

Luke 22 (31-32) / Zechariah 3 – Strengthen Your Brothers

Context (vs.23-24) – talk about who is the bad one leads to talk of who is the best one, typical – James 3:14-16 – selfish ambition leads to giving Satan a foothold. Jesus tells them that they are the ones who have stood by Him all this time, they are the ones who will have a special place in the kingdom of heaven, and yet He knows their trials, as well as His, are far from over.

Vs.31 – Satan has demanded permission to put them to the test – the pronouns are plural in the Greek text, so it refers to all the disciples, of which Peter is the representative. They are all going to be in the midst of great temptation as the events of the Passion Week and Crucifixion are now upon them. “Sift someone like wheat” is similar to “pick someone apart”.

Vs.32 – Jesus lets Peter know that Satan has targeted him individually. In verse 32 the second person pronouns are singular. When the Devil wants to attack the company of saints he will often focus his attack on a particular individual. He picks on one to try and pick the fellowship apart.

But I have prayed for you – Jesus prays for you, too (Hebrews 7:25 / Romans 8:34) – As the devil accuses (Revelation 12:10) Christ acts as our advocate – Hebrews 9:24 / 1 John 2:1

An OT example of Satan as the sifter – Joshua the priest in Zechariah 3 – Reinstating the priesthood & anticipating the better priesthood of another, greater Joshua. Joshua the high priest is also mentioned in Haggai 1:1. The phrase “standing before” has the idea of priestly service. The Hebrew word for “filthy garments” means “excrement”; this suggests Joshua’s disqualification for priestly service, but he’s been rescued by God’s grace. He is like a burning stick pulled out of the fire. He not only has his iniquity removed, he also is given a positive righteousness (pure vestments). The thought of being clothed by God in righteousness runs from Genesis (Genesis 3:21) to Revelation (Revelation 7:13-14). We are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9 / Revelation 1:7, 5:10) and we will encounter opposition as we minister.

That your faith may not fail – Peter’s denials are pictured as lapses, not as a total absence of faith. Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith would not be “eclipsed”. He knows what we are going to go through and that we will fall down sometimes, yet He still loves us and prays for us.

The attack is not so much on Peter’s person as it was on his faith; we lose faith because of what is going on. When Satan wants to destroy, discredit, and disillusion a church community he will begin to do his work in individual lives; “If I can cause so and so to look bad, to doubt his faith, and it is noticed by the others, this will cause the weaker ones to stumble also”

Knowing that Peter would fall down, and be in darkness for a time, Jesus prayed that his faith would not be eclipsed, that the Light would still shine through, that it wouldn’t go completely out, Satan thought he could do it, but Jesus knew better, and He proclaimed it to Peter, oh how wonderful it is to realize that Jesus does the same for us, that even when God allows the devil to get his hands on us, and we respond in bad ways and live in darkness for a time, the light still shines a sliver through that darkness, it doesn’t go completely out, and it will break through like the morning sun, and Peter spoke of this in 2 Peter 1:19

And when you have turned again – (turned around) Jesus quite graciously restores Peter “in advance,” even with the knowledge of his approaching denials. Jesus knew the darkness was coming but He also knew that although Peter would fall down, he would not fail to get back up.

Jesus knew that sometimes we will be seemingly overshadowed and living in darkness for a while, but he prayed for Peter and He prays for us that we will not be eclipsed, that the glimmer of light will still shine through and that we will be reestablished in our faith and strengthen the faith of others. Within the church body we have many stories that are similar in that they involve the sifting but also the strengthening on the other side. We have to be like Peter and turn back

and not be like Judas and turn away. We will suffer shame either way, but one way leads to a devil's destruction and the other to a godly destiny.

Strengthen your brothers – Jesus commissions Peter, and we are to do the same (2 Corinthians 1:4), this doesn't excuse what we may have done, it exclaims what He has done in spite of what we have done, it proclaims the goodness and greatness, the mercy and grace of Christ who was with us through the trials. Although we sat in darkness the light shined through.

Jesus prays for your faith and asks for you to encourage others. We fall and when we return it is not to save face, not to defend what we have done wrong. You don't see John excommunicating Peter, John remembered the good things and the good words Jesus had said, and we need to remember them too...if a man is repentant he needs to tell of God's grace in turning him around, and we need to listen up if we want to be strengthened. We can't think we are too good for that. Again Peter was wrong, guilty, sinful, denying the Lord, against his own ideas of his greatness and courage, it can and does happen to us all when we think we cannot fall.

Vs.33-34 – Peter reminds us of how we all are at points in our Christian walk. He is too careless about the possibility of stumbling. The confidence Peter has in private will wilt under the pressure of the public eye. Once again, Jesus is quite aware that Peter will deny him.

Sometimes we have to go through what the Puritans called the "dark night of the soul". We are warned and taught that we will go through severe trials but we try and shrug it off but we are not expecting what will come we don't know what is coming, but we can know God through it. You will go through stuff. You can't think you're too strong.

Peter in Acts 12 / Galatians 2 – sometimes it is all our fault, sometimes it is not, and sometimes just a misunderstanding or we are falsely accused, sometimes we need to be confronted, and repentance must happen before restoration, but in all these cases we need to be praying. We don't lessen prayer just because someone is guilty, we are all in each one of these places at one time or another, and the question is will you pray, because Jesus is. Sometimes we are on one side, sometimes the other, sometimes right in the middle, but the truth is that we are all in the same boat. Now just because we are all in the same sin boat doesn't mean we aren't supposed to tell the other person when he is letting in water, or that we aren't supposed to shout "man overboard" when someone decides they want to make a splash. We all need to try and help the man back in, like the brand out of the fire (Jude 1:23 – save others by snatching them out of the fire), unrepentant means he is fighting against that very thing. Peter had to admit he was wrong, stop denying, and rejoin the fellowship.

Jesus knew that Peter was going to be pressed on, smashed, broken, and returned again to witness of God's mercy and grace. Peter, the one who had this great revelation (Matthew 16:13-19), the man who had seen miracles and performed them himself, only now is he broken enough to strengthen his brethren. Our pride, or whatever else God has to expose, keeps us from God's best and then God allows the enemy to attack and God uses this to teach you to rely on Him more and when we lean on Him this brokenness leads to greatness, not the sin that broke us but the turning again, the realization that no matter how far we have gone in the kingdom of God we still need the King. God will break us to remake us; God uses the broken to reach the broken.

People are watching, and we need to show that we have something real, that we are a healing place, not just another papier-mâché ministry that falls apart whenever someone falls down. We are real people with real problems, but we have a real trust in a real God who really gives us hope and helps us to help one another. We can change, and we can be an instrument in God's hands as we learn to lean on Jesus and live the truth and use our turn around to turn others to God. We can, and we must, show them the power of Christ, and strengthen our brothers.