

Lk. 22:24-34 (WCF 14:3) “Sifted Like Wheat”

For the Children: When a bully picks on a weaker kid, his aim is only to hurt. When a sports trainer or army-sergeant causes pain, hopefully it's to train and strengthen the athlete or soldier. Satan is a bully, trying to destroy the faith of God's children – often using the bad things that happen to us. God uses the same things to train and strengthen us. That is why our faith goes up and down: in our weakness we suffer harm from Satan; by God's grace, we are strengthened as we pass through difficult times. **Questions:** What wrong views of faith did Peter and the other disciples show? How did the Lord Jesus correct them? How did He encourage them?

Introduction:

First Point: The Dispute

- 1) **The Rivalry:** Sadly, the disciples were arguing again over who was greatest in Christ's Kingdom. See also Mk. 9:34-37, Lk. 9:46-48, Mt. 18:1-5, 20:20f. This might have been because no one wanted to do the servant's job of foot-washing before their meal (Jn. 13:5-10)
- 2) **The World's View of Greatness:** Again the Lord corrects their idea of greatness by pointing out that Gentile rulers see it in terms of lording it over others, or want credit as “benefactors” of their people. The Jewish leaders were no better
- 3) **God's View of Greatness:** Christ's Kingdom stands in contrast (“But you not so!” v26). The greatest must see themselves as like the youngest, the leader like the servant (a form of the word, “deacon”). True greatness lies in humble service, as well as the exercise of God-given authority. Christ, the Greatest, showed this by humbly washing their feet (Jn. 13:5-10), they must follow suit. This applies to both leaders and members in the church today

Second Point: The Exaltation

- 1) **The Promise of Greatness:** The paradox is that humble service for Christ's sake is graciously rewarded by exaltation and glory at length. This greatness involves the “granting” (appointing, related to the word “covenanting”) of a Kingdom. It involves the blessedness of reclining at the Lamb's wedding supper, to dine with Him; and sharing in His authority in the ruling of the “12 tribes” of the New Israel – in which the apostles will be especially prominent, though we will all have a share in it
- 2) **The Condition of Greatness:** These blessings are, however, only entered into by those who remain faithful. Jesus assures his disciples that despite their many weaknesses of faith, there is still faith in them. Hence they have been sharing already in His humiliation and trials. The promised blessings are theirs, even though they understand little of His work and kingdom at this point

Third Point: The Sifting

- 1) **Satan's Sifting:** Part of the reason for this very checkered exercise of faith is that Satan has demanded permission to sift them like wheat – as with Job, to try to use the pressure of trials to turn them all to chaff. Note that v. 31 uses “you-plural,” indicating that this is Satan's intention for all the disciples
- 2) **God's Sifting:** God grants this permission for His own reasons – Satan is under God's authority, not over it. The Lord sifts, not be tempting unto destruction, but by testing to refine believers and uncover imposters. This also strengthens those who pass through the trials and equips them to help others better (v. 32) and to be more humble servants. This good intention is seen by the fact that Jesus promises to intercede for Peter (v. 32) as for all His sheep (Jn. 17)
- 3) **Peter's Pride:** Peter does not understand this – he sees himself as a rock who will stand by His Lord no matter what. The Lord warns him of his imminent triple-denial. Even the strongest rock may be assailed, because Satan is sifting and God is refining. Because this is part of God's over-ruling plan of rescue and recovery, faith will have the ultimate victory

Conclusion: