

Faith, Failure and Recovery

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- [0 : 00] verses from Luke's Gospel, chapter 22, beginning initially at verse 1. Luke 22, beginning initially at verse 1.
- Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.
- Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was the number of the twelve. He went away and conferred with the high priests and officers how he might betray him to them.
- And they were glad and engaged to give him money. So he agreed and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude.
- Verse 14. And when the hour came, Jesus sat at table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.
- [1 : 20] For I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took a cup when he had given thanks, he said, take this and divide it among yourselves.
- For I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you.
- Do this in remembrance of me. And likewise the cup after supper, saying, This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.
- But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes that it was being determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed.
- And they began to question one another which of them it was that would do this. Verse 28. You are those who have continued with me in my trials.
- [2 : 33] And I sign to you as my Father assigned to me a kingdom. That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. And sit on the thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Simon, Simon. Behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.
- And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers. And he said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.
- Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day. Until you three times deny that you know me.
- Amen. With the Lord blessed us that reading may be to his praise and to his glory. Chapter 22. And I want to concentrate this evening on verses 31 and 32.
- [3 : 39] Simon, Simon. Behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.
- And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. Now, the theme of this message is about the possibility of faith failure.

But about its definite recovery. Scholars believe that this particular incident, which is only recorded in Luke's gospel, took place after the apostolic band, if you like, had left the upper room and were on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And in these words, Jesus predicts, in spite of Peter's insistence, that his faith will fail. But more than that, it will also recovery.

And the recovery is due to nothing less than the prayer of Jesus. That is a comforting thought, is it not? There's something lying beneath the surface here which is worth noting.

[4 : 55] The you that's referred to in verse 31 is plural. What does that mean? It means that although it's addressed to Simon, Simon, all the apostles are in view there.

That in verse 32 is singular, which means it's only Peter that's being talked about. So we come first of all to what I've called the desire of Satan.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. Is it correct in 2016 to still be talking about Satan, the devil, and all he gets up to?

Well, yes, it is. It's in the biblical record. And we take our faith from the biblical record. But more than that, the Christian apologist C.S. Lewis, he once said this.

The greatest contract that the devil has ever pulled off is to convince most of the world that he doesn't exist. So I take it that we should be talking about Satan.

[6 : 15] And what's happening here in this verse is that we're taken behind the scenes of the spiritual life of Simon Peter and being permitted to see that there is a spiritual warfare behind all of his walk with God, and that is true for each and every one of us.

The first word is this business of Satan demanded. Literally, what it means is that he demanded the surrender, not just of Simon Peter, but of all the apostles.

And there's a suggestion in the way it's phrased that God has somehow agreed with that request. He has demanded the surrender of all the apostles, but in particular, Simon Peter.

Now, if it is the case, and I think it is, that the Lord has granted this petition that Satan has, he's also put a limit on all that he might achieve.

To see how this is the case, the curtain is pulled back in the book of Job. And in chapter 1, we read in verse 12, the Lord said to Satan, behold, all that he has is in your power.

[7 : 47] Only upon himself do not put forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. And if you turn to Job chapter 1, not now, but in your own reflection, you'll find that there's an interview process going on between the Lord, the heavenly council, and Satan.

And the Lord said to Satan, have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil.

So here we have an idea that Satan has the right to consider the servants of God and to make an estimation of their character.

And you find it in the response. Satan answered the Lord, does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every hand?

You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But now put forth your hand and touch all that he has and he will curse you to his face.

[9 : 03] So here's an admission by Satan of what God has done. God has blessed the work of Job. He has given him great prosperity and he's put a hedge around him for protection.

But Satan's response is this. Remove all of that and he'll curse you to your face. In our Christian walk with God, it is true to say that God still says, have you considered my servant?

And from that consideration, there is a severe test that is coming about. And the real intention of Satan is in verse 20, 31.

Satan has demanded to sift you as wheat. As I said already, this statement applies to all the apostles.

This action of sifting wheat basically refers to the repeated swift and violent shaking of wheat in a sieve in order to separate the wheat from the chaff and other unwanted materials.

[10 : 37] So here is our Lord teaching this, that if you follow me, not only will you have to take up your cross and deny yourself, you're also going to be subjected to a severe trial and that this trial is starting this very night, the night they were in Gethsemane.

Now this metaphor of sifting, like sifting in a wheat, in a sieve, you'll also find it in Amos 9, verse 9. So here it is.

There is a severe trial that the life of faith can sometimes impose on the believer. He has demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

All of that, not just to Peter, but to James and John. Which of these did Satan really shake about and test like wheat in a sieve?

And the answer is, just look at the life of Judas Iscariot. And we can't go into that tonight because that's a study on all of its own.

[12 : 11] But that's the possibility if people hand their lives over to Satan. Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot.

A betrayer right in the midst of the apostolic band. And if you look at the book of Job from chapter 3 onwards, you see the exacting nature of the test and trial that God sometimes but not always imposes on his children.

That's the desire. The curtain is being pulled back and we're able to see forces at work. And these are sinister forces.

These are what the apostle Paul talks about in Ephesians 6 as spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

I beg you to beware of it. The antidote is in this next verse. The desire of Jesus.

[13 : 21] I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. The word here means to pray, to ask, to beg or to implore.

But there's something here which is in the Greek which doesn't come out very well in the English and it's this. That in Greek there are two past tenses.

One is called the imperfect and it's continuous action in the past. And you might have thought that that is the tense that reflects the prayer life of Jesus.

But it's not. The tense that's used here is used to record things that only happen once. So the implication is that the recovery of Peter's faith rests on a single prayer which Jesus uttered on his behalf and he is sure that God the Father has answered him.

Jesus is not making many prayers for Simon Peter. He made one. It is sufficient to save us to save him and deliver him from his present temptation.

[14 : 46] I have prayed for you. This is completely sufficient to undo the work in the temptation of Simon Peter and in anyone else so that what we are asserting here is that Jesus Christ in himself is the victor.

In the world you will have tribulation he said. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.

In John 14 we read for this reason the Son of God was manifest that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Who is he says 1 John 5 that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. So here is a statement of faith that is saying that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ he and he alone will grant us victory over the evil one.

The Lord's prayer deals with it. Jesus tells us this is how you pray. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

[16 : 12] So the victory which Jesus has achieved rests not only on his prayer life but on his death on our behalf. Paul writing to the Colossians talks about it in Colossians 2 15.

He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them triumphing over them in the cross.

Jesus is the victor. Revelation 12 verse 11 They conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives unto death.

He is the one who conquers the powers of Satan. But here's something else. Hebrews 7 and 25 says this Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

That is something that you can take to your heart. He always lives to make intercession for us.

[17 : 39] So this is what Jesus says. I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. But the fact is what the New Testament teaches is that the faith of Simon Peter did fail and it was a great failure.

So the one who said in this very chapter I am ready to go with you to prison and to death in a very short time said woman I don't know who you're talking about.

How could it be that the one who gave the confession recorded in Matthew 16 you are the Christ the son of the living God should in such a devastating fashion deny the Jesus that he loved.

In Luke's gospel in verse 62 verse 61 of chapter 22 at the moment of his failure the Lord turned and looked at Peter he looked at him with the eyes of love and mercy speaking right down into his soul he had despite his brashness denied his Lord and master what had happened to the prayer that Jesus had uttered I have prayed for you the question is or the answer to the question the prayer has not failed because his faith will not fall terminally so that he would never be of any further use in the kingdom of God rather his faith would recover and when he did

Peter would be a better man and servant of God for that failure so finally bear with me as we look at verse 32 the desire of Peter when you have turned again turned back strengthen your brothers so the recovery of Peter's faith is being discussed here in a very radical fashion because the root that's being used here to describe this means to turn back return turn to turn around if you go back to the King James version and you read this verse there they translate it like this when you are converted and we can justify that translation because from that verb has come up with another noun called which translates as conversion it's only used once in the

[20 : 44] New Testament but it's used in Acts 15 where they're talking about the conversion of the Gentiles so what's being said here in these Gentiles who turned around in their experience and started to face a different direction was that a profound work of repentance had taken place in their lives and this is what Jesus is saying to Peter the Lord turned and looked at Peter let me read Peter remembered the word of the Lord how he had said to him before the cock crows today you will deny me three times and Peter went out and wept bitterly so here we are Peter realizing what he's done and it's from this realization this remorse that a tremendous change comes upon this man

Peter there is a value to not worldly sorrow but godly sorrow and we read in 2nd Corinthians 7 godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret but worldly grief produces death that statement is made to the Corinthians after Paul had challenged some of their decisions and they had received his word repented over what they had done and they now had a marvelously new experience after the death of John the Baptist Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God and saying repent what does that mean repent the verb that's used in Greek means to repent have a change of heart turn from one's sins change one's ways so as far as Peter is concerned this remorse that he's talking about caused him to change his life and because his life is now being changed here is the challenge that comes to him strengthen your brothers strengthen your sisters and he would have a ministry that would affect other people because of his experience and that ministry began on the day of

Pentecost in Acts 2 Peter standing with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed them men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem let this be known to you and give ear to my words for these men are not drunk as you suppose since it is only the third hour of the day but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel and if you follow the sermon through he goes on to defend the truth of the resurrection of Christ based on Joel 2 and on Psalms 16 and 110 here is the beginning of Peter's ministry to strengthen then it goes on and we find that in Acts 10 and 11 he's there defending the admission of the Gentiles which formerly would have been a no no admission of the

Gentiles into the church and this is how he defends it I remember the word of the Lord how he said John baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit if then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ who was I that I could withstand God strengthening the position of the Gentile believers but he comes into his own towards the end of his life when God calls him to strengthen the Christian community that was scattered abroad because of persecution and that he does not only in his public ministry but in what he writes so if you look at first Peter he starts off by saying this Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus Galatia

Cappadocia Asia and Bithynia may grace and peace be multiplied to you at the end of the letter he writes by Silvanus a faithful brother as I regard him I have written briefly to you exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God stand fast in it the day of persecution the day of trial had arrived how were people going to stand against the dictates of the government which said you either worship Caesar or you'll be put to death well here's how it's happening Peter because of his experience is able to write these two letters is able to strengthen his brothers because of what he went through Simon

[26 : 50] Simon behold Satan has demanded to have you that he might sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail what kind of word is this is it a theological word not really it's based of course on the teaching of the Bible because without the Bible we wouldn't have any word at all but it is a pastoral word it's one that you can draw strength from because there have been moments when us all we think we failed and then we take to heart the ministry of Jesus that says I have prayed for you so when you're in the flow of Desmond as John's pilgrim progress would put it what you need to do is not to remember where you are but where you're going and where you're going depends on the prayer of Jesus I have prayed for you may God bless these remarks may they be to his praise and to his glory I'm going to sing hymn number 619