then the Lord turned to look at Peter. You see that in v. 61.

The Lord turned to look at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord how He said to him before the rooster crows today, you've denied Me three times, and he went out and wept bitterly. You know how it

is.

You're kind of in a conversation. Sometimes you're talking about someone and you don't realize they're about to walk by. They kind of look at you and you all of a sudden feel like I shouldn't have said that.

Peter had just said all of this. And there Christ is in the midst of his suffering. And He sees him.

And there's eye contact. Look, I've been in meetings where a husband and a wife, one of them's confessing very serious sin, and it's the first time the spouse is finding out about it. And you just see when they meet their eyes right there just the brokenness, the hurt of what has happened and gone on in their marriage.

But here, this is Peter sinning against Him who had perfect love. Who did no wrong to Him. Who told Him in advance what was going to happen.

Incredible. I mean, that's a class. You want to learn? You want to grow? Peter grew from this.

He saw the graciousness of the Lord. He saw his own pride and arrogance. As Bobby pointed out in the first hour, at that point, Peter remembered.

Peter remembered the saying. Meaning, he had forgotten it. I mean, this is hours later.

You would think if you heard about what was about to happen when you're in the midst of it, and this is after he had waited for an hour. So apparently, it never came to his mind in the whole hour he was sitting there. It's after he denies Christ.

He remembers what the Lord said. He didn't remember it after his two times of denying Christ. It took a third time for what Christ said to come and hit him.

Incredible. All that you thought you would do for Christ, and you failed. You failed.

Your spiritual plans were smashed. It's amazing. Fifth thing, what was the ultimate reason why he did not flunk the class like so many others have? What was the reason? What was the reason? And why did Peter's faith not ultimately fail? Why? Yeah, Jesus had in the past prayed for him.

In the past, Christ had prayed. He knew this was going to happen. He says right there, He says, but I have.

Verse 32, I have. I've prayed for you that your faith may not fail. The Lord knew what was coming.

The Lord knew what was going to happen and He already was supplying the strength to make sure Peter made it. When did Christ pray? Christ had yet to pray in the garden here. What is this referring to? What do you think it's referring to? What prayer of Christ might this be alluding to? John 17.

You know, in the Gospel of John, chapter 18 is Peter's denial. The very next chapter deals with it. Listen to this text.

John 17. I'm praying for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for them whom You've given Me.

And again, all the disciples, they were all fleeing at this point. Yes, Christ focuses in on Peter. I'm praying for those You've given Me for they are Yours.

Verse 12, while I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given Me. I have guarded them. Not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, Judas, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Is that where that prayer is happening? I'll tell you, that's for you. That's for you and I. The saint of Christ praying for our faith, that's for you and I too. This isn't just something that is specific towards Peter.

This is something that is happening in Peter's life because Peter has a great high priest whose name is Love, whoever lives to intercede for Him. And if you're in Christ, if you put your trust in Him alone for your righteousness, you have a great high priest who's seated in the heavenlies who's interceding for you, who's keeping you. You're kept by the power of God.

I kept them in Your name. I've guarded them. Not one of them has been lost.

Peter wasn't going to be lost in the midst of the trial. The Lord was guaranteeing that. Christ is guarding us.

Guarding. That's the word of a watchman. Christ is your watchman.

He's watching over you. He doesn't sleep. He doesn't slumber.

He's protecting you. He's on the lookout for you. He's allowing things to come into your life.

He's preventing things to come into your life. He's not giving you a test that's too difficult for whatever your grade level is in the spiritual realm, He's not going to let you be tempted beyond that. And as you grow, the test might get harder because you're going to be more mature.

You're able to take more heat by the same grace, the grace of God. Christ is praying for us. You know what that word pray says? I've prayed for you.

A lot of places that word is rendered begged. I've begged. I've cried out for you.

I've asked urgently for you. Jesus didn't say I will pray for you and not go do it. He was telling Peter he already had.

He already had prayed for him that his faith wouldn't fail. This is no flippant prayer. This is an urgent begging before God the Father by the one Person you want praying for you, and it's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And He is praying for you. John 17, Luke 22. We've got promises here for the Christian.

He's the one who's going to sustain you. He's the one who's going to help you. Those whom you have given Me... You think about some, they frame a personal letter from someone on their wall.

They put their degree on their wall. But say you get a letter from the President and you put it on the wall. People come in and they see that President.

Assuming there's a President you like. That President, he wrote you a letter. I've got a personal letter from the President.

And they frame it. Brethren, you take this verse, you take these verses, and you go frame them on your wall. You've got a personal letter from the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who ever rules and reigns, and He's

praying for you that your faith may not fail.

He is your Great High Priest. He will sustain you. He will keep you.

He will guard you. There's great reason to have confidence in Him. This is what we want to remember.

So, why did He not flunk? The ultimate reason is the Lord. It's the Lord. But there's a second thing here.

He turned again. Peter had to turn again. It says there, when you've turned again, Peter had to turn again.

And where do we see him turning again? Verse 62, He went out and wept bitterly. Right there, He didn't go out and hang Himself like Judas did and take the money back with a world of grief. He went out and He wept bitterly.

He was truly ashamed of His action that He had committed against the One who had loved Him in such a way. We've got to turn again. Meaning, we've already turned at some point in the past.

You've already turned to Christ. In a moment of sin, you turn away. You've got to keep turning back and following Him, looking to Him.

And notice the certainty of Peter turning again. Don't you love how Christ says it there? And if you do turn again, what's it say? When you have. You see how involved the Lord is in your life, Christian? When you have.

It's going to happen. And yet, He needed to turn. You don't just say, well, God's going to cause me to turn.

No, you've got to turn when you sin. In some ways, it's like Peter was restored in advance. But you know what? We were chosen when? I chose you and Him before the foundation of the world.

God already knows. I mean, the Psalmist talks about our feet going somewhere and the Lord already knows where we're going to step. Now you can hear those truths.

You should find great comfort from them. It shouldn't make you sit back and let go and let God. That's absolutely unbiblical.

But he had a promise from Christ in advance prior to facing the trial. That's exactly what you and I have, brethren. You've got promises in here before you face the trial from God.

Jesus fulfilled a certain verse, you could say, through His effectual prayers. Not just John 17, but Jesus played out James 5.20. Let him who knows that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. Christ is always bringing people back.

He's bringing people to Himself. Back to the truth. So what if you're in some darkness right now? What if you've turned away from Christ? Turn again.

Turn again. Don't stay where you're at. Sixth thing, Peter graduates.

And after going through this assignment, Peter will now be ready for a mission. It had a purpose. God was involved.

This wasn't accidental. When you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. Strengthen your brothers.

Strengthen them in the truth, in holiness, in the Word, in godliness. Get them established. Take away thoughts of theirs that are unbiblical and take their mind captive to obedience to the truth of who Jesus Christ is and what the Word says.

Make sure their minds are filled with the riches of God's goodness in the Scriptures. Isn't this kind to the Lord to show Peter after you've failed, He's already saying I'm going to make you useful. He told him that in advance.

That's what He tells you in advance in Hebrews 12. After you've been disciplined, you will what? Share in His holiness. So He's letting you know in advance this is all going to work for good.

Because all things do work for good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes. Now, this failure of fear and denial of Christ and Peter then turning again and strengthening the brothers, you don't want to compare this to someone being a pastor and they fall into adultery and they turn again and they're back in the ministry a month later. There's a lot of ways people will twist this.

Peter's sin before the Lord, this act of fear that all these others had made, it was very serious. But you don't want to compare it to other certain situations and just want to reinstate people right into the ministry after some serious fall. That's not what we're seeing here.

So, Jesus, after all this happens, after He rose from the dead, He revealed Himself to His disciples. He asked Peter three times, do you love Me? Do you love Me? And this is kind of the graduation ceremony, right? He's trying to see has it gotten through your thick skull? Are you going to make really proud, arrogant, boastful, of course I love you! Of course this and that. Peter says in John 21, Lord, You know everything.

And the Lord did. The Lord knew about the test. And the Lord knew He would deny Him.

Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You. And what did Jesus say to Peter? Feed My sheep.

Right? One way of feeding the sheep is strengthening the sheep. And Peter went on to do that. He went on to strengthen fellow Christians.

He's being restated, you could say, after this denial. He's being restored. He's being told to go on and to feed and to strengthen.

So Christ clearly views Peter's usefulness as increasing after this fall. This work for good to further God's ultimate purpose is not in any way justifying the sin of denying Christ, but using it to grow Peter. All of it had a purpose.

All of it had a purpose. That Peter could strengthen believers. Do you see that in your life right now? What test are you going through? Where's God testing you? Don't forget, there are purposes behind that that the Lord is working for your good.

I mean, what's the classic text that mentions that? That people quote from Genesis 50-20. What does it say? It's for you, you meant it for evil, Joseph is saying. But God meant it for good to bring it about that many should be kept alive as they are today.

And the Lord meant it in Peter's life. He needed more humility in order to be able to save many of the things he said, without which he would not have been as useful as he was. So when and how did Peter go

on to strengthen the brothers? In 1 and 2 Peter, I mean, Bobby just basically gave a whole 40 minutes on that in the first hour.

These different things Peter was reminding them of and feeding the sheep and being a good shepherd to them. In 1 Peter 1-7, Peter says, so that the tested genuineness of your faith will prove to be more precious than gold, though it perishes, though it is tested by fire, that it might be found. That's what happened in Peter's life.

The tested genuineness of his faith. It proved true. Judas failed the test.

His proved to be false. Peter went on to face a trial leading to death. I already referred to it in Acts 12.

He was arrested after James was killed. Peter didn't deny Christ there. The once fearful Peter says in 1 Peter 3, he says this to you and I, 1 Peter 3-14, but even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

Have no fear of them. This is Peter saying that. Nor be troubled.

But do what? In your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone. Was Peter prepared to make a defense to the servant girl? No. He lied.

Far from being ready to make a defense to the servant girl there. Do you know him? Yeah, let me tell you about my Lord and all that He's done for me. Was that what Peter said? It wasn't.

Peter cowered away in fear. And yet here, he's telling believers now to have no fear and be prepared to make a defense. That's the opposite of how he was.

And look, you can't tell people to do this if you're hypocritically not doing it in your life right now. Clearly, this has become evident as Peter has gone on that consistently he was not a fearing man. He was prepared to make a defense to anyone.

He wasn't too prepared at Galatia when he cowered away there. Peter had another test. He feared man there.

He didn't do what was right. He was a hypocrite right there in the moment. Yet God even used that for good.

He got another assignment there, another test. In this 1 Peter 3 passage, he is quoting Isaiah 8. Listen to Isaiah 8. Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy. Don't fear what they fear.

Don't be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor is holy. Let Him be your fear.

Let Him be your dread. The Lord put Peter through all he did and one of the things is to bring about a greater fear of God. And you know what happens when you see the love of God and His patience and His kindness toward you? That should produce a greater amount of fear in your life where you don't want to sin against such love.

You don't want to take it as a flippant thing because of all that individual, that person, this God has done for you. So Peter now to fear of God. A reverence of the Lord that he did not have previously.

And then Peter says this. How is he strengthening the brothers? What is he reminding them of? 1 Peter 5.9 He says this, resist the devil. Firm in your faith.

That's the very thing Peter didn't do. He failed the test. He got shaken.

Knowing why? That the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And they obviously knew about Peter and his trial. And Peter's saying your suffering is not unusual.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Resist the devil. He'll flee.

The devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to whom he may devour. He wants to devour you. Christ prays for you that your faith not fail.

Well, some thoughts in closing. So what did Christ do for Peter in Luke 22? He strengthened him. Paul says in 1 Timothy, I thank Him who has given me strength.

Right? Christ strengthens us. Christ did not abandon Peter. Christ did not get bitter at Peter for denying Him.

Christ had an incredibly gracious response. You always want to remember this. Look, when some brother and sister wrongs you, remember Christ's response to Peter.

If someone says to you, I'll never deny you, and they go deny you, how are you responding? I hope you could say to them, well, I already prayed for you that your faith... No, you probably wouldn't say that because that would show your view of them was that they were going to fail you already. You want to believe the best. But Christ has a very gracious response.

What an encouragement. If you're Peter, you're not sitting there in a part of doubt and unbelief. It's like, oh, part of what he remembered was that he would turn again.

That it would happen. And that he would then be useful. Strengthen the brothers.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1, a similar idea. God who comforts you in your affliction. Why? Why does God comfort you in your affliction? Just for you? Wrong answer.

He does it so that you will now be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort you received. God's comfort is not just for you. It's for you to go and share with others, to strengthen them with the truth that impacted you in the midst of your trial.

What did the man Christ Jesus praying in the garden need? I'm back to the questions where the right answer is to be strengthened. That's what Christ needed. And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him.

Christ, the man, needed to be strengthened. He needed to be strengthened. We need strength.

We need help. What did Job, a righteous and blameless man, what did he do in his life? Those who were given bad counsel, they knew something about Job. You know what they said about Job? Job 4, behold, you have instructed many, you have strengthened the weak hands.

This is the blameless man in all the earth. And one of his activities that he was engaged in was strengthening the weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling and you have made firm the feeble knees.

When a leadership transition happened from Moses to Joshua, what did the Lord tell Moses to go and do? The Lord said to Moses to do something for Joshua. Deuteronomy 3, but charged Joshua and encourage and strengthen him. Strengthen him.

Why? For he shall go ahead of this people and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see. What are we called to do in Hebrews 3.13? But exhort one another every day as long as it's called today, so that none of you are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And you know what's amazing in those verses there? You take that one out of its context, he talks about people falling away from the living God by an evil, unbelieving heart.

When you think about your heart being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it's not just that you become some insensitive person to sin. His fear is that you become an apostate. The same thing in Hebrews 10 when it talks about stirring one another up to love and good works.

We're to intentionally consider how to do that. What's he go on to say in context? What's so important about stirring one another up to love and good works? He goes on to say for some, what happens? They go on willfully sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth. They become apostate.

You see, your and I's need to be strengthened for our heart not to be hardened, to be exhorted and encouraged on a daily basis, to be here today in this assembly, it's pretty important. It's pretty important. We need someone to strengthen us.

We need to be encouraged. In the wrong response, someone says, okay, I'll just sit back. You've got to strengthen me.

You've got to strengthen me. You guys say, come on, feed me, feed me. I need all your help.

Look what it says of David. 1 Samuel 30, David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him. That would be pretty distressing.

Because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and his daughters that had been taken by the enemies. What did David do? But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Look, people trying to strengthen you through reminders, they're trying to bring to your mind something you should already know that should already be on the front of your mind, but because we're dull of hearing, it's not on the front of our mind.

And they tell you that truth. You take that truth, and then you go to the Lord. You strengthen yourself in the Lord.

It's no good to hear some truth if you won't go and apply it. If it goes out one ear and out the other. Just as in Acts 14, we need to be strengthened by the truth.

By the truth. We need to be strengthened with that. Are you and I equipped to strengthen others? If this is important, if it's constantly throughout the Bible, people going and strengthening one another and getting them more and more established in the faith and in the truth and in solid doctrine and reminding them of

truths that they've forgotten, if it's that important, do we know the Word? The Word strengthens us.

The Word of God. The truth of God. Psalm 119, my soul melts away for sorrow.

Strengthen me according to Your Word. Or in Acts 15, Silas among others, they were prophets and they went and encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. You know what that word many means? You know how it could also be rendered? A long message.

Right? They went and strengthened them with a long sermon. I don't look at the clock when I preach because it messes with my head and I rush. So I'm almost done.

But you might need a long sermon to be strengthened. I'm the third person getting up here to remind you of something today, so if you forget, then we're in trouble here. You're getting another opportunity.

Ephesians 3 talks about being strengthened through the Spirit in your inner man. We need strength to comprehend the love of Christ. 2 Timothy, you, my child, be strengthened by what? By the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews, after correctly understanding God's discipline, we are to strengthen our weak knees. That's what happens in the context. He talks about God's discipline.

Here you understand it correctly. And then he says, therefore, lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. So correct understanding should lead you to be encouraged to strengthen your weak knees and press on.

Hebrews 13, 9, don't be led away by diverse and strange teachings. And look, as much as we try to strengthen you, there's all sorts of opposition out there and they're wanting to damage you and do the exact opposite. They're wanting to bring in diverse and strange teachings.

But the writer says, no, it's good for you to be strengthened by grace, not by foods which have not benefited those devoted to them. You're going to have people saying you've got to do this, you've got to eat a certain type of food, you need to follow the Hebrews Roots movements and do all these things that the old Jewish people did that are now shadows and they've passed away. You're going to find strange and diverse teachings that are not according to Christ.

That will not strengthen you. And if you and I are teaching that to others, we're not going to be strengthening them ultimately. We're going to be hindering people.

Romans 16, 25, now to Him who is able to strengthen you according to what? My Gospel. We need the Gospel. We need Christ crucified to substitutionary death.

His love. I'm reminding you again of Peter's denial, and yet it wasn't the end of him. Whatever sin is in your life, you don't have to quit right there.

Get up. Turn again. Follow Christ.

Believe Him. He's praying for you that your faith will not fail. You've come to share in Christ.

If you hold fast your original confidence to the end, hold fast. Don't let go. Is there some area in your life right now that the Lord is actively dealing with you in order to grow you so you can minister to others

better? Is that happening? If it is, do your homework.

Get done with the class so you can help all of us. As you reflect on your life as a Christian, what falls have you had that you've turned again from? Did you gain humility and wisdom that you are now imparting to other believers in strengthening their faith? Or is it something you still can't talk about because there's still something going on in the present? Right? You're still not over it. On a personal level, are you strengthening yourself in the Lord through the Word of God? How is your devotional life? Where do you and I still have remaining pride and incorrectly view ourselves and we're still like Peter in that way? Where is there some degree of arrogance internally in our heart and in our perception of ourselves? You know what's interesting? We'll reveal that in how we speak.

Peter revealed his pride through his mouth. Because out of the abundance of a man's heart, his mouth speaks. Is your primary goal behind many conversations and trips to strengthen the brothers? Does that even cross your mind? When you go to church, when you go to someone's house, when you have someone over, are you thinking how can I encourage and strengthen them in the Lord? Does that even come on your radar? It's all over the Bible.

I only scratched some of the references. We need to be strengthened. You need to be strengthened.

We need to strengthen others. Can people say of you, I left helped and strengthened in the faith after talking to them? Are you supporting the brethren individually or are you focused on yourself? Are you weak today? Do you realize Christ is praying for you today? He will guard you. He will keep you.

He is your Great High Priest. He's already prayed for you that your faith not fail. And no, you can't sin that grace may abound because you're new.

You've got a new heart. You've got new compulsions. You want to obey righteousness.

So, may Christ strengthen those who think you have nothing to strengthen others with to repent of your false humility and realize God has given you some part in this body that you would be a help and an influence on others for good. So take those opportunities to strengthen others. It's far better than looking for opportunities to tear down.

Do we need to make judgments? We absolutely do. But the far more that we are strengthening one another, what a great help and encouragement that will be. We need to encourage one another, remind one another, strengthen one another.

Well, amen. Let's pray. Father, this is important.

Lord, if Your Son, the Lord Jesus, needed to be strengthened, because He lived by the power of the Spirit. Lord, He was a man. A man full of the Spirit.

Lord, we thank You for what You've done in Peter's life. Lord, You took a man who was proud, thought he was better than all the others. Lord, what if there's people like that in our church? Lord, we don't want to have some thought that there's no hope for someone to grow.

Lord, Peter, Lord, if he was a member in our church and we heard some of what he said, Lord, it would make Craig, Jeff, and I cringe. Lord, we'd be in shock. And yet here, You graciously dealt with him.

And You didn't put him on the shelf. Lord, You strengthened him. You prayed for him that his faith not fail.

And You had him turn again that he could strengthen others. And here he's done it. 1 Peter 2, what an encouragement to those who are suffering as Christians in their time, those letters were.

Lord, what reminders they contained in humility and the enemy and the importance of taking a stand for Christ and proclaiming Him. Yet all of that was not true in Peter's life. At that point, in Luke 22, Lord, You grew him.

Lord, that gives us hope. Set our feet on higher ground. Lord, day by day, help us.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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