

## SATAN HAS ASKED FOR YOU

*“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’”* (Lk.22:31-34). We often read this passage as though it were an isolated incident in the life of Peter, with no application for us. Yet, I believe that there are greater lessons to be learned, which can greatly help us in our walk with Jesus. Let’s consider this text, and the lessons to be gleaned from it!

**1. Satan must ask permission before he can attack us (“Satan has asked for you”).** This is exemplified not only here, but also in the book of Job (chps.1-2). This tells me that, ultimately, God is in charge. Satan can ONLY do what God allows Him to do. But this raises another question: *Why does God allow Satan to do anything at all?* And the answer is found in “free will” – the idea that God has given us the ability to choose. We are not pre-programmed robots; instead, we are beings with the ability to choose (Josh.14:15). However, there is a catch: we are responsible for those choices! God tries to influence our choices by appealing to our intellect through His word (Ac.17:1-4). And Satan tries to influence us by appealing to our fleshly lusts (Lk.4:1-13; cf. 1Jn.2:15-17). But WE cast the deciding vote! Knowing that Satan must ask God first, reassures me that, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1Cor.10:13).

**2. Satan can turn our lives upside down (“that he may sift you as wheat”).** Sifting is a violent process, whereby the wheat is agitated in order to separate the grain from the chaff. When Satan is sifting us, he is violently agitating our lives, to see if there is any “chaff” – i.e. bad things that he can exploit to ruin us! On the positive side, God can use that same sifting process to bring out the “good part.” And once again, WE cast the deciding vote! However, the whole process is violent, and our lives can literally be turned upside down by this “sifting.” This is one reason there is so much suffering in the world. But forewarned is forearmed! We know that the trials of life are part of the sifting process that we must endure – a process that can either make or break us (Jm.1:12-16).

**3. Christ prays for us, to help avert failure (“But I have prayed for you”).** This text is a specific application of a more general principle: *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”* (Hb.7:25). As Christ prayed for Peter, so He prays for each of us! Since He knows us better than we know ourselves, it is very comforting to know that He is praying for us. Not only does Christ intercede, but “the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rm.8:26-27). Just think of it! TWO Divine beings praying for us! Indeed, “if God is for us, who can be against us” (v.31). God gives us every possible advantage in our struggle with Satan. But once again, WE cast the deciding vote! With free will, God may teach, persuade, beg, appeal, and even pray. But ultimately, WE must make the right choice.

**4. Our salvation includes returning to God (“when you have returned to Me”).** Yes, God plays a role in our salvation, for He sent Jesus, and gave us His word. But WE must accept Jesus, and obey His word (Jn.12:48)! This principle is true in our initial salvation (cf. Ac.2:38, “repent”), as well as our ongoing salvation (Ac.8:22; cf. 1Jn.1:7-9). In Peter’s case, it seems that Jesus foreknows how this will turn out. I also believe He is capable of knowing how OUR situation will turn out. So, what does He foreknow about YOU? Will you return? Or will you ultimately fall away beyond all hope (Hb.6:4-6)? Only you and God know for sure!

--Lanny Smith