

Job 1:1-12; 1 Pet. 5:6-11; Luke 22:31-343
HOW ALL THINGS CAN WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

Text: Lk 22:31-32

Three points: Warning, Praying, Turning.

1. The warning is about Satan at work;
2. The praying is about Christ at work; and
3. The turning is about Simon at work.

First: The Warning: "Simon, Simon, satan has asked to sift you as wheat."

These words make us ask, "Did the warning about Satan working on Jesus' disciple upset Simon?" Did Simon respond by saying, "Oh no! Jesus, did he? Satan sifting me like wheat, i.e., helplessly bouncing me around? And what did you tell him?"
you mean that I, devil, is trying to get me?

I hope you told him to get lost. This is the last thing I need, have the devil sift me like wheat. I don't want to be shaken around like that. I have a tough enough time to keep *my spiritual stability as it is.*

No, this is not how Simon responded to Jesus' warning. Quite the opposite. Instead, he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

Which is like saying, "Lord, I am okay. Don't worry about me. I know what I am doing. I have my eyes wide open. I know what is going on. I am strong enough to defend myself. I know all about his tricks. I ^{can} defend myself. I dare him come near me. And if he does, too bad for him; I 'll show him a lesson or two."

Yeh, sounds good, doesn't. But was that confidence translated into reality? Or what is over-confidence?

"Simon, Simon." What does this mean? What does a repetition of a person's name say? At home, when I was a small boy, it was my mother who did most of the disciplining. And I recall when my mother would emphatically repeat my name, saying, "John, John", she meant business. In fact, in meant that I was in trouble. I had something coming. I do not know whether it was like that in your home, too, but this is how it was in our home.

There are other instances in holy scripture where we find this doubling of names, or repeating of phrases.

Think of David saying, "Absalom, Absalom, ^{Get your priorities straight} my son, my son." ^{serious, fair, a song.}
... Or Jesus, saying, "Martha, Martha." And when addressing the crowds, saying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem." ^{It meant, get with it. Repent.}
I say unto you". = *listen to what I am ...*

And what about the risen Christ speaking from heaven, when Saul was on his way to Damascus, "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples": "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" *i.e., that will hurt you. I am the christ.*

emotional expressions of pointers, +

All such repetitions are warnings. They stress importance, solemnity. They give emphasis. They put weight in the scale. *They have their pulse on the truth.*

And ^{here} using the old name of "Simon", rather than the new name, "Peter", was to remind him of the old nature: its weakness, inadequacy, stumbling, and failing at times. The old nature being quite alive, rather than dead and gone.

Simon was about to ^{be} severely tempted and tried, rocked by conflict and doubt, thrown in turmoil. And Jesus was warning him for what was about to unfold, **-unless**, Simon would take all this to heart, and be prepared, with the special help of Jesus, to fight it off, and be victorious.

Simon did not think he needed this warning, or help. He figured he could quite well handle it on his own. Thank you very much.

I want you to know that the Greek word "UMAS", translated as "YOU" is, in the plural. This means that the warning addressed to Simon was intended for every one of the disciples. They all would be tempted and tried, be rocked by conflict and doubt, and thrown into turmoil. They all would be effected by what was about to unfold in regard to Jesus' capture, suffering and death.

and You know what this plural "you" further tells us? That to be a strong and persevering christian is no picnic. It calls *for being sp. alert,* for self-denial, cross-bearing, and reliance on Jesus at all times. By each one of us, with no exceptions. UMAS - you - plural!
Jesus is warning here you + I too.

Trouble maker, a mischief maker, a tempter for all The devil is a people who think they are *spiritually strong enough in themselves, you're not.*
Every day, as first order of business, you need to put on - - (2 Cor. 6:11-12, 16-18)
Our Savior is exposing the devil for whom he really is: the tricky, sly, sneaky, scheming people destroyer, and God opposer. Satan is out for Simon's hide, ruin, and destruction. He does not want him to become the powerful witness for the Lord Jesus *he promises to be.*

Peter later on refers to Satan as, "the roaring lion who ... And Paul holds the devil up as "an angel of light." *(masquerading as)*

How is your old nature doing? Is it still quite alive, every once in a while, or is it dying more and more, every day? *We never become perfect on this side of eternity. But I have often said that the older we... less, less, + it... more, more.*
And thinking of Job, even when you have died to your old nature, it does not mean that Satan has given up on you. ~~What~~ What I must emphasize is that no one is immune from his attacks and dirty tricks.

But notice too, the Master Redeemer said to Simon that Satan "asked" Jesus' permission to sift him like wheat. Here it is: "Simon, Simon, Satan has **asked** to sift you like wheat." That is comforting, isn't? It says that even the devil is under God's control! He can work only where Christ allows him to go.

I find this very comforting. It means that Jesus also could have said, "No way satan; you leave my servant alone." God can say this anytime. He could have said it in the case of Job as well.

Also, we don't know how often God does say, "No way; you leave my servant alone. Hands off. I forbid you to even come near him/her. Away from my follower, and out of my sight."

Now the reason God does allow us at time he tested, tempted, tried, rocked by conflict and thrown into turmoil is that God wants to get rid of the chaff floating around in our lives. Only pure wheat is good for consumption. All the rest has to go.

It is like pruning. When we lived in Ontario nearly 50 years ago I worked on a fruit farm. The whole winter we pruned and pruned, and pruned some more. A good crop depends on trees be in good shape. All the suckers, dead and interfering branches had to go; they were cut out and later on burned.

Whatever the devil makes to grown in our lives must be cut out, -painful as it may be.



And this brings us to our second point. Not only is the devil trying to work in our lives, so is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our great intercessors. He is praying for you and I. Here it is: "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail."

Isn't wonderful that Jesus does this? And that He does so far more than we often realize. He knows when it is needed. He sees when we are beginning to give into temptation, when we are on the wrong road and in danger. He knows all this long before we realize it ourselves

In Hebr. 7:25 it says, "Christ lives to intercedes for those who are His own." And in John 17 Jesus prayed, "Father, I want those whom you have given me to be with me where I am, and see my glory, the glory you have given me before the creation of the world."

Oh, let's keep singing this old hymn: "I have a Savior who is pleading in glory; a dear loving Savior, though earth's friends be few. And now He is watching in tenderness over me."

Vrs. 32a
The Greek word translated in English as "fail" is the root word of "eclipse". This means when you and I are tempted, tested, and tried, we know that Jesus is praying that our faith will not be eclipsed.

Therefore, let us always look at the devil's work in the lives of those who serve him, in the perspective of Christ's intercession for his own, at the right hand of the throne of God, as the bible says. The devil will not have the last

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word in our lives. God has. Hallelujah. In fact, God always speaks the final word, bot in grace as well as in judgement.

The devil at work. Christ at work. And now Simon at work. In other words, over the years what did Simon do with all this? The tension between the devil and Christ, the world and heaven, the present and the future?

There are masses of people who are not making ready for heaven. They are concerned only about here and now, and how much money they will be able to gather for an early retirement.

But friends, what is 20, 40, 60 years in the future, in comparison with where you and I will be 100 years from now, 1,000 years, 10,000, 100,000,000 years from now? In other words, where you and I will be for all of eternity? It is either on the "new haven and earth upon which perfect r. dwells", or as Jesus said in Mt. : 46, "they will go away into eternal punishment."

Are you cooperating with Christ's prayers for you? Satan can and does mess up a lot of lives, terribly. But with your embracing of Christ's prayers for you, the devil cannot nullify Christ's intercession for his n.

"Something beautiful, something good ...

Now this was true for Simon as well. In 2 Pet. 1:3-5 *we read,* - - - Simon could never have written this if it wasn't for Jesus upholding him during Satan's sifting process.

And the same stands for you and I. Did not Christ say, "Without me you can do nothing?" This stands faith-wise and harvest producing *too*. As someone put it, "If it wasn't for Christ we'll all be sunk."

The holy Spirit prompted Simon to examine his motives and re-arrange his priorities. Do you have any motives to examine and priorities to re-arrange?

Simon heard the rooster crow. This is what led him to go out and weep bitterly. Simon learned from his mistakes. Have we? Have there been times in your live you heard the rooster crow? If so, what did you do? Did you heed the warning?

You know, there are millions of people who are not heeding the warnings in their lives. ~~This way the precious words and prayers of Jesus fall on rocky paths in their lives, where the birds pick it all away; i.e., where the devil ruins and nullifies it all.~~

That is sad. It is the opposite of what Christ wants for their lives. Judas was warned as much as Simon. But he did not heed the warnings, and hung himself. Simon turned around and repented. He was born anew to a living hope.

Turning around is necessary to be transformed.

Lots of people have been nudged on by the Spirit of the living God, and warned during their life time, but, sad to say, they paid no attention to these precious admonitions.

And that caused the golden grain to fall on the rocky path, for the birds to pick it away. They refused to turn back, and be converted.

Oh, my friends, let ~~no~~ word of Jesus ever be "for the birds". *Because This* stand for Satan's picking *heavenly* seed away in one's life.

Story of ... "once upon ..."

I trust you remember *the* three points: Warning, Praying, and Turning.

The Warning was about Satan at work.

The Praying was about Christ at work.

And Turning was about Simon at work: i.e. doing what Christ wanted him to do: paying attention to the warning + *praying*; + *as a result of that,* changing the course of his life.

all *this stood for Peter.* And lo and behold, he became one of the great leaders of the christian church.

Let me read a couple verses how Simon did exactly what Jesus predicted, i.e, "strengthen the brethren."

- 1 Pet. 5:8-11
- 2 Pet. 1:3 -11
- 2 Pet. 3:17-18

How has it been in your life? Have life's trials and troubles made you bitter, or better? Never forget that "All things work together

And in ~~2~~ *1* Cor. 13:4 we read this: "Praise be to the God and Father"

In summary, Satan is working hard to have all of our life *be materialized,* compromised, secularized, commercialized, politicized, and immoralized. But do not let this happen. Remember, that in the midst of all of that, and even in spite of it, Jesus has prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, i.e., transformed, He wants you to strengthen your brothers and sisters, too. That is the mission God has given us. *Embrace it.*

Amen.

Lord God Almighty, we thank you that you are our Sovereign God. That you are the unchanging one: majestic, holy, glorious, all-knowing, all-wise, ever-present, loving, ever-dependent, gracious and merciful.

We thank you that you have come to us through your Word and Spirit. Help us O Lord, to be always aware of your voice and Presence.

We confess that at the outset of our christian life of service, we often are much like Simon: immature, self-reliant, eager to serve you, and yet, failing to follow where you lead us.

Forgive us Lord for messing up things in our life. Help us to better learn and listen.

And Father God, when you need to send us your Word and Spirit with the corrective measures in our lives, may we sense it for what it is intended to be: a voice of admonition and correction, a voice of direction to follow your ways in our lives.

Oh, how blest we are to not be on our own during moments of temptation. Help us to recognize that you are always there during times of trials and days of struggle.

Help us to hear what Isaiah heard you say: "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to idols. See the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; Before they spring into being, I announce them to you."

God, we so much thank you that you have spoken to us from heaven and announced the things to us we needed to hear.

May we never be so foolish to think that we know it all. For that is the time for spiritual rattle snakes to be send into our lives, and without us realizing that even these measures are intended for our eternal good.

So thank you Jesus for always being many big steps ahead of us in our lives. Help us to be very observant each hour and each day to your loving direction. Through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Lord of our life.

And all God's people say, "Thank you, Lord. Amen."