

October 20, 2019

“Satan Has Asked For You”

“And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. (32) But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’ (33) But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with you, both to prison and to death.’ (34) Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me.’”

The preceding recorded conversation between Jesus and Peter is most interesting. It occurred shortly after Jesus had instituted the Lord’s supper (Luke 22:14-23), and after there had been a “dispute among” the disciples “as to which of them should be considered the greatest” (Luke 22:24). It also occurred after Judas, one of the twelve disciples, had approached the chief priests, saying “what will you give me if I deliver Him to you,” at which time they “counted out to him thirty pieces of silver,” Matt. 26:14-16. And it occurred shortly before Judas led a “great multitudes with swords and clubs” to apprehend Jesus (Matt. 26:47; cf. Luke 22:47). With the betrayal actions of Judas at hand, with the cross just before Him, and mindful that Peter would soon deny Him, this had to be a most difficult time in the earthly life of Jesus! However, Jesus Who would soon “taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9), in our text is showing love and concern for one individual, for Peter, to whom Jesus spoke, saying, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). The double use of the words, “Simon, Simon,” reflects the love and concern of the Savior for Simon, and the importance of what Jesus was about to say. It reminds us of the words “Martha, Martha” (Luke 10:41), of “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” (Matt.23:37), or “Abraham, Abraham” (Gen. 22:11). In each of these instances with the double usage of the names cited, the Lord was manifesting his love for the ones mentioned, and was about to state something very, very important.

Even though He would very shortly be nailed to that cruel cross, Jesus in our text voiced His concern for one person, for “Simon.” “Simon” was his real name, but Jesus earlier had spoke to him, saying, “you shall be called Cephas (or Peter) which “is translated, a Stone”, John 1:42. However, on this occasion Simon was just “Simon;” he was not living up to the name “Cephas;” or “Peter;” meaning a stone or a rock.

Amazingly, Jesus said “Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). The one who had “asked for” Simon was herein called “Satan,” a term meaning adversary or accuser. Indeed, Satan is our “adversary” who wants to “devour” you and me (I Peter 5:8), even as he wanted to “sift” Simon “as wheat.”

Satan is the enemy of us all! The names and descriptions given to him in the Bible should give us some idea as to the danger he poses for each of us. For example, he is referred to as “Satan,” meaning “adversary” or accuser, Job 1:6. He is called “the devil,” from *diabolos*, meaning slanderer (I Peter 5:8). He is called “the tempter” (Matt. 4:3), “the wicked one” (Matt. 13:19), “the enemy” (Matt. 13:23), a “Liar” and a “murderer” (John 8:44), “the god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), “Belial” (2 Cor. 6:15), “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), “the great dragon” (Rev. 12:9), etc. All of these terms infer that Satan is one with whom we must reckon and must make every effort to “resist” (Jas. 4:7). He even tempted Jesus (Matt. 4:1-13), Who was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). If he could tempt Jesus in Whose heart no evil thought ever existed, you can be sure he is capable of tempting you and me!

Yes, Satan “asked for” Simon, that he might “sift” him “as wheat.” He “asked for” Simon, even as he in essence had asked for Job (Job 1:6-12). Job was “a blameless and upright

man” (Job 1:8), and Peter had been with the Lord for better than three years and had been a part of His inner circle. But these facts did not dissuade Satan from seeking their downfall!

Simon could not believe what he was hearing! He said to Jesus, “*Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death,*” Luke 22:23. He had great confidence in his own spiritual strength. But the Lord knew better. He told Simon “*the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me*” (Luke 22:34). And it happened exactly as Jesus had predicted. Not only did Peter deny Him “*three times;*” but he even cursed and swore, saying “*I do not know the man,*” (Matt. 26:72). He lied, he cursed, he swore in a matter of hours after telling Jesus “*I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death,*” Luke 22:33.

But Jesus, Who knew Simon better than Simon knew himself, said “*I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren,*” Luke 22:31. Simon did what he could never believe he would do; he denied the Lord! But when he heard the cock crow, he remembered what Jesus had said, and he “*went out and wept bitterly,*” Luke 22:62. And, amazingly, on that great day of Pentecost he proclaimed the first sermon in this the gospel age, resulting in the conversion of “*about three thousand souls,*” Acts 2:14-41. Later he wrote two epistles wherein he sought to “*strengthen*” his brethren (I Peter 4:12-14; 5:10; 2 Peter 1:5-10; 3:11, 17-18).

There are some important lessons we can learn from the Lord’s conversation with Simon, some of which are as follows:

1. We can be mistaken regarding our own spiritual strength, even as was Simon. Hence, we are told to “*let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall,*” I Cor. 10:13.

2. We are not immune to the “devices” of Satan (2 Cor. 2:11). He is our “*adversary,*” and he must be resisted (I Peter 5:8-9).

3. Jesus is ready to help! He “*prayed for*” Simon. He can “*sympathize with our weaknesses*” (Heb. 4:15); He is our “*Advocate with the Father*” (I John 2:1), and He is “*able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them*” (Heb. 7:25).

4. Repentance and restoration should follow sinful actions! Contrast Simon and Judas. Both very grievously sinned. Simon was grieved; he “*wept bitterly,*” but he made the necessary correction, even as he later admonished Simon the sorcerer (who also sinned after he was converted) to “*repent...and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you,*” Acts 8:22. Judas also was “*remorseful,*” but he “*went and hanged himself*” (Matt. 27:5), committing self-murder!

5. We also should “strengthen” our brethren! Simon did. And so should we! When we are faithful to the Lord, when we regularly attend all the worship services of the church, when we pray for one another, when we seek to restore those overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1), when we offer words of encouragement to those struggling with health issues, with temptation, etc., we are strengthening our brethren, and this is so important.

Conclusion: As we read the Lord’s conversation with Simon as recorded in Luke 22:31-34, let us put ourselves in Simon’s place, and make the proper personal application. By so doing, we are being strengthened, and so are our brethren. —B. Witherington
