

# Shout Out Loud! – Easter Message 2009

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## FOR FURTHER STUDY

The message on this Easter Sunday morning is certainly not your normal Easter message. The text is taken from Luke 22:14-34. You may recognize the text as being the account of the Last Supper. Luke 22:15 tells us that Jesus "desired" to have this supper with His closest disciples. It must have been a great meal as they heard Jesus speak. The only interruption during the meal came when Jesus offered a mild rebuke to the disciples when they were arguing over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Verses 28 and 29 were a high point of the meal. Jesus tells them that He is establishing His kingdom and they would rule and reign with Him. What excitement! What a spiritual high! Things couldn't be any better. They were wrong.

The only problem was that according to verses 31-34, He had not yet established His kingdom on earth and they would have to wait to rule and reign with Christ. Talk about shattering a dream. Jesus says that life is tough and will get tougher. Life is hard and will get harder. Difficult times are not coming, they are here.

Amazingly, right in the middle of this "bad news" experience, Jesus gave them one of the greatest promises found anywhere in the Word of God. Jesus tells His disciples that He is praying for them. What a statement! What a promise! What a thought!

Why do we need such a message on this Easter Sunday morning? Why don't we just talk about the resurrection? Because after every spiritual victory comes a spiritual challenge. Easter is always a spiritual high for most Christians. After all, we're celebrating the fact that Jesus Christ has literally defeated death, hell, and the grave. What better news do we need than that?

I heard a message more than thirty years ago entitled, "It's Friday, but Sunday's Coming". It remains my all time favorite Easter message to this day. It was a message of hope in the midst of despair. It was a message of life in the midst of death. When all seemed lost, the disciples needed to be reminded of the fact that it was only Friday. Sunday was coming! Sunday would spell defeat for all who were trying to defeat Him.

In my message today, I would like for everyone to consider that, it's Sunday, but Monday's coming". In other words, be vigilant, be alert, be on your guard, because according to our text, Satan desires to "sift us like wheat" to destroy our faith. Remember. We are most vulnerable after great spiritual blessings and victories.

### I. PETER: SATAN DESIRES TO SIFT YOU LIKE WHEAT. (Verse 31-32)

Let's examine this interesting account in phrases.

#### Phrase One: "Simon, Simon. Satan hath demanded to have you".

The word "you" is in the plural sense. It literally means that Jesus was not just talking to Peter, but to all the disciples. The larger implication is that Satan evidently made an appearance before God to be allowed access to His disciples. This same principle is also found in Job 1:9-12 and Job 2:4-6 where we find Satan making a second request to God to be allowed full access to Job. As you know, Satan was allowed access to Job but was not allowed to take his life. The lesson for us is simple. Satan cannot tough anyone without the expressed permission of God.

Two Lessons About Satan from these Accounts:

1. Satan has more power than we think he has. In John 16:11, he is called the prince or the ruler of the world. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, he is called the god of this world. In Ephesians 2:2, he is called the ruler of the authority of the air. In 2 Corinthians 4:4b, he blinds the minds of believers. And in 2 Timothy 2:25, 26, he holds people in a snare until they are delivered by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

According to the book of Job, he has the power to take life (Job's family). He has the power to ruin health (Job); cause natural disasters (Job 1:19); and provoke evil deeds (Luke 22:3).

2. Satan's Power is by Permission from God: We must keep in mind that there are not two ultimate authorities in the universe. There is only one, and that is God!

QUESTION - Why would God allow any power and authority to Satan at all? That is one of the most difficult questions that anyone could ask. It becomes a much more difficult question in light of Revelation 20:2, 3, 10 when it says that God will bind Satan for 1000 years so he can no longer deceive the nations of the earth. He will then be thrown into the lake of fire. So- Why allow him to go century after century with any power at all? I believe we have several clues from Scripture. According to 1 Peter 1:6; 3:17; and Romans 8:17, there is a three-fold purpose:

1. To refine us as Christians.
2. To perfect the Church of Jesus Christ.
3. To glorify God.

So, Satan has power and authority and he is using it for his evil purposes, but ultimately, he can only do and accomplish what God gives him permission to do. Little does Satan realize that he is in fact accomplishing the perfect will of God in doing these things.

## II. SATAN'S DESIRE WAS TO DESTROY FAITH: (verse 31)

Phrase Two: "That he might sift you as wheat". What does that mean? We are given a clue to the meaning of this term in the next verse. Verse 32 makes it clear that he is talking about the destruction of our faith. Satan evidently will do anything to make our faith fail.

### How important is our faith?

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

## III. JESUS PRAYS FOR OUR FAITH NOT TO FAIL: (verse 32)

Phase Three: "But I have prayed for thee" (you). What an encouraging and hopeful verse of Scripture. Jesus is praying for our faith to remain strong. Notice that the word "you" used here is no longer a plural Greek word. It is now singular. He is now speaking specifically to Simon Peter. According to verse 34, Jesus tells Peter that before all is said and done, he would deny Him three times. Although Peter declared that it would never happen, we all know that it did. But just when Satan thought that he had been successful in causing Peter's faith to fail, Jesus had been praying for him. Because of this prayer, Peter's failure was only a temporary setback. He was sifted but not destroyed.

Think about it. The Father and Son teaming up on our behalf to make certain we make it to the end. This truth had such a profound impact on Peter's life that he wrote about it some thirty years later in 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (See also John 10:27-30)

#### IV. WE ARE TO HELP STRENGTHEN THE FAITH OF THOSE AROUND US: (verse 32)

Phrase Four: "Strengthen Thy Brethren" All of us have an added responsibility as Christians. This responsibility is intended to bring us joy. It was never intended to be an added burden. God was telling Peter that it was his responsibility to help strengthen the faith of the other ten disciples. While there are certainly times when God Himself strengthens our faith, according to our text, God uses other people the majority of time to strengthen our faith. What a thought! What a responsibility!

#### V. APPLICATION:

Whatever God gives to us, we have the privilege of passing it on to others, knowing that it will result in the strengthening of their faith. The next time you feel dejected and downcast and feel like you can't go on, remember that God the Father and Christ the Son are praying for you. You can make it to the end.