

Message #109**Luke 22:31-34**

There is an interesting passage of Scripture that was written by the Apostle Paul about 30 years after he had come to faith in Jesus Christ. He analyzed his own flesh and he said that there had been times when he knew what was right and didn't do it and there were times he knew what was wrong and he did it. He realized he had a sin nature that was in war with his new nature (Romans 7:14-25). When he sinned, he did not blame others, he did not blame Satan; he blamed himself and said I am a wretched man.

There have been times when some of God's best servants have had some moment of lapse. There have been moments when even God's best servants haven't hit the bull's-eye of the righteousness of God. There have been times when God's men have failed.

It happened to David. It happened to Solomon. It happened to Peter. Jesus Christ knows all about the past, present and future failures of His people and thank God He does not shelve them or throw them away. If God would have done that, the world would have missed a tremendous man of God, the Apostle Peter.

This is a very important and very encouraging text that Luke includes. It is extremely important and it communicates a very important message:

AFTER A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST HAS TRULY REPENTED FROM A FALL INTO SIN, HE SHOULD USE HIS LIFE TO SPIRITUALLY MINISTER TO AND STRENGTHEN OTHERS.

If a believer fails and truly faces it, I cannot find in Scripture the mindset that suggests the believer should hide out and never minister again. In fact, I find just the opposite. The believer needs to face the failure and get up from the failure and use it as a basis to help others.

Jeremiah taught exactly this same principle—Jeremiah 8:4. Jeremiah said that the logical thing for one who falls down to do is to get up and get going again.

One who has gone through some low moment as a believer is actually in a position to strengthen and encourage others who are going through the low moments. The problem with most people who fall is that they proudly and defiantly stay in their sin rather than honestly face it and turn from it.

At this moment of time, there would have been no greater sin that an Apostle could have committed than to deny Jesus Christ. These Apostles had been with Jesus Christ for over three years. They had lived with Him, traveled with Him, ministered with Him and for Him and they had been greatly gifted and blessed by Him. For an Apostle to deny Jesus Christ in His greatest hour of need would be the worst possible sin one could have ever committed.

But this is exactly the sin that Peter did commit. Satan tempted Peter to sin and Peter sinned.

He fell and he fell big. But Jesus Christ, in amazing grace, did not shelve him; in fact, He loved him, forgave him and greatly used him.

If you have fallen into sin as a believer, this text is one you want to see. Jesus Christ cares about you and stands ready to use you if you will turn back to Him.

There are five important factual observations to make from these verses. All begin with a word that starts with the letter “R.”

FACTUAL OBSERVATION #1 – One main reason why faithful believer’s fall. 22:31

Believers fall into sin for many reasons. Most of the time when a believer falls into sin he does so because of his own flesh. A believer lives in a sinful world and he chooses to give into his flesh. However, there are times when one falls into sin because of a direct attack of Satan.

In this specific context, it would take an attack of Satan to get Peter to do what he did. Peter was a faithful and loyal Apostle. He was not easily intimidated, so to get him to do what he did would take something Satanic.

In **verse 31**, Jesus says to Peter that Satan desires to sift “you.” That pronoun you is plural so it is aimed at more than just Peter. By using the plural pronoun, Christ is informing all the Apostles and all of the people of God that Satan’s desire is to sift God’s people to see if he can get them to deny Jesus Christ by their lips and lives.

The image of “sifting” is one of shaking and throwing the wheat around so the chaff would be separated from the wheat. Satan wanted to shake these disciples so that he could bring out some sin and evil. He did not want these Apostles to blossom in righteousness. He did not want them stable in their faith; he wanted them shaken in their faith.

Keep in mind that these Apostles had just been informed that their loyalty and faithfulness would be greatly rewarded (22:28-30). When Christ would set up His kingdom for Israel on earth, they would hold high, prestigious, honored positions of judgment. Satan was out to stop that from happening and it would start with Peter.

Carefully notice what Christ reveals here: Satan has demanded permission. That word “demanded” is a Greek word that means to ask or make a request for the right to do something. Satan made a request to God and asked His permission to sift Peter and the other Apostles.

There are a couple of points to see here:

1. A believer cannot come under any Satanic attack unless God Himself permits it. Satanic attack is controlled by God (i.e. Job).
2. There are times when a faithful, strong believer fails due to Satan’s work.

Again we want to remember that Peter is a strong, faithful, loyal Apostle. This is not about some weak, anemic, wishy-washy spiritual invalid. Peter is a strong man of God. In fact, Peter would defend Jesus Christ and eventually die for Jesus Christ.

Satan does not get permission to attack many believers because they are so worldly he already has them going the direction he wants.

FACTUAL OBSERVATION #2 – The prayer request for a faithful believer's faith. **22:32a**

This is fascinating and important to see. When Jesus informs Peter that Satan is out to sift him, He does not lecture him, threaten him, He does not criticize him, He does not condemn him or gossip against him. What He does is pray for him.

Carefully notice what Jesus prays, "that your faith may not fail." That word "fail" is one that means to cease to be. This particular word has the preposition "ek" in front of it which speaks of a total cessation. What Christ is praying is that His disciples will still maintain their faith even while being sifted by Satan. He did not want them to stop having their Apostolic faith even when they failed.

What is fascinating about this prayer is that Jesus does not pray they would escape the sifting. His prayer is after they have been sifted that they would maintain their Apostolic faith and that they would continue to minister to others. Darrel Bock said what this prayer means is not "that Peter would never fail, but that whatever failure he has will be temporary" (*Luke 9:51-24:53*, p. 1742).

The natural tendency for a sifted disciple is to abandon the discipleship ministry. In fact, there are many within the family of God who would try to get him to do just that. Christ's prayer is that the believer won't quit, won't stop, but will continue to by faith go forward and minister. Peter could come back from the failure and stronger and better minister.

When a believer fails, the first surge of emotion will be to run and quit. One of the first clues that one has sinned is that they disappear and want to quit. The right thing to do is to face it, confess it, deal with it, turn from it and get going. That is what Jesus prayed.

According to Hebrews 7:25, those who have drawn near to God through faith in Jesus Christ always have Jesus Christ as their intercessor. He constantly prays and intercedes on their behalf. He prays that they will face the sin, confess the sin, turn from the sin and then get going again for Him.

Our sins and failures do not have to be the last word on our lives. As one commentator observed, we may lose a battle here and there but we do not have to lose the war. We can actually come out stronger and be used greater, if we face the failure.

FACTUAL OBSERVATION #3 – The personal responsibility of the believer who falls.
22:32b

Look at this verse. Jesus says to Peter, it is your responsibility to turn around. That participle “turn around” is an aorist tense. What that means is when the believer fails, he has the responsibility to take action at that point of time to turn from the sin and turn back to God. When a believer fails or sins, it is his responsibility to turn around. It is his responsibility to turn again to the previous state of faithfulness and then strengthen “your brothers.” **Forgiveness is offered by God, but the believer is responsible to face the sin, confess the sin and turn from the sin.**

We learn here one reason why God sovereignly permits a believer to fall is so that he may minister to others who are falling or have fallen. Jesus Christ does not teach shelving a repentant believer; He teaches using them again.

If you have been a faithful believer and you fail or fall, it is your responsibility to own up to it and turn from it and get back to your relationship with God. Don’t play the blame game, get up and get going.

One reason you need to do this is to help others.

FACTUAL OBSERVATION #4 – The self-confident response of a believer about to fall.
22:33

A believer who is about to fall usually has a very confident attitude concerning his commitment to Jesus Christ. Jesus had just informed Peter that he was about to fall and Peter’s response was he was unsiftable.

Peter believes he has reached a level in which some Satanic sifting and temptation is impossible for him to succumb.

This is a very naïve and arrogant attitude to have.

Proverbs 28:26 says, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.”

I Corinthians 10:12 says, “...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

This very thing happened to an entire church, which is the 5th church listed in Revelation. Sardis sat on top of a 1,500 foot mountain. The people who lived there thought there was no way an enemy could get at them. They thought their city was impregnable. Yet in 549 BC and in 218 BC the city was captured by enemies who scaled the mountain and did the impossible. The city was sound asleep in self-confidence and was captured.

Do not ever think that you are beyond a Satanic sifting and failure. In fact, the Apostle Peter said we must humble ourselves because “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Pet. 5:9).

The self-confident attitude that says “never me” or “not me” is ripe for a major fall and “let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

FACTUAL OBSERVATION #5 – The accurate realization about a believer’s fall. **22:34**

Christ’s response to the self-confident Peter is you won’t last long. Your self-confident promises won’t make it through the night. In just a few short hours, Peter would go from being the most celebrated Apostle to being the most sinful. But then he would also go from being the most sinful to the most spiritual.

In fact, it would be the crowing of the rooster that would actually bring Peter under tremendous conviction and bring him to repentance (Luke 22:60-62). He did not make excuses; he did not blame others; he blamed himself.

Jesus knew this would happen. He knew all of His men would fail, but He still loved them and He still wanted to use them.

He did not abandon them and He did not shelve them and He did not demean them. He told them that He wanted to use them.

Perhaps you have been sifted by Satan. You have stumbled into deep, dark sin and have not done what was right. Turn from it now. Turn back to the Lord. Face up to it and confess it and, as Jeremiah said, get up from the fall and get going again.