

Special Message:

“SIFTED SAINTS”

By

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Wednesday Bible Study*

Luke 22:31 “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” **Alt. Translation says, “Satan has asked to sift you....”**

Historians tell us of a man named Daniel Morgan who commanded a unit called Morgan’s Raiders during the Revolutionary War. He served on the colonist’s side and became well known for his expertise on the battlefield. Military strategists would tell us that it was his tactics that led to the turning point in the war at the Battle of Saratoga.

In that battle, Morgan told his riflemen, **“Forget the poor fellows who fight for six pence a day. Concentrate your fire on the officers. In fact, try your best to hit the epaulets that the officers wear on their shoulders.”** As a result of Morgan’s orders, British General Burgoyne’s officer ranks were so depleted that he surrendered at Saratoga. Morgan’s strategy is still the way to win a battle.

Jesus knew all too well the fierceness of our enemy. He knows that he comes with every weapon to sift the Lord’s people. He has been doing this from the beginning. We do not realize how determined Satan is to destroy all believer’s faith. He seeks to destroy your faith, and my faith.

Someone has said that “When we make the decision to follow Christ in total obedience, an alarm goes off in hell.” We become a threat to the kingdom of darkness and a prime target of demonic forces.

“Simon, Simon, Jesus says, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat.”

In our scripture reading, Jesus introduces the subject of sifting saints. In His day, grain workers used a sieve just before they sacked grain. They shoveled wheat into a square box covered with netting, then turned the box upside down and shook it violently. The grit and dirt fell through the netting until only the grain kernels remained.

So then, **“sift”** in this verse means **“to be turned upside down, shaken and separated—to be shocked through the agitation of sudden trials.”** These trials can take many forms—sickness, death of a loved one, loss of reputation, financial disaster, loss of employment, broken relationships, etc. The whole purpose of this sifting is that we would turn from our faith!

Jesus used this analogy to say to Peter, “Satan believes you’re nothing but grit and dirt and that when he puts you in the sieve and shakes you, you will fall through to the ground.” This is not unlike what Satan said to God in the book of Job. Job was not exempt, and neither are we. I believe that at different points in our life we could all replace the name of Job or Peter with our name. What does the devil think of us? He thinks that we are nothing but grit and dirt and that we are weak. He thinks that when he applies the pressure we will fall through to the ground in defeat and despair.

I would like for us especially to understand that Jesus did not pray that Peter would be spared from Satan’s sifting. Rather He prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail. That indicates to me something of great importance here. Our faith is Satan’s prime target. **OUR FAITH!**

1. The Time Of The Sifting

It came immediately after a great revelation. Peter and the other disciples had just received a promise from Jesus that they would have a fruitful ministry. In verse 29, Jesus said, “I confer on you a kingdom.” He told them that they would eat and drink at His table and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In essence, He told them that He was going to channel His kingdom through them, just as the Father had made Him a channel of His glory. In addition to this, Jesus said that they would become princes, ruling and reigning with Him.

I can only imagine the thrill they must have all been experiencing. Forget about the bad news of the morning and of yesterday. They have been given a glimpse of the future. Jesus is saying, “Hold on fellows, good things are in store. You are going to accomplish great things.” Then the second shoe falls. Be on your guard when you’ve had a great spiritual experience—when you feel the Lord’s presence and power in your life—when you move closer to Him than ever before. Don’t fear it or dread it, but be on guard.

I am sure that there are those going through the process. You feel as though your life has been turned upside down and shaken apart. You might ask, “Why me?” or “Why now?” We may not know the why’s until we make it to heaven. But at least you can rejoice that you are such a threat to Satan. He doesn’t bother with those who have no or little commitment to follow Christ. He has no need to bother with them. Satan seeks to sift only those who are a threat to his work. The deeper you go with Christ, the more Satan will want you to turn back and the more you will be “sifted.”

2. What To Do For Others When They Are Sifted (Pray)

When we hear of someone who is being sifted by Satan, what should we do? What did Jesus do about Peter's imminent fall? He prayed for him. In verse 32, He said, "Peter, I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail."

What the Lord was really saying was, "Peter is worth saving. Satan desires him, but I desire him more." Judas could not be saved; he had no heart for the Lord. He sold out to greed and that became an open door for the devil. But Peter truly loved the Lord and Jesus said to him, "I have prayed for you." Can you imagine anything better to hear in all the world?

Lord, give us that kind of love! When we see brothers and sisters struggling or heading for trouble or disaster, let us love them enough to warn them as firmly as Jesus warned Peter. Then we'll be able to say, "I'm praying for you." ***In the Greek, "you" is plural, meaning "all of you."*** Jesus was speaking about praying not only for Peter but for all of the disciples---and that means you and me today!

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

3. When The Sifting Is Over

When Peter was sifted, he failed miserably. But it was not a lasting or permanent kind of failure. After his denial, Luke tells us that "he went out and wept bitterly" (Lk.22:61,62).

Just because someone fails, does

not make him a failure. What does make a person a failure? Isn't it simply a decision to give up and quit? I picture Peter walking toward the Judean hills, falling on his face, crying out to the Lord for forgiveness. He's at the lowest point of his life. He was ashamed of his denial, especially in light of the fact that he was a leader among the disciples.

But then something wonderful happened. The Holy Spirit brought to Peter's memory the words of his Master: ***"I have prayed for you."*** They brought hope and comfort to his soul. He also remembered the words, "When you have returned to me, strengthen your brothers."

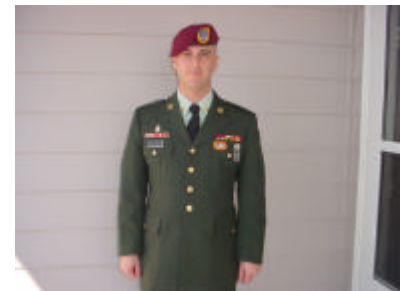
How many times Peter must have played this over and over in his mind, thinking, "Didn't Jesus say I would return to Him, be brought back to Him? Didn't He say I still had a ministry? After what I did, can I really help others? Well, consider this:

- 1) Peter was the first disciple to reach the tomb when they were told that Jesus had risen.
- 2) He was with the other disciples when Jesus later appeared in their midst.
- 3) He was on the beach with the risen Christ when He said, "Peter, feed my sheep."
- 4) He was there worshiping when Jesus was translated to glory.
- 5) He became a mighty preacher and missionary and leader in the early church.

When we see someone else weeping, broken, having failed at some point, we ought to say to them, "When this sifting is over, when your faith is stronger, when you are restored—God will use you."

4. God The Restorer And Rewarder Of Good.

He takes the trash in our lives and converts it into treasure. Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purposes." 2 Pet 1:10-11 "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." One day soon, the sifting process will end. Satan will have done his worst but our Advocate the Lord Jesus Christ, will win this battle for me and for you.



Sgt. Jonathan Watters

L.I.F.T.

Let us not forget to support our little girl, Valerie Nomenjanahary, in Madagascar. We have not sent support to her for July and August due to low funds. Please see Tina Farmer if you can help us get caught up.

Ladies Retreat

Are you ready for a wonderful time in the Lord? Please keep the first weekend in November clear for this special time of refreshing. We will be receiving the registration forms soon. Our speaker SHOULD be a lady we all know and love, Donna Kieser-Rice.