

Luke 22:31-32
Our Advocate Versus Our Adversary
by Grover Gunn
pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church
Jackson, Tennessee

1 Peter 5:8 says,

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

In the book of Job, God asked Satan where he had come from. Satan answered that he had come from going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it. Satan is scouring the earth, and he is looking for those whom he may spiritually overcome and consume. He is walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Now this language which so dramatically communicates the danger which Satan represents also implies Satan's limitations. If the devil is seeking those whom he may devour, then there are those whom Satan can't devour. Just as that great fish could not keep Jonah in its belly but had to throw him up on dry ground, so there are those whom the devil cannot devour and digest to their spiritual destruction. These people whom the devil can't devour are those who have a faith relationship with Jesus unto eternal life.

In our passage for today, Jesus is warning His disciples and especially Peter that Satan is indeed seeking those whom he may devour. Jesus is warning Peter that Satan wants to devour

him and the other disciples. We will examine our passage today using three points: Satan's demand, Satan's device, and Satan's defeat.

First, we will look at Satan's **demand**. In verse 31, Jesus says, "Simon, Simon! Satan has asked for you ..." Jesus is here addressing Simon Peter, but He is not talking about Peter alone. The word "you" in "Satan has asked for you" is plural. The reference is to all the disciples.

Satan already had Judas. Look at verse 3 near the beginning of this chapter:

3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve.

Satan already possessed the soul of Judas Iscariot. He had devoured him like a lion, but this had not satisfied but only whetted Satan's appetite. Now Satan wants to devour the other eleven. Jesus says to Peter, "Satan asks for you" with "you" in the plural. The Greek word here translated "ask" refers not to a polite request but to the demand of a perceived right. Satan is demanding all twelve of the disciples as his own.

The book "Pilgrim's Progress" is an allegory by John Bunyan about the Christian life. "Pilgrim's Progress" represents the Christian life as a journey or a pilgrimage by a man named Christian. Christian leaves the City of Destruction, passes through the straight and narrow gate of faith in the gospel message, and then travels the Highway of Holiness to the city of

Zion, which is heaven. At one point in his journey, the devil in the person of a monster names Apollyon confronts Christian, blocks his path and swears that Christian will go no further. In this encounter, Apollyon claims that Christian belongs to him. Here is how their interchange begins:

Apollyon: Whence came you, and whither are you bound?

Christian: I am come from the city of Destruction, which is the place of all evil, and I am going to the city of Zion.

Apollyon: By this I perceive thou art one of my subjects; for all that country is mine, and I am the prince and god of it. How is it, then, that thou hast run away from thy king?

Satan is there arguing that Christian is his subject because Christian was born in the city of Destruction. Christian is a citizen of the kingdom of darkness, and therefore the Lord of Darkness is demanding his allegiance.

Satan is making the same demand regarding Jesus' disciples in our passage for today. Satan claims that every descendent of Adam by ordinary generation belongs to him. Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the garden, tempting them to eat of the forbidden fruit and thus to sin against God. When Adam sinned, God cast him out of the garden. Adam the Outcast was no longer a citizen of the Kingdom of Light, and so by default he was a citizen of the Kingdom of Darkness. Adam the Outlaw was then in the domain of the lawless one. Satan claimed as his own not only Adam but all those who trace their fatherly

descent back to Adam. When Adam fell into sin, he was acting not only for himself but as a representative of the whole human race.

Satan further bolsters his claim to the children of Adam by the fact that Adam's descendants follow Adam's example through their own acts of sin. Look back at verse 24:

24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

Satan could point to this petty rivalry rooted in pride and claim it as evidence that the disciples belong to him. Satan could claim it as a mark of ownership as valid as the brand burned into the hide of a steer. Satan demands the disciples as belonging to him.

Our first point is Satan's demand. Satan demands that the disciples be acknowledged as belonging to him. Our second point is Satan's **device**. Satan had a device he plans on using to prove and insure his claim of ownership. That device is the winnowing sieve.

Let me explain how a literal winnowing sieve works. The sieve is a shallow container with a fine mesh on the bottom. The farmer puts some grain in the sieve. Then he vigorously shakes the sieve while blowing over it. The small, heavy dirt falls through the mesh, and the light chaff blows to the side, leaving the good grain clean and ready for the storage barn.

Satan says that he wants to sift the disciples as wheat. He wants to put them through a vigorous shaking of their faith because Satan believes this will reveal the disciples to be chaff. Satan believes that the trial will destroy the disciples' faith and spiritually ruin them.

The disciples, especially Peter, will have their faith shaken that night when Jesus is arrested, tried and crucified. Satan deliberately goes for their faith as a jugular vein of their spiritual life. When the king of Syria fought against the king of Israel, he commanded the captains of his chariots, saying "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel." Satan's battle strategy against the disciples is to fight no one small or great, but only the king of the graces, and that is faith. Why is faith so important? Its importance lies not in itself but in its object. The object of faith is Christ, and faith is our lifeline to Christ. The believer is in a vital, saving union with Christ, and the human experience of that union is faith. Destroy faith, and you cut off Christ. To cut off Christ is to sever the Head from the Body. To cut off Christ is to sever the Vine from the branches. Apart from Christ, the disciples can do nothing. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Faith is our union with Christ, and thus faith is also the source of all the other graces. Destroy faith and thus sever the branches from the Vine, and the branches will no longer partake of Christ's grace, which is the life giving and sustaining sap which enables the branch to bear fruit. Apart from faith, there can be no true love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Destroy faith, and the Christian is defenseless. A key element in the Christian's spiritual armor is the shield of faith. Take away faith, and the Christian has little protection from the fiery darts of the evil one.

Satan demands the right to sift the disciples, to test the disciples, because Satan believes that he can destroy their faith and prove them to be worthless chaff.

Satan had made a similar demand in the book of Job. God pointed to Job as His faithful servant. Satan demanded that he be allowed to sift Job like wheat. Satan demanded that he be allowed to afflict Job, and he said that Job would fail the test and prove to be chaff. Satan said that Job would respond to the affliction by cursing God. Satan was wrong about Job. Job patiently endured the affliction to the glory of God. Satan was also wrong about Peter and the other disciples. And that brings us to our third point, Satan's **defeat**.

Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus is also interested in sifting or winnowing. John the Baptist said concerning Jesus in Matthew 3:12:

12 "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Jesus is not afraid of submitting His disciples to winnowing because He regards them not as chaff but as wheat. They are

wheat not in their natural condition but as a result of the transforming grace of Jesus. The eleven disciples will persevere because Jesus prays for them. Satan demands and Jesus prays, and the prayers of Jesus are more effective than the demands of Satan. Satan claims that the disciples are his because of their sin, but Jesus claims them because He is about to pay their ransom price. Jesus is about to redeem the disciples, not with corruptible things, like silver and gold, but with His own precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and spot. Jesus says, They are mine, for I am about to buy them with a price.

Satan demands the disciples as their accuser. In Revelation 12, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren. Satan tempts us to sin. When we do sin, Satan then accuses us as sinners and claims us as his own. Revelation 12 explains how Jesus defeats Satan as the accuser of the brethren:

- 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.
- 11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death."

The saints overcome Satan through the power of the blood of the Lamb. 1 John 2:1-2 says,

- 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
- 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Satan accuses us and claims us as His own, but all Jesus has to do is to show the nail scars on His hands. Yes, we are sinners, but these scars prove that our sins have already been paid for. Jesus is our propitiation, the One who through His own suffering has satisfied God's righteous wrath against our sins.

Jesus as our Redeemer and our Propitiation and our Advocate prays for us. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him, for He ever lives to make intercession for them.

Looking back at our passage for today, Jesus tells Peter that He has been praying for him. Now notice here the content of Jesus' prayer. He is not praying that Peter be spared the violent sifting process. Jesus is praying that Peter's faith not fail. In His high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus will say to the Father:

- 15 "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

Let's look at how Jesus' prayer for Peter is answered. Satan is able to shake Peter's faith, but not to overthrow it altogether. You know the story about Peter's denial of Christ later that night. Peter would deny Christ on three occasions and even with vehement swearing. To the outward observer, it may have

appeared that the embers of faith had ceased to burn in the hearth of Peter's heart. Yet the fire of faith was never completely extinguished.

You can blow on cold coals all you want, and they will never burn. But where there is even a little fire, a breath upon them will cause the embers to come to life. We read about the breath that revived the flame in Peter's heart:

Luke 22:61-62

- 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."
62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

All it takes is a reminder of the Savior's warning and a look in the Savior's eyes. Peter is filled with sorrow for his sin. That is a sign of spiritual life. Soon after Peter cries his tears of repentance, he is again with his fellow disciple John. Rather than isolating himself in his shame, he returns to the fellowship of the flock. This is another sign of reviving spiritual life. He returns to the fellowship of the church.

We see no such signs of spiritual life in Judas. Judas had received a sop from Jesus' hand and then had kissed Jesus in the garden, and all this had not moved his heart. Judas would isolate himself in his shame. Judas would experience not the sorrow of repentance which leads to renewed life but the sorrow of despondency which leads to death.

Christ allowed Peter to be sifted like wheat. Christ through His prayer upheld Peter through the process. As a result, Peter was not destroyed but purified. One writer put it this way:

Peter's vanity was sifted out of him, his self-confidence was sifted out of him, his rash presumption was sifted out of him, his impulsive readiness to blurt out the first thought that came into his head was sifted out of him, and so his unreliableness and changeableness was largely sifted out of him, and he became what Christ said he had in him the makings of being - "Cephas, a rock' ...

Beloved, let me close with this thought. The devil can't devour us as long as we feed on Christ in faith. If we feed on Christ, which is the spiritual reality symbolized by the Lord's Supper, then the devil cannot feed on us. As long as we abide in Christ through a faith relationship, we will receive from Christ spiritual life and nourishment. As long as we abide in Christ through a faith relationship, we will bear the fruit of a transformed life. As long as we abide in Christ through a faith relationship, we will quench the fiery darts of the evil one. As long as we abide in Christ through a faith relationship, we will resist the devil, and he will flee from us. As long as we feed on Christ in faith, the devil may sift us, but he will not be able to stomach us. We will not be among those whom the devil, that roaring lion, is able to devour.