



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 3571

Luke 22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat."

There are a few occasions in our Bible where Satan speaks. In Genesis three he spoke to Eve. In Job 1, he had a conversation with God. In Matthew 4, he tempts Jesus. And, here in our verse today, it seems that Satan was asking the Lord for permission to attack Peter.

Several layers of interesting thought arise from this:

First, Satan cannot do whatever he wants to do. He was limited in what he could do to Job. Here, in this verse, he must get permission before he can “sift” Peter. Is that true of each of us? Does Satan have to get the Lord’s approval before he will launch a full assault against our hearts and souls? In Peter’s letter, Satan is described as a roaring lion looking for someone, anyone, to attack.

Satan is not equal to God. Satan is limited by God. For that, we ought to be thankful.

Second, had the Lord not told Peter this, it is likely that the apostle would have never known this. The “sifting” may well be the encounters Peter faced in the courtyard while the Lord was being tried. A servant girl challenged him. Under pressure and alone, Peter crumbled. He was “sifted.” Knowing this in advance, didn’t seem to help Peter. One would think, “Ok, this is it. This is Satan trying to shake me.” But, that doesn’t seem to come up. And, it wasn’t a Roman soldier with a sword to Peter’s throat that sifted him. It was the accusations from a servant girl. Peter denied. Peter cursed. Peter crumbled.

(OVER)

All of this makes one wonder, the things that happen in our lives, is Satan behind that? Is he sifting us? We are not told of conversations between Satan and the Lord involving us. Maybe it's good we didn't know.

Third, it is also interesting that the Lord granted Satan what he wanted. He allowed Peter to be sifted. One would think the Lord would respond, "No. Keep your filthy hands off of him." But, He didn't say that. Instead, the Lord said, "I have prayed for you." Jesus praying for Peter. Jesus praying for us. What a wonderful concept that is. When this life is over, I wonder if the Lord will say, "Remember that dark day in your life? I was praying for you. I was praying that your faith would be strong."

For Peter, failing faith was common. When walking on the water, he started to sink and the Lord rebuked him for having "little faith." His faith failed. When the disciples were on the sea, in the midst of a storm, and Jesus asleep in the boat, they became frightened and thought they were about to die. Jesus again said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Faith failed. Another time, while again in a boat on the sea, the disciples were fussing about not having enough food. Again, Jesus said, "You men of little faith". Faith failed.

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail, but it indicates that He thought it might. The following verse says, "...when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Turn again? Seems like the Lord knew. The Lord did know. He would say, "before the rooster crows three times, you will deny Me." Peter would be sifted. Peter's faith would fail. The Lord knew. The Lord allowed this.

Fourth, the Lord also knew that Peter would be useful again. A faith failed isn't the end. Peter would turn again. The Lord knew. The Lord was patient. And, in many ways, isn't that our story. There have been occasions when our faith has failed. We remained quiet when we should have spoke. We put a basket over our light so no one would see it. We had attitudes that do not show our best. There have been times when our faith has failed. But, we turned. We came back.

And, this is a lesson we must remember about others. We see others whose faith has failed. Don't give up on them. Don't toss them to the wayside. Pray for them, as the Lord did for Peter. Remind them to return, as Peter was told. Be stronger this time, as Peter would later be.

Satan was after Peter. The Lord knew it. Satan tripped Peter, but he got back up. And, so must we.

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