

HELP FOR SAINTS BEING SIFTED
LUKE 22:31-34

Introduction:

A story is told about a shipwrecked man managed who to reach an uninhabited island. To protect himself against the elements and to safeguard the few possessions he had salvaged, he built a little hut from which he constantly and prayerfully scanned the horizon for the approach of a ship.

Returning one evening after a search for food, he was terrified to find the hut completely enveloped in flames. Everything he had salvaged was destroyed. Yet by divine mercy this hard affliction was changed into a mighty advantage. Early the following morning he awoke to find a ship anchored off the island. When the captain stepped ashore, he explained, "We saw your smoke signal and came."

Everything the marooned man owned had to be destroyed before he could be rescued.

The TRIALS and ADVERSITIES of life are never pleasant, but it is IN THEM that we come to LEARN THE SECRETS OF DEPENDENCE, OF GRACE, OF HOPE and OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

None of us wishes for TRIALS or ADVERSITY, but it is THROUGH THEM that GOD REFINES the METAL of our lives and MOLDS US MORE INTO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.

Just as gold or silver is subjected to GREAT HEAT so that the DROSS can be removed, GOD allows us to enter the FURNACE OF AFFLICTION so that HE MIGHT REFINE and PURIFY OUR LIVES.

Of course, the MOST DIFFICULT of the ADVERSITIES we face is that which comes from our own SIN and THE ATTACKS OF THE DEVIL. When we are forced to enter that furnace, the potential for pain is greatest.

In our text, SIMON PETER is told that he is about to be TESTED. He is ENCOURAGED in this revelation by the fact that THE LORD HIMSELF HAS PRAYED FOR HIM ahead of time. *(Think about that!)*

There are, no doubt, some here who are going through some kind of

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LUKE 22:31-34

ADVERSITY right now! You may be facing **BATTLES** and **TRIALS** in your life that the rest of us can't even begin to imagine going through. But, just as there was **HOPE** for **PETER**, there is **HOPE** for you!

This passage lets us know that even when we **FAIL** in the **ATTACKS OF LIFE** we **do not** have to crawl away in defeat, never to be heard from again.

I want you to see that every **CHILD OF GOD** can **ENDURE** the **TRIALS, TESTS, and ADVERSITIES OF LIFE**. And even if we have **FAILED**, we can still **RISE** from the ashes and **SALVAGE** something from what **SATAN** has attempted to destroy.

I. UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE A DETERMINED FOE! (Vs 31)

SATAN is **DETERMINED** To Try To **DESTROY** Our Lives!

Later, **PETER** would write in his first **EPISTLE** these words...

1 Peter 5:8—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:” (He came to know that by EXPERIENCE!)

A. Understand The Context Here.

CHRIST told **PETER** that **SATAN** has made a request to have "*all*" the **DISCIPLES**, not just **PETER**, **TESTED** regarding their **FAITH**. The word "*desired*" means "*to demand, to ask for oneself.*" The word translated "*you*" here is plural. In other words, this **REQUEST** was not just that **PETER** might be **TESTED**, it was a **REQUEST** to **TEST** all the **DISCIPLES**.

The term "*SIFT*" is an agricultural term that refers to the process of separating the husk of the wheat from the grain. The wheat would be crushed under foot or with a tool, then it was thrown into the air. The chaff, or husk, was blown away by the wind and all that was left behind was the good grain.

SATAN wanted to prove that there was **NO REALITY** to the **FAITH** of the **DISCIPLES**.

This is much like **SATAN'S** request to test **JOB'S FAITH** in

Job 1:8-12 and Job 2:3-6.

SATAN wanted to crush CHRIST'S DISCIPLES, *SIFT THEM*, and prove that nothing would be left but a bunch of empty hopeless shells.

SATAN already had JUDAS ISCARIOT (who the BIBLE says was a devil from the beginning). And here he wanted the eleven that were left! *(That's the context!)*

B. Understand That We Battle A Determined Enemy!

SATAN is relentless in attempts to prove that BELIEVERS are nothing but a bunch of phonies.

He wants to show GOD and the world that there is nothing to our PROFESSION OF FAITH—that it is only a PROFESSION without any real substance!

He wants to DESTROY everything of value in our lives.

He wants to RUIN our testimony if he can!

He wants to DESTROY our homes if he can!

He wants to WRECK our influence if he can!

He wants to STEAL everything of value we have in our life and leave us with nothing but an empty, devastated shell of what we once had!

He wants us to get our eyes off of CHRIST and on to our CIRCUMSTANCES and QUIT!

He wants to drive a wedge between us and the members of our FAMILY in any and every way he can.

He wants to drive a wedge between us and the members of our CHURCH family.

He'll use whatever tactic he deems necessary to get us to FALL. He'll never stop until we FALL, or we DIE!

C. Understand That If The Devil Gets His Way In Our Life And We Succumb To His Attacks, Remember This: "No One Sins In A Vacuum!" *(i.e. Our sin doesn't just affect us, it can affect everyone around us!)*

It is the absolute height of selfishness to live just to please ourselves while having no regard to what our sin is doing to our FAMILY, our CHURCH and to OTHERS IN OUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE!

We know from experience how ADAM'S fall touched us all! *Romans 5:12—“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”*

ACHAN'S SIN (*Joshua 7*) affected 36 men who lost their lives in the battle for Ai, it affected their families, it affected his family and it affected all of ISRAEL!

DAVID'S SIN with BATHSHEBA, in *2 Samuel 11*, affected him, BATHSHEBA, their baby, BATHSHEBA'S husband, and the house of DAVID for years to come!

We never walk away unaffected when we choose to SIN!

UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE A DETERMINED FOE.

II. UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE A DILIGENT FRIEND!

(Vs 32) We SAINTS Have A Powerful ALLY In Our Corner!

A. PETER Received The Benefit Of The LORD'S INTERCESSION! (Note that the “*you*” in *vs. 31* is plural, but “*thee*” in *vs. 32* is singular!)

We can be sure that JESUS was praying for them all, but HE spoke especially to PETER, because HE knew that PETER was about to take have one of his biggest TRIALS. (*vs. 34*)

All of the DISCIPLES failed the LORD that night!

Mark 14:50 says that they all forsook **HIM** and fled.

But **PETER** went beyond simple forsaking and into the realm of outright denial of any relationship to **CHRIST!**

(Luke 22:54-62)

CHRIST knew ahead of time that **PETER** would fail **HIM** and even **how PETER** would fail **HIM** and yet **HE** prayed for him! That's a powerful **ALLY!**

B. Understand The Times Of Testing And Failure Will Come In Our Lives, But In The Midst Of Them, Let's Take Courage In The Fact That We Have The Lord Praying For Us And Pleading Our Case In Heaven!

Hebrews 7:25—“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**”

Romans 8:34—“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, **who also maketh intercession for us.**”

1 John 2:1—“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, **we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:**”

Notice in *Luke 22:32* the word **"but"**. **SATAN** has his **DEVICES** and his **SCHEMES** to **TEMPT US** and **TRY US**, but **HE DOESN'T HAVE THE LAST WORD!**

In the midst of his **SCHEMING** and **PLANNING**, **JESUS** **"butts"** in to stand by our side until the **TRIAL** has passed! He will never leave us, no matter the **TEST** or **RESPONSE!**

Hebrews 13:5—“...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. **So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**”

C. Understand Though, That Just Because We Are Tempted, That Does Not Mean That We Have To Fall Into Sin.

CHRIST can equip us with all the **resources** we will ever need to be able to **withstand anything** the devil throws at us.

1 Corinthians 10:13—“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; **but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.**”

Hebrews 2:18—“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted.**”

James 4:7-8—“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.**”

WE HAVE A DETERMINED FOE! (Satan)

WE HAVE A DILIGENT FRIEND! (Our Saviour)

III. UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE A DISTINGUISHED FUTURE! (Vs. 32) No Failure Should Ever Be Considered Final!

A. CHRIST Made It Clear That Peter Would Fall But He Would Get Back Up!

The phrase **"when thou art converted"**, means **"when you have repented,"** or **"when you have come back to me."**

In other words, **PETER'S** fall would not be the final statement of his life. He was going to be **RESTORED** and he was going to be used of the **LORD** in a great way.

Mark 16:7—“But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.”

Remember what happened at **PENTECOST** and the great **ACTS OF FAITH** in his life recorded in the book of **ACTS**. Some here may come under this kind of attack someday and

HELP FOR SAINTS BEING SIFTED

LUKE 22:31-34

may fall into deep sin.

Some here may have already fallen and may have already come back from a fall into deep sin.

But there may be others who have fallen and are still in that fallen state today.

I want you to know that your fall does not have to define the rest of your life!

B. The LORD Has Made Provision For The Cleansing And The Restoration Of Those Who Fall Into Sin.

Those provisions come after one's **CONFESSION and REPENTANCE and include GOD'S FORGIVENESS and RESTORATION.**

When we come clean about our **SINS** and **TURN FROM THEM**, the **LORD** will **FORGIVE US** and **RESTORE US** to a place of **BLESSING** and **SERVICE!**

1 John 1:9—“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Proverbs 28:13—“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

This truth is was illustrated by **CHRIST** in the **PARABLE** of the **PRODIGAL SON** and what happened when he returned to his father in *Luke 15:11-24*.

C. When A Person Walks Away From The Things Of The LORD And Goes Into SIN And Stays There, It Means That One Of Two Things Is True.

1) Either They Were Never Really Saved.

1 John 2:19—“They went out from us, but they were not

HELP FOR SAINTS BEING SIFTED

LUKE 22:31-34

of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

2) Or They Are In Open Rebellion And Are Subject To The Chastisement Of The LORD.

Hebrews 12:6-12

GENUINE FAITH may falter, but it will never utterly fail! *Proverbs 24:16*—“For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.”

PETER came back because he was **SAVED!** When he was **SIFTED**, it was proven that his **PROFESSION OF FAITH** was **GENUINE**. There was some chaff, but there was some grain of real **FAITH** there too!

D. When A BELIEVER Falls Into SIN, Those Who Genuinely LOVE Them Will Seek To RESTORE Them.

Galatians 6:1-2-- “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

We are not to condone or support their **SINFUL** actions, but we should not abandon them completely either!

WE HAVE A DETERMINED FOE...A DILIGENT ...A DISTINGUISHED FUTURE!

IV. UNDERSTAND THAT WE CAN HAVE A DEFINITE FOOLISHNESS! (Vs 33-34) Never Say Never!

A. When PETER Heard The Prediction Of His Denial, He

Boasted Of His LOVE And DEVOTION For The LORD.

He asserted his willingness to go to prison or even to die to prove his allegiance to **JESUS**. But **PETER** forgot a very important principle of life, "*Never Say Never!*"

Listen carefully, **NO ONE IN THIS ROOM IS ABOVE FALLING INTO THE SNARE OF THE ENEMY.**

Only when we are in **SATAN'S SIFTER** can we know exactly how we will respond! It is a dangerous thing for us to rely upon ourselves and our ability to **WITHSTAND TEMPTATION and TESTING.**

1 Corinthians 10:12—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

We've all seen someone act in certain ways and said, "*I would never do that!*" We need to be careful!

B. Any Of Us Can Become Weak In The Area Of What We View As Our Greatest Strength!

When we think we have an area of our life absolutely conquered and think that **SIN** cannot possibly occur there, we will tend to let our guard down. When that happens we can be sure that the enemy will target us for **SIFTING!**

Proverbs 28:26—"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

Proverbs 16:18—"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Jeremiah 17:9—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

C. If We Have The Feeling That "It Can't Happen To Me!", We Are In Imminent Danger Of Falling!

Conclusion:

JESUS has done everything necessary to provide **SALVATION** for those that are in **BONDAGE** to their **SIN**. Thank **GOD** for that!

If you have never been released from that **BONDAGE** to sin, please come and receive what **CHRIST** has for you so that you can be **FREE INDEED!**

Those who are **SAVED** have the **LORD JESUS** as an **INTERCESSOR!** He not only **INTERCEDES** for us, but **HELPS** us through the times of **TEMPTATION** and **SIFTING**. **HE** has promised to **FORGIVE** and **RESTORE** us when we do **FAIL** if we will **CONFESS** and **REPENT!**

There is no need for anyone to allow **SIN** to fully devastate their life. "*If you would be free from the burden of SIN, there is POWER in the BLOOD!*" If you want **HELP** as you face the times of **SIFTING** in life, you will find it in **CHRIST** and in those who walk with **HIM!**