



Almont Vineyard Church

Week 4 Targeted Series: "Don't Be Sifted"

October 3, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome, first-time guests and longtime AVC family.

This is the sermon portion of the app—commentary and spiritual thoughts connected to Sunday's message. If you want to go deeper, the devotional questions are at the bottom. One place. The whole experience.

We are back in our series Targeted. This week's sermon is titled "Don't Be Sifted."

Just hearing those words can feel intimidating. I do not like the biblical fact that we are targeted. I do not like the biblical fact that our lives are under surveillance.

In our culture, more and more cameras are being added so that humanity's every move can be watched. I am not fond of that either. But I am far less concerned about the cameras on the road than I am about the spiritual surveillance watching our lives. I know that can sound strange—demonic eyes on ordinary days. Scripture does not treat it as something we can shrug off.

After the devil finished tempting Jesus, Luke writes: When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. —Luke 4:13

In other words, he was not finished. He was waiting for another opening. Revelation 12 shows the same war: Satan and the forces under him still oppose the people of God.

This week we will define what sift means. It is a violent shaking. Jesus told His disciples that Satan wanted to sift them all like wheat—and then He said, "But I have prayed for you." Even so, the sifting still came. How can that be? We will answer that.

We will look at the sifting in Judas's life and in Peter's life—how doors were opened, and how the enemy rushed in like wolves after prey. Then we will talk about practical, Christ-centered and Word-centered ways to guard our mind, our heart, and our soul so we are not sifted and devoured.

Come this Sunday ready to be encouraged and equipped by God's Word.

In Christ,
Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 4 Targeted Series/ Don't Be Sifted" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

John 10:10

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2010%3A10&version=NIV>

2 Corinthians 2:11

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%202%3A11&version=NIV>

Luke 22: 31-32

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2022%3A%2031-32&version=NIV>

Romans 12:2

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2012%3A2&version=NIV>

Proverbs 4:23

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%204%3A23%20&version=NIV>

1 Peter 2:11

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter%202%3A11&version=NIV>

Spiritual Reflection

Luke 22:31–32

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

The Farming Art of Sifting in Biblical Times

Sifting did not stand alone. It was the last violent act in a long farming process. When Jesus said Satan wanted to sift the disciples, He was not pointing to a gentle kitchen task. He was pointing to a harvest that began with a blade, continued with trampling and beating, and ended with a hard shake in a sieve.

The Greek helps us hear that. In verse 31 the word you is plural. Greek has a singular and a plural form of you; English does not. Satan asked to sift all of them—the whole group—as wheat. In verse 32 Jesus switches to the singular: “I have prayed for you, Simon.” The attack is against them all. The intercession names Peter. More on that later.

The verb Jesus uses is *siniazō* (σινιάζω), from *sinion*, a sieve. It appears only here in the New Testament. It means to shake grain in a sieve—to riddle it, toss it back and forth until what does not belong falls away. Two kinds of sieve were used in the biblical world: one to separate finer particles from coarser material. Scripture names the sieve and the act of sifting only rarely—Isaiah 30:28, Amos 9:9, and Luke 22:31. The force of the picture is the shaking itself. Satan’s aim is ruin. He wants the wheat gone. Jesus’ aim is that faith would not fail, and that the one who turns back would then strengthen the others.

The metaphor is even larger than one farm tool. It draws strength from more than one process people already knew. Farming supplied the threshing floor, the winnowing fan, and the sieve. Wine-making supplied the picture of liquid poured from vessel to vessel until what was settled and what was leftover became clear. Metal refining supplied fire that tests and purifies. All of that stands behind Jesus’ word. One commentator put the farm image itself this way: “As the wheat in the sieve is shaken backwards and forwards, and thus the refuse

separates itself from the grain, and falls out; so Satan wishes to trouble you and toss you about (by vexations, terrors, dangers, afflictions) in order to bring your faithfulness to me to decay.” That is the violent, disorienting nature of what the disciples were about to walk through.

There is a further pastoral distinction. Sifting can also describe a law of spiritual life. The Father’s chastenings aim to sift His children as wheat. In that sense sifting is not the first rough treatment of the harvest. It is a later, more delicate, and final dealing with the finest of the wheat. Satan sifts to destroy. The Lord can use even a severe shaking so that what is true remains.

So sifting is the product of the whole procedure. Farmers first took a sickle—a handheld blade that brought a whole stalk down in one swipe. Men usually cut. The cut grain was gathered into bunches and bound into sheaves, often by women. What was left in the field was gleaned. The sheaves were loaded onto donkeys or camels and taken to the threshing floor.

That floor was a hard, packed surface, often ringed with stones. Sheaves were spread about a foot deep. Then came threshing—another violent step meant to knock the good kernels out of the heads and husks. Farmers used more than one method. Animals, sometimes specially shod, were driven again and again over the pile. Workers beat smaller or more tender grain with sticks or a flail. For larger amounts they used a threshing sledge: a heavy wooden panel or frame with stones or iron fragments—sometimes serrated rings like saw teeth—on the underside. Oxen pulled it. A driver sat on the frame. As the sledge passed over the sheaves, the grain was crushed out on every side. Beans, peas, dill, and cumin were often beaten out with a stick. The method depended on the crop and the quantity. In every case the point was the same: force the good free from what held it.

Winnowing came next. The threshed mix was thrown into the air. The brisk afternoon wind—often from the north and west—acted like a natural fanning mill. Light chaff blew away. Heavy grain fell back to the floor and was gathered.

Only then came sifting. The grain still had grit, pebbles, weed seeds, and leftover chaff mixed in from the floor. It was put into a large sieve and shaken hard so the debris separated and the kernels were clean enough to bag, store, or mill. Amos 9:9 uses the same sieve image: Israel shaken among the nations, yet not one true kernel lost. Luke 22:31 uses it of the disciples.

That is the full scope behind Jesus’ word. The sickle cuts. The floor crushes. The wind strips. The sieve shakes. When Jesus says Satan has asked to sift them as wheat, He is naming the last and most searching stage of a process that is already violent. The enemy does not only want a little pressure. He wants a shaking that reaches the core.

And it is not only “them.” It is us. Satan wants to violently shake our lives—and he will not stop with us. He centers his attention on our families and targets them as well. He asked for the whole band of disciples. He still looks for an opportune time. The comfort in the same breath is just as strong: Jesus has prayed. Faith can be shaken and still not fail. The one who turns back is sent to strengthen the brothers.

Sources: 3-12

The confusion starts with the way Jesus speaks. He calls Simon by name, then the Greek pronouns shift between plural and singular. English has no clean way to show that.

When Jesus says, “Satan has asked to sift you as wheat,” the word you is plural. The Greek is *hymas* (ὕμᾱς). It marks a group, not one man. Satan demanded all the disciples, so that he might sift them like wheat. The assault is collective. He wanted to crush Simon Peter and the others together.

Then the grammar turns. In the next line, “I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail,” both you and your are singular. Jesus is no longer speaking of the band. He is speaking of Peter. The older English of the King James Version could still show this: “you” and “ye” for the group, “thee” and “thy” for the man. Luke 22:31–32 in that older pattern reads, in effect, “Satan demanded to have you [plural], that he might sift you [plural] like wheat, but I have prayed for thee [singular] that thy [singular] faith fail not.”

Modern English uses you for both. A translator has to choose. Keep the Greek distinction, and the sentence sounds archaic (“thou” and “ye”) or clumsy (“you all”). Use ordinary you for both, and the reader can no longer see the shift. Most modern translations choose readability. The footnote is there because the English line cannot carry what the Greek line says.

The theology follows the grammar. The plural you sets the scope of the attack: everyone. Satan asked for the whole company. The singular pronouns that follow narrow the promise and the charge to Peter. His faith would falter. It would not be destroyed, because Jesus had already intervened for him. Then the restored man is sent back to strengthen the brothers who were sifted with him.

Jesus speaks to Simon about all of them, then prays for Simon himself. The trial is shared. The intercession is named. The one who turns back is given the others.

Sources: 13-14

Opportune Times Satan attempts Sifting

When Satan departed from Jesus after the wilderness temptations, he left “until an opportune time.” (Luke 4:13) An opportune time refers to a moment when conditions favor Satan’s attack—a window of vulnerability when resistance is weakest and circumstances align for maximum spiritual damage.

Satan operates as an opportunist; he strikes hardest when you are weakest. Many scholars understand this opportune moment to be Jesus’s arrest, when he told those arresting him, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” In Luke’s Gospel, Satan appears only occasionally until the passion events, when he becomes aggressive again.

When Satan Comes After You

Satan doesn’t attack indiscriminately—he exploits specific vulnerabilities. Satan strikes during periods of strength and success, when pride makes you vulnerable to corruption. He attacks when you abandon godly priorities and choose wrong values. He exploits times of stress and fatigue, when your defenses are exhausted. He targets those who pridefully believe they can overcome his schemes without God’s armor.

The pattern mirrors what happened to Jesus: After forty days of fasting when Jesus was weak, Satan attacked him. Similarly, in Gethsemane, Satan understood Jesus was troubled and weak—an opportune time—so he attacked with his spirit of fear.

Your defense is vigilance and submission. Be sober-minded and watchful, for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. (1 Pet 5:8–9) Submit yourself to God and resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

Source: 15-18

Commentary on Main Texts

2 Corinthians 2:11

“In order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

Lest Satan Outwit Us

Paul speaks of Satan more in the Corinthian letters than anywhere else in the New Testament. He could see the marks of a demonic attack on that church. The false apostles were tied to Satan’s clever deceptions (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan was also the one tempting some into sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 6:12–20) and others into the idol feasts of their pagan neighbors (1 Corinthians 10:18–22). This verse names another scheme. In their zeal to purge sin, the Corinthians were punishing the offender and forgetting what discipline is for: repentance, and reconciliation to God and to the body. Under that pressure, sorrow can turn into resentment instead of repentance (2 Corinthians 2:7; 7:10). Paul begged them not to let that happen.

Satan looks for the mistake, in a church and in a person, and moves in on it. The old word behind “outwit” and “take advantage” is *pleonekteō*. It means to cheat someone out of what belongs to them. When we do not know his strategies, he takes what is already ours in Jesus: peace, joy, fellowship, a sense of forgiveness, victory. Trapp called him “that wily merchant, that greedy blood-sucker, that devoureth not widows’ houses, but most men’s souls.” Calvin put the danger just as plainly: there is nothing more dangerous than to give Satan a chance of reducing a sinner to despair. Whenever we fail to comfort those who have sincerely confessed, we play into his hands.

His devices are specific, and they shift. Against the sinning man, the first strategy was lust; the next was hopelessness. Against the church, the first strategy was tolerating evil; the next was undue severity. Against Paul, the strategy was to keep him so strained over Corinth that he lost peace and was less useful in ministry. Calvin called these devices the artful schemes believers ought to know, and will know, if they let the Spirit of God rule in them. Paul could say he was not ignorant of them. Many of us cannot say the same.

That is why the armor in Ephesians 6 is not theory. God gives it because we are no longer on Satan’s side. The belt of truth is Scripture studied so he cannot deceive us. The breastplate of righteousness is the strength to resist temptation. The shoes are readiness to speak of Jesus. The shield is faith asked for and held up. The helmet is the steady reminder that Jesus has already saved us. The sword is the Word, with the Spirit’s help to understand it. The question the text leaves is personal: What weak point is he trying to exploit? Where is he looking for a foothold? Are we unaware of his schemes, or not?

Luke 22:31-32

JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL / 22:31-32

After describing the disciples' glorious roles in the kingdom of God (22:29-30), Jesus turned to the immediate trials they would face. First, Jesus warned Peter of his future denial. Second, Jesus warned them all to prepare themselves for the coming troubles, by rhetorically commanding them to keep their purses, bags, and swords. Peter and the disciples' response appears to be commendable. Peter enthusiastically reaffirmed his commitment to Jesus, even if it meant death or imprisonment. The disciples were preparing themselves to withstand the enemy. But in all their enthusiasm and energy, they should have taken a clue from what Jesus was doing: he was praying. He had already prayed for Peter (22:32), and he would soon spend the entire night in prayer (22:39-46).

22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat." Luke alone recorded these solemn words to Simon (Peter) and described Satan's role in the upcoming difficulties all the disciples (the word "you" is plural), but especially Peter, were soon to face. Satan asked to sift Peter as wheat, meaning a severe trial. These words recall when Satan asked God for permission to test Job (Job 1:7; 2:2). Satan wanted to crush Simon Peter and the other disciples like grains of wheat. He hoped to find only chaff and blow it away. But Jesus assured Peter that although his faith would falter, it would not be destroyed, for he said, "But I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Jesus had intervened on Peter's behalf, asking that Peter's faith may not fail. Jesus prayed for faith, not the removal of the test. Apparently he knew that Peter would fail; otherwise, there would be no need for Peter to "turn back." Yet Jesus was confident of this turning back and also understood that, having faced this trial, Peter would be able to strengthen his brothers (that is, his fellow disciples, and later his fellow believers). Indeed, the book of 1 Peter deals entirely with encouragement for believers who are undergoing trials and difficulties. Peter became a source of strength to many who needed it.

RESTORED

Peter was certainly no stranger to failure. But Jesus made sure that Peter didn't wallow in it. He prayed for Peter and encouraged him to "bounce back" and be a source of strength to the other disciples. The Bible and church history reveal that Peter did indeed come back from his failure to lead the early church. Satan attempts to destroy believers by accusing them of disloyalty and lack of integrity. Whatever your failure(s), learn a lesson from Peter. Remember that Jesus intercedes for you. Focus on your love for Jesus and your desire to do his will. Keep in the forefront of your mind that people need your example and leadership.

Source: 21

Indeed, Satan has asked for you: Jesus was aware of a spiritual battle behind the scenes. Peter was no doubt ignorant of the fact that Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat—Satan wanted to completely crush and defeat Peter.

Apparently, Satan wanted to do much more against Peter than the Lord would allow; and Satan could not do whatever he wanted against Peter, but he must ask.

“Satan desires that in the sifting process ‘no wheat shall remain’, but that all (like Judas) will be blown away like chaff.” (Geldenhuys)

But I have prayed for you: What prevented Satan from having his way with Peter had nothing to do with Peter. It was because of Jesus’ prayers on Peter’s behalf.

The thought of Jesus interceding for us, protecting us from Satan, is wonderful! How many times we would have perished, had not Jesus prayed for us!

That your faith should not fail: Peter’s faith would falter, but not fail. Jesus did not see the temporary lapse that was to come as a failure of faith, because He knew that Peter would return to Him.

In the Christian life, we may falter, but we must never fail. If we have denied Jesus in some way, then we must return to Him immediately.

And, having returned, we must turn our focus towards helping others—when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren. The one who returns after faltering isn’t necessarily to be put on a shelf, or to become self-focused—but they should reach out and strengthen the brethren.

How could Peter say, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death”? Peter was unaware of both the spiritual reality and the spiritual battle that Jesus could see. Peter just looked to how he felt at the moment, and at the moment he felt pretty brave!

But when you are walking on feelings, all this can change pretty quickly. Soon, Peter will be intimidated before a humble servant girl, and deny to her that he even knew Jesus.

“It is sometimes easier to bear a great load for Christ than a small one. Some of us could be martyrs at the stake more easily than confessors among sneering neighbors.” (Maclaren)

Jesus told Peter the truth about himself and the situation not to discourage him, but to let him know there is a spiritual reality and a spiritual battle that he is unaware of, but that Jesus knew well.

Source:22

John 12:4-6 Judas’ Fall to Greed

John 12:4–6

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

The Bag, the Habit, and the Fall

John does not call this a slip. He calls Judas a thief, and the verb behind “used to help himself” is ongoing. It is not “he took once.” It is “he kept taking.” The money bag was trusted to him. What the others gave for the work, and for the poor, he was already skimming.

That is why the protest about the perfume is so hollow. Mary's nard was worth about three hundred denarii—a year's wages for a working man (John 12:5; Mark 14:5). Judas did not smell worship. He smelled a deposit. If that jar had been sold and dropped into the bag, a whole year's pay would have passed through his hands. He could take off the top, the way he already took what was put in. John says the quiet part out loud: he did not say this because he cared about the poor.

Theft like that rarely starts with a decision to become a traitor. It starts smaller, and a man talks himself into it. "I will put it back." "The group owes me." "I will cover it when the next gift comes in." An IOU in the bag is still theft, but it feels like bookkeeping. Then the amount gets ahead of him. What he meant to repay becomes what he cannot repay. Greed moves in where the excuse used to be. James describes the same slope: desire conceives, sin is born, and full-grown sin brings death (James 1:14–15). The imperfect tense in John 12:6 is that slope already in motion. By the time the perfume is poured out, the habit is old.

The size of the sum shows what he was really mourning. A day's wage was a denarius. Three hundred of them is not loose change in a disciple's purse. It is the kind of figure that makes a thief calculate. And the scary part is not only the money. It is the religious cover. He objected in public, in the language of care for the poor, while his hand had already been in the bag. The others heard concern. Jesus heard the scheme.

The end of that road is not far from this room. After this, Judas went to the chief priests and agreed on a price for Jesus—thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–16). At the supper, the bag was still his. Some thought Jesus had sent him to buy what was needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor (John 13:29). That is how normal the role had become. Then Satan entered him (John 13:27). The man who helped himself to what was put into the bag finally sold the One who had trusted him with it.

So John 12:6 is not a side note about petty cash. It is the pattern. A trusted place. A private taking. A story he told himself. A sum large enough to feed the greed. A holy-sounding objection that was really about the money. Then a fall that looked sudden to everyone except the One who had watched the bag.

Judas objects to Mary's rich gift (4–8)

Judas Iscariot ... who would betray Him: In a short time Judas would betray Jesus, and his betrayal is so much darker when contrasted with the light of Mary's devotion to Jesus. No doubt, Judas objected to Mary's gift because he was convicted by her simple and powerful display of love.

This is the only place in the New Testament where Judas is mentioned as doing something evil other than his betrayal of Jesus, and even this was done in secret. Judas successfully hid the darkness of his heart from everyone except Jesus.

Judas teaches us that outward appearances can be deceptive. Many people have a religious facade that hides secret sin.

Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred, denarii: Judas had a sharp sense of financial values, but no appreciation of what God valued. He thought this was too much love and devotion to show to Jesus. If we are extravagant in our love for Jesus, He will not criticize us; that is what Judas did. Are we like Mary, extravagant in our love for Jesus, or are we like Judas, criticizing others who are?

She has done this for the day of My burial: Mary knew something that the disciples didn't understand. She knew that Jesus was going to die, and so she was compelled to offer this extravagant gift of devotion to Jesus. Mary had more insight than others because she spent time at the feet of Jesus.

"This was the moment at which Jesus was symbolically set apart for burial by one who really understood what was happening." (Boice)

Source: 23

Luke 22:54-62

So they arrested him and led him to the high priest's residence, and Peter was following far behind. Jesus did not resist arrest, his disciples had turned and run (Mark 14:50), so Jesus was led away to the high priest's residence, even though it was not yet daylight. The Jewish leaders were in a hurry because they wanted to complete the execution before the Sabbath and get on with the Passover celebration. The high priest's residence was a palace with outer walls enclosing a courtyard. That this trial should occur here was unprecedented. Normally the Sanhedrin would meet in a large hall in the temple area. They could have met there because during the Passover, the temple opened at midnight rather than at dawn. This meeting at Caiaphas's home may have been to aid in a hasty assembly; however, they still could just as easily have met in a normal location. Most likely, it was their desire to avoid a riot that led them to this more private setting.

First Jesus was questioned by Annas, the former high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas, the ruling high priest. Annas had been Israel's high priest from a.d. 6 to 15, when he had been deposed by Roman rulers. Then Caiaphas had been appointed high priest. He held that position from a.d. 18 to 36/37. According to Jewish law, the office of high priest was held for life, but the Roman government had taken over the process of appointing all political and religious leaders. Caiaphas served for eighteen years, longer than most high priests, suggesting that he was gifted at cooperating with the Romans. Caiaphas was the first to recommend Jesus' death in order to "save" the nation (John 11:49–50). Many Jews, however, still considered Annas to be the high priest. Annas may have asked to question Jesus after his arrest and then been given permission to do so. This hearing is described in John 18:12–24. Annas and Caiaphas undoubtedly lived near each other, perhaps even sharing this same large residence in Jerusalem. Thus Jesus could easily have been questioned by both of them in a short amount of time.

Peter, disheartened by Jesus' words against his attempt to help out, was not arrested despite his attack. He probably was safe because of Jesus' intervention, but still curious. He followed the mob from far behind. He was the only one who acted with courage. The others were cowering behind closed doors (John 20:19).

22:55 The guards lit a fire in the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter joined them there. As mentioned above, this courtyard was probably in a central area of the buildings that made up the high priest's residence. In the courtyard, the guards lit a fire, around which the servants and soldiers were warming themselves against the early morning chill. Although most of the disciples had fled when the soldiers arrested Jesus, two of them, Peter and another disciple (perhaps John), were also there (John 18:15). After securing permission to enter the courtyard, Peter joined the others as they warmed themselves around the fire. Peter's experiences in the next few hours would revolutionize his life. He would change from an impulsive follower to a repentant and wiser disciple, and finally to the kind of person Christ could use to build his church.

22:56–57 A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him. Finally she said, “This man was one of Jesus’ followers!” Peter denied it. “Woman,” he said, “I don’t even know the man!” John wrote that this servant girl was acting as a guard at the gate to the inner courtyard (John 18:16). “The other disciple” had secured permission for Peter to enter. She apparently looked him over and noticed in the firelight that he looked familiar, so she began staring at him. Then the girl realized where she had seen Peter before—he was one of Jesus’ followers. Where she had seen him is unknown—perhaps in the temple or somewhere on the streets of Jerusalem. In any case, she recognized him.

This put Peter in a difficult position. Standing among the soldiers and servants right there in enemy territory, Peter did not necessarily want to be identified with the man held in an upstairs room, on trial for his life. So Peter made a natural and impulsive response—he lied, “Woman ... I don’t even know the man!” It didn’t matter that Peter had arrived soon after Jesus did or that he was there in the courtyard for an unknown reason at this early morning hour. He simply denied even knowing who Jesus was. Temptation came when Peter least expected it. This serves as a warning to all believers to be prepared. Peter had been ready to fight with a sword, but not to face the accusations of a servant girl.

STAYING CLOSE

How could Peter deny Jesus before a servant girl and two other bystanders? After all, this was the same man who only hours earlier had showed considerable courage by drawing a sword and trying to defend Jesus in front of armed soldiers. Perhaps the lesson is that temptation and compromise are most powerful when they do not come in obvious ways. But an even better lesson is this: as long as Peter was with Jesus, he was bold and aggressive. Left on his own, he wasn’t. Stay close to Jesus in your devotions, Bible study, and worship. Anyone is capable of denying the Lord and selling him out when he or she stands alone.

22:58 A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” Peter could run, but he couldn’t hide. He got away from the questioning servant girl only to run into someone else who also recognized him as one of them (one of Jesus’ followers). But Peter again denied it.

22:59–60 About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.” Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. This time, another bystander also recognized Peter. John wrote that this last person to question Peter was “one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off” (John 18:26 nkjv). He heard Peter’s Galilean accent, which was closer to Syrian speech than to that of the Judean servants in the Jerusalem courtyard. Thus the group concluded that Peter must have been with the Galilean on trial inside the palace. Peter again replied in the negative, claiming to not even know what they were talking about. These three denials did not occur quickly, one immediately after another. Time elapsed in between, yet Peter could not escape his own fear. As he spoke these words of his third denial, the rooster crowed, signaling the early morning hour. The period of the night from midnight to about 3:00 a.m. was known as “cockcrow.” A rooster would crow first at about 12:30 a.m., then again at about 1:30 a.m.

THE SPREAD OF SIN

Sin, like cancer, has a way of growing if unchecked. Notice the progression of Peter’s denials: In 22:57, he denied knowing Jesus; in 22:58, he denied being one of his followers; in 22:60, he denied even knowing what they were talking about. Sin has a way of spreading. As it does, the cover-up gets bigger as well. The time to get a grip on sin and its cancerous effects is in the very beginning, before it has time to multiply its poisons in

your life. Better yet, kill it before it even begins. Confess your sins or your desire to sin to the Lord, and ask his help to avoid Peter's mistakes.

22:61–62 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So Peter went out and wept bitterly. Peter's denials fulfilled Jesus' words to him (22:34). When Peter heard the rooster crowing and then saw Jesus turn and look at him (either from the upper story where the trial was being held or as he passed through the courtyard between visits with Annas and Caiaphas), Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him earlier (12:9). Peter had indeed denied Jesus three times before the rooster crowed.

Peter went out and wept bitterly. His bitter tears were not only because he realized that he had denied his Lord, the Messiah, but also because he had turned away from a very dear friend, a person who had loved and taught him for three years. Peter had said that he would go to prison or even death for Jesus (22:33–34; Mark 14:29–31). When frightened, however, he went against all he had boldly promised. Unable to stand up for his Lord for even twelve hours, he had failed as a disciple and as a friend.

Fortunately, the story does not end there. Peter's tears were of true sorrow and repentance. Later, Peter would reaffirm his love for Jesus, and Jesus would forgive him (see Mark 16:7)

Source: 24

Guarding – Mind, Heart, Soul

1. Guard the Mind

The battle starts in what we dwell on. Satan does not need the whole person if he can own the thought life.

Romans 12:2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

2 Corinthians 10:4–5

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Isaiah 26:3

“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”

Additional passages

Colossians 3:1–2

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Ephesians 4:22–24

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Romans 8:5–6

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”

1 Peter 1:13

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Colossians 2:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

Ephesians 6:17

“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

1 Corinthians 2:16

“‘For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

2 Timothy 1:7

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

Philippians 2:5

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

Isaiah 55:8–9

“‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”

2. Guard the Heart

The heart is the well the rest of life drinks from. If it is unguarded, everything downstream is poisoned.

Proverbs 4:23

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

Philippians 4:6–7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 15:18–19

“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

Psalm 51:10

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Additional passages**Proverbs 4:20–27 (the wider guard-your-heart passage)**

“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”

Jeremiah 17:9–10

“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”

Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

Psalm 119:11

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Psalm 139:23–24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Luke 6:45

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Proverbs 3:5–6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

1 Samuel 16:7

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Hebrews 3:12

“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

Psalm 51:17

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

3. Guard the Soul

The soul is the whole inner life—will, desire, identity, worship. Satan wants to sift and destroy there.

Psalm 23:3

“He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

Matthew 16:26

“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

1 Peter 2:11

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”

3 John 2

“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

Additional passages

Matthew 11:28–29

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Psalm 42:5

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

Psalm 42:11

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

Psalm 62:1–2

“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”

Psalm 19:7

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”

Psalm 25:1

“To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.”

Psalm 25:20

“Guard my life and rescue me; let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.”

Proverbs 22:5

“In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares, but he who guards his soul stays far from them.”

Matthew 10:28

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

1 Peter 1:8–9

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

James 1:21

“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:23

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Hebrews 6:19

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”

Luke 22:31–32

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

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Sermon Notes:

“Don't Be Sifted”

Good morning and happy Sunday, everyone. Can you believe it's officially October?

Praise God for the wonderful weather we have been experiencing. It's times like this... if we could store them in a bottle. LOL.

We are in a sermon series that we started several weeks ago called Targeted. Before we dive into God's Word, here are the AVC connections.

PP YouTube, App, Facebook/Website, Text Alerts — if you're not in the system, let us know.

[Let's Pray]

I titled today's sermon: “Don't Be Sifted.”

I think you would agree with me... I don't like the biblical fact that we are being targeted.

I don't like the biblical fact that our lives are being surveilled.

Forget the Flock cameras that are being installed all across the country. I am more concerned about the satanic cameras.

This past week the AVC elders and staff went to a two-day Vineyard regional conference in Ohio. We listened to some Iranian missionaries' testimony on how they were surveilled by the government.

[Short Story of Missionaries Testimony]

PP After the temptation of Christ, Scripture says... I quote: “When the evil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”

The spiritual warfare we are in is real... strategic... and personal.

Friends... we must protect ourselves and not open any doors for Satan to come in and play. PP Pic / Door with Wolves

I am not going to sugarcoat the reality of the Gospel. Satan and his demons want to kill you and your families. Just to be clear... those are Jesus' words... not mine. John 10:10... "The thief comes to Steal, Kill, & Destroy." Apostle Paul says that Satan tries to outwit us.

PP The Scripture says: "...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

Outwit means to outsmart.

Scholar Brown comments on outwit... I quote: "Outwit captures the idea of being caught off guard or maneuvered into a vulnerable position." (Brown, Logos Bible software / 2 Corinthians)

When Satan outwits us, it can lead to "sifting."

If you know anything about the Gospels, then you know that Jesus prayed and called 12 disciples to follow him.

At the Last Supper, right before his death and resurrection, Jesus said this to his disciples:

PP Read Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (*You is Plural)

The Greek word "you" is plural... meaning you all... or better translated by the Greek translator Dr. Barnwell (APP): "Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you guys." Meaning all the disciples.

Here's the real and raw truth we must hear and pay attention to.

Jesus prayed for them, but two of the disciples were still "sifted."

The word sifting is a "violent shaking" that occurs in a sieve to discard the bad debris (APP).

PP Pic / Sieve

The two disciples who were violently shaken by Satan were Judas and Peter.

How is it possible that they were sifted even after Jesus prayed for them?

Both men opened the door.

Friends, when we crack open the door for Satan and his demons, they are going to come rushing in like a pack of wolves trying to take down the innocent prey.

Judas opened the door to greed. Scripture says in John 12:4-6...

"But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold, and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it."

The sin in Judas' life led him to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

Sadly, Judas didn't recover and committed suicide.

Peter opened the door to fear, and it overtook his mind to the point he disowned Jesus three times.

PP Luke 22:54-62 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down

together, Peter sat down with them. 56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The great news for Peter is that he bitterly wept in repentance (Matthew 26:75) and was later restored by Jesus (John 21:15-17).

In conclusion, I am going to offer you several things in protecting yourselves from being sifted:

PP #1 Guard Your Mind

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

PP #2 Guard Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

PP #3 Guard Your Soul

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

In the AVC app there are more Scriptures associated with guarding the mind, heart, and soul.

Stand with me in closing prayer.

Devotional Questions:

1. The opportune time

Read Luke 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 2:11.

Satan left Jesus until an opportune time, and Paul says we are not unaware of his schemes. Where in your life right now is the door already cracked — a habit, a relationship, a private thought, a resentment — that the enemy could use when you are tired, alone, or offended? Name it. What would closing that door look like this week?

2. Sifted, even after prayer

Read Luke 22:31-32 slowly. Jesus prayed for the disciples, and two of them were still sifted.

Prayer is not a substitute for an open door. Where have you been asking God to protect you while you keep feeding the very thing that gives Satan access? What is one specific obedience you have been postponing?

3. Judas and the money bag

Read John 12:4-6 and then Matthew 26:14-16.

Judas did not wake up one morning and decide to betray Jesus. He had already been helping himself to what

was in the bag. What “small” compromise have you been calling manageable that is actually training you to sell out something holy? Be honest: greed, image, control, comfort, or approval?

4. Peter and the fire

Read Luke 22:54-62.

Peter followed at a distance, sat down with the wrong crowd, and fear finished the work. Where are you following Jesus at a distance right now — close enough to look faithful, far enough to stay safe? What would it cost you this week to move closer?

5. Bitter weeping or a closed heart

Read Matthew 26:75 and John 21:15-17, then set them next to Judas in Matthew 27:3-5.

Both men failed. One wept and was restored. One did not recover. If Jesus turned and looked straight at you today, what failure would he be looking at? Are you letting that failure drive you to repentance, or are you hiding it until it hardens?

6. Guard your mind

Read Romans 12:2 and Proverbs 4:23.

The pattern of this world and the wellspring of the heart are connected. What are you repeatedly letting into your mind — news, scrolling, fantasy, argument, worry — that is renewing you in the wrong direction? For the next seven days, what will you put in its place, and which passage will you actually read?

7. War against the soul

Read 1 Peter 2:11 and 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Sinful desires do not visit. They war. Peter says the enemy prowls, and he also says resist him, standing firm in the faith. Which desire is currently at war with your soul, and what is one concrete act of resistance you will practice before Sunday — not a vague intention, a closed door?