

Sifting The Saints

Luke 22:31-32



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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FOCAL Read Responsively Luke 22:31-32 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you] as wheat: 32 **But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.**

A little old lady that everyone called "Grandma Jones" was admitted to the hospital. She was one of the fortunate ones, and had rarely experienced any sick days. Certainly she had *never* been in the hospital, so she was miserable just being there. By the time she was tucked into bed she had managed to complain about everything: the temperature, the lights, the skimpy gown, the food and especially, the mattress. Grandma spotted a small plastic thing with a button on one end and a cord on the other. She asked, "**What's this thing?**" The nurse said, "**When you press that button, it turns on a light in the hall for the nurse on duty**". Grandma said, "**A light in the hall? Look, I'm the sick one around here. If the night nurse needs a light on in the hall, she can get up and switch it on herself.**"

We all have valleys and mountaintops in this life. The mountaintops we love, but the *valleys*? Why have we got to have these? We see the answer in the life of a man named Peter.

The Bible tells us that our Lord Jesus started preaching right after His baptism by John. We read:

Matthew 4:17-20 **Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 18** **And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two**

brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left [their] nets, and followed him.

Did you notice that? Jesus is preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and then He reaches out and *specifically calls Peter and his brother Andrew* to "**Follow Me**". We see something in this.

God came down from Heaven not only to save us from our sins, but to *walk in partnership with us*. Christianity is more than just "get saved by believing on Jesus, then sit and stew until the Kingdom comes." It is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That relationship is not built on who is best and brightest, but it is a relationship that God offers to everyman. **Peter is everyman**. Peter wasn't born to a palace, nor born in Church. He was - along with his brother - a fisherman. When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, saying

"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

He was calling these men to salvation. A person is saved when he or she makes the free will decision to **follow Jesus, to give their lives to Him**. If you **follow Jesus** then **He will make you**. He will take your life and change it, making it better and more glorious.

Peter and Andrew had a choice. They could turn their lives over to Jesus and thereby be saved, or they could stay where they were. It was up to them. But Beloved, understand this:

God will use anyone and will bless anyone, but we must make ourselves available to God. When He says, "**Follow Me**", we need to follow Him.

What did Peter and Andrew do? The Bible says:

"And they straightway left [their] nets, and followed Him. "

"Straightway". Immediately. Without hesitation. When Jesus calls to salvation, He bids those who are saved to put aside everything else and **follow Him**.

Illustrate The great artist **Michelangelo** could have had any piece of marble he wanted for his sculpture, but for reasons that no one could understand he wanted a beaten up and abandoned piece of marble that had been abandoned a half century earlier by sculptor **Agostino de Duccio**. When asked why he wanted that piece Michelangelo said "**Immagine del cuore**", there is an image in the heart of the stone. The artist believed that there was a masterpiece already inside of the stone. Chiseling on that marble for *nearly four years* Michelangelo ignored the imperfections in the stone and, through the trial of the hammer and chisel, worked toward the masterpiece. Eventually the world saw what Michelangelo saw, a beautiful statue representing

"David", the shepherd boy who would become king over Israel. The masterpiece would have never been seen had the master sculptor not chiseled and tried the stone.

Listen Beloved, Peter wasn't perfect, and no one who follows the Lord is perfect. He doesn't require that we be perfect. He just requires that we be *available* and *obedient*. In this life we will be tried, we will be sifted, but we will never be abandoned until God makes us into His masterpiece!

**If You Are A Christian
You Will Be Sifted By Satan**

If you are born again, a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are two things that are certain: (1) The Lord Jesus will make sure that you get to Heaven, and (2) The Devil will do everything he can to sift you while you are on earth.

As Jesus gets ready to go to the Cross He wants Peter to understand that he's going to go through a deep valley. He's going to be sifted by Satan. Jesus emphasized this truth by calling Peter's name twice: "**Simon, Simon**

FOCAL Luke 22:31-32 ... **behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you]**

Salvation is all of Christ. We, like Peter, are saved by **repenting**, relinquishing control of our lives to the Lord. We **follow Jesus**. We **give ourselves to Jesus because He gave Himself for us**.

Salvation is a mutual giving. I give myself to Jesus because Jesus gave Himself for me!

The Apostle Paul said:

Galatians 1:3-4 ... our Lord Jesus Christ, ... gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

By His Blood our citizenship is removed from this evil world and is transferred to a Heavenly Kingdom where Christ Himself rules! Jesus Christ

Galatians 2:20 ... loved me, and gave himself for me.

I was a slave of Satan and of sin, but Jesus Christ ransomed me from that.

1 Timothy 2:5-6 ... Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Jesus Christ **gave Himself for us**. We are told

Titus 2:13-14 ... our Savior Jesus Christ; 14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

How did Jesus give Himself? He gave Himself on that Cross of Calvary. Every one of us owed a debt to God that we could not pay. Sinners, our lives mirrored the things of this world. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. In

our context Jesus had just finished illustrating what He was going to do on the Cross at that first Lord's Table.

Jesus Christ illustrated the loving and the giving of our faith in the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table - just like our salvation - is very personal. Those who share in it - in His Body and Blood - share in His Kingdom, and are called to share His Kingdom with others.

Context Luke 22:19 **This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.**

He gave His Body for us. No one took His life from Him, but He willingly gave it out of love. He shed His Blood for every person who would ever be born. Jesus said:

Context Luke 22:20 **This cup [is] the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.**

The Lord wants us to carry that Gospel out to the world. All who believe in Jesus become a part of God's Kingdom, an eternal Kingdom ruled by love.

Context Luke 22:29 **And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;**

The greatest thing in this life is to know Christ, and to work together with Jesus and our fellow believers to lead others into this great Kingdom. But let me tell you, the devil will do everything he can do to get us away from our mission. Satan loves to entice and entrap believers, sifting us.

1 Satan sifts us by enticing us to play the "King of the Hill". Do you remember playing "King of the Hill" as a child? The object of the game is to get to the top of the hill, then knock everybody else off - then you're "King of the Hill". I was a pretty big child so I could play that game pretty well. "King of the Hill" is played by children of all ages. **Jesus caught His disciples playing "King of the Hill"**. We read:

Context Luke 22:23-24 {the disciples} **began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.**

Jesus had just shared the Lord's Table with His disciples, showing how He would **lay down His life for His brothers and sisters**. And yet they are arguing among themselves *who's going to be in charge*. Jesus said:

Context Luke 22:26-27 ... **he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether [is] greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? [is] not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.**

The Christian way of life is a life of service, a life of *loving service*. This is the Kingdom that Jesus wants the world to see - not a Kingdom of Chaos but of Love.

2 Satan will sift us by enticing us to put our trust in ourselves, rather than the Lord. Listen to Peter's prideful words:

Context Luke 22:33 Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

I am sure that Peter was sincere in his statement. He was - at that moment - ready to follow Jesus to prison and even death. There are many sincere people who think that they have power within themselves to keep themselves. This is a lie that Satan tells many.

Neither I, nor you, have the power to keep ourselves saved. The great truth of Scripture is that God must save us, and God must keep us.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

God works in His saints. The Scripture says, "**we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works**" (Ephesians 2:10). The great artist Vincent van Gogh said:

"Christ is more of an Artist than the artists. He works in the living spirit and the living flesh; He makes men instead of statues."

It is God Who gives us eternal life when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. I follow Him and He works in me.

1 Peter 1:3-5 ^(NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Listen Beloved: the Lord knew your every flaw saved you. He knew that Peter was going to deny Him, not once, but *three times*.

Jesus told Peter:

Context Luke 22:34 ... I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

There is within each and every one of us a pride that says, "I will never fall". The fact is, the Lord knew we were going to fall just as He knew Adam would fall before He ever made him - but He saved us anyway!

Illustrate I remember that years ago the boxer **Muhammed Ali** gave himself the nickname "**The Greatest**". And he was a great boxer. I remember that one time Ali got on an airplane and sat down. The stewardess came up and said, "**Sir, you need to put on your seatbelt**". Ali replied, "**Superman don't need no seatbelt**". The stewardess quickly said, "**The real**

Superman don't need no airplane!"

3 Satan will sift us when those we thought would never fall show their humanity.

Sometimes our greatest testing is when someone you trusted lets you down. Those hearing Peter's declaration probably thought he would never fail. Imagine how they felt when ...

Staying within our context we see - toward the end of this chapter - Jesus being led away by His enemies. He had told Peter that he was going to deny Him, but Peter didn't believe Him. When they dragged Jesus off like a criminal Peter followed in the shadows. Somebody was with Peter, for this next section is written in the third person.

Context Luke 22:55-57 ... Peter sat down among them. 56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

Peter was not even aware that he was fulfilling the Lord's prophecy. He denied Jesus the first time, telling a young woman "I never knew Him".

Context Luke 22:58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

Strike two, Peter. Again, he is not even aware of his sin. Peter is frightened and trying to keep a low profile. He wants to see what happens to Jesus. About an hour passed, and

Context Luke 22:59-60 ... another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this [fellow] also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. 60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

Strike Three, Peter! Three times he had an opportunity to speak up for the Lord, and three times he denied Him. The Bible says:

Context Luke 22:61-62 ... the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter went out - the Bible says - weeping bitterly. Shame washed over him like the waves of the sea over a beach! He is dirt!

God Controls The Sifting To Make You Stronger

Sherry and I ate at a Chinese Restaurant the other day, and at the end of the meal I opened up my fortune cookie and read:

"Your perception of a situation will always determine your response".

When I read that I thought, "Now that's pretty good!" It certainly applies in what we're talking about today.

When a trial comes if you feel that you are in a helpless and hopeless situation, then you'll give up. If you feel that you are by yourself in the trial, you will quit. But if you analyze what Jesus told Peter

FOCAL Luke 22:31-32 **And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift [you] as wheat:**

you'll understand and be encouraged in the trial.

Jesus didn't just tell Peter that he was going to be **sifted by Satan** - but He told Peter that this very sifting **would have the purpose of strengthening and purifying his faith.** The sifting of Satan would make him usable of God!

Illustrate Look at the phrase "**that he (Satan) may sift you as wheat**". This may not make any sense to you today, but back in Jesus' day it made a lot of sense. You see, wheat is a grain that can be ground and turned into bread. But before wheat can be used the *husk* must first be separated from the *inner grain*. If you've ever been through this process you know that you can't do this by picking the husk out by hand. If you try that, you just never get all the husk. The ancients learned that once the wheat was beaten and the hull and grain were separated that they could take the wheat and put it in a sieve called a "fan". Once the wheat was in the "fan" they would toss it up into the air. The heavier grain would fall back into

the fan, whereas the "chaff" and "dust" from the hull of the wheat would be carried off on the breeze.

Jesus told Peter "**Satan wants to sift you like wheat**". He wanted to toss Peter about, to turn his life upside down, to bring confusion to him. But in the end **Peter would still be wheat.** Not only that -

Our arch enemy Satan would actually be doing both *Peter* as well as *God* a favor, though he knows it not! Satan's siftings will not destroy the child of God but will make us more usable, taking the chaff out of our lives.

Yes, being tossed about by trials - particularly those from Satan - is distressing. But Beloved, the trials of Satan cannot destroy the child born of God. The Scripture says:

Romans 8:35-39 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

The siftings coming - they will come - but if you are children of God you will endure.

God the Father controls the sifting, God the Son prays for us as we are sifted, and God the Holy Spirit strengthens us and teaches us both during and after the sifting.

FOCAL Luke 22:32 ... I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:

Christ Jesus prayed for Peter - and He prays for you and I. We are not in the trial alone, but Jesus is with us every step of the way! It is He Who paid the price for us.

Romans 8:31-34 What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Jesus prays for us. Jesus walks with His people. And Jesus wants His people to know that - even in the trials - it is God and not Satan who is in control.

FOCAL Luke 22:32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Word Study I want you to notice that word "converted" . This is the Greek word **EPISTREPHO**, which means "to be brought back from where you are to where you need to be".

The poetess **Joanna Fuchs** writes:

Save me from myself, Lord;
Save me from my need
To always run my life, Lord,
To control my every deed.

Save me from my pride, Lord,
My focus on just me;
Help me learn to serve, Lord;
Show me how to be.

Save me from the world, Lord,
When tempting things entice;
Remind me of eternity
With You, in paradise.

I give my life to you, Lord
My every need you fill;
I'm resting in my faith, Lord;
You saved me, and you always will.

I love that poem! The siftings of Satan and the trials of life open our eyes and make us into what God wants us to be. But I want to ask you this before we close:

Are You Following Jesus?

Salvation is a relationship with Jesus. When Jesus called Peter and Andrew they could have made excuses. These were business men, fishermen with a job to do.

- Nets rot if not dried in the sun. Peter could have said, **"Lord, let pull in and dry out my nets first"**.

- Fish turn rancid if not cleaned and prepared. Peter could have said, **"Lord, let us take care of these fish first. They need to be cleaned and salted - after all, we don't need to waste good food."**

- Families need income to survive. Peter could have said, **"Lord, I've got a wife to support"** (see 1 Corinthians 9:5). Let me take care of my business first, then I'll take care of Yours.

Peter didn't do any of these things. The Scripture says:

Matthew 4:20 And they straightway left [their] nets, and followed him.

Listen Beloved, Saving Faith follows Christ or it is not Saving Faith! Saving faith is a mutual giving: Jesus gives Himself to me and I give myself to Him.

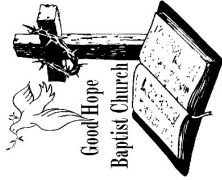
Illustrate If Abraham had never followed Jesus from UR, He would not have been saved. If Noah had never followed Jesus in building the Ark, none of us could have been saved. If Moses had never followed Jesus from the Desert of Midian to Pharaoh's Palace, Israel would have never been saved. When Israel would not follow Jesus into the Promised Land, they *were not saved*.

The greatest thing you can do is to follow Jesus, for in Him there is life. Listen, dear friends, one thing follows

the other. If you are saved by faith in Christ then you **follow Christ**. He has left us no other option. Jesus told the Pharisees:

John 10:26-28 But ye {Pharisees} believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand.

May you hear Christ as He calls you to day.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Matthew 4:17-20 _____

**If You Are A Christian
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Luke 22:31-32; Galatians 1:3-4; Galatians 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Titus 2:13-14; Luke 22:19; Luke 22:20; Luke 22:29

1 Satan sifts us by enticing us to play the "King of the Hill". _____
_____ **Luke 22:23-24; Luke 22:26-27**

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Luke 22:33; Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Luke 22:34

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"Your perception of a situation will always determine your response". _____

Luke 22:31-32; Romans 8:35-39; Luke 22:32; Romans 8:31-34; Luke 22:32

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Matthew 4:20; John 10:26-28 _____

