

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

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Luke 22:31-*“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.”*

TURNING DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

Gen, 15:12-14-*As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”*

If you were an Israelite, living at the end of those four hundred years, and even though the stories had been passed down all the way back to Abraham, and even though God had promised him that in four hundred years, after having been mistreated – boy, was that ever the truth – you would come out of the land with great possessions and be given the special land that was promised to you through Abraham, how would you feel? Could you believe it? It would be pretty difficult to believe those things seeing the terrible circumstances surrounding you. Yet, in a very short time, God, through Moses, would

wrest victory from the jaws of defeat and you would, in fact, experience the very thing that God had promised your forefather, Abraham.

What went through King David’s mind as he, for months, ran from a madman king who wanted to kill him? Did he see victory as he was running for his life? Probably not. But God, in His perfect wisdom and timing, snatched victory from what appeared to be defeat and enthroned David as the greatest king who ever lived on earth.

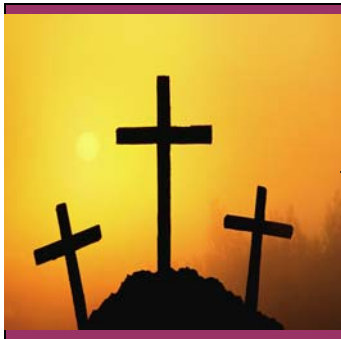
What did a bystander think when they saw Peter run from the courtyard where Jesus was being taunted and crowned with thorns, and sit on the ground outside, weeping bitterly at his selfish sin? He might have thought, “Well, he’s finished. He denied the Lord, not once, but three times. Like Judas, he’ll likely just go hang himself.” **But God, in His mercy and in His perfect will, once again thwarted the designs of the devil and brought victory out of defeat.** Peter went on to become the great emissary of Christianity.

How about Joseph? How would you feel if your own brothers sold you to a band of merchantmen and you were

taken to a strange country where you didn’t even speak the language? You would go from being the son of a great and wealthy farmer, whose God promised a wonderful land to live in, to becoming a slave in an Egyptian’s house; and eventually spending years in prison. But, once again, God intervened and that which the devil intended for harm, God changed for good. And even more than good, He changed it into a great victory and rescue for Joseph and his family.

And what better example than Jesus Himself. Satan thought he’d won a great victory at Calvary but he played right into God’s hands. **What was a sure defeat in the eyes of many became the greatest victory in the history of mankind.**

So what happens when you find yourself in the midst of a great trial? Do you allow God to change defeat into victory? Remember, Satan had to ask permission to sift Peter. And if you are a radical disciple, he has to ask permission to harass you, too. And if God grants it, that means that He has a plan already in effect. He fully intends to transform that which the devil intends



for harm into that which will bring Him glory.

God makes a habit of turning defeat into victory.

If we really knew and understood this, we would all handle difficulties much better than we do. And if we approached things the way Joseph did, or the way Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, or their friend, Daniel, we would ultimately see God's hand because we would be looking for God in the situation instead of looking at the dire circumstances. It would be our operation of faith that would propel the altering of the enemy's proposed defeat into God's perfect victory.

There is never a time when Satan is attempting to defeat us that God will not turn it into victory, if we allow Him to. We must know the truth. We must know the God who we say that we serve. And we must recognize that God has not turned His back on us. He never turns His back on those who love Him and serve Him. Never! **God has purpose in everything that comes our way, including those things in which the devil has placed his hands.**

GOD HAS AN ULTIMATE PLAN

Look at Job. Here was a man who, clearly, pleased God and was greatly blessed and protected by God. And

the devil saw that God had put a hedge around Job so that he could not get to him. God, however, lifted the hedge of protection and allowed the enemy to do certain things to Job but only those things that played into God's perfect plan.

When Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat, Jesus didn't pray Peter out of the predicament. He prayed him through it. And even then, before it happened, he told Peter (who certainly didn't understand it at the time) that he would get through it and then would be responsible to encourage others.

Luke 22:31-32- "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*"

And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers. God had an ultimate plan. And he used the enemy's plans to bring about His will in Peter's life. Satan has many devious plans of defeat that he intends to use against God's people. There are Biblical truths that we need to know if we want to see defeat continually turned into victory.

God, of course, can turn defeat into victory any time He wishes to. But, often, we tie God's hands by our ill-used free will. If we serve God half-heartedly, or if we continue to play with the things of the world, we have

opened ourselves up to the whim of circumstance and to the devil's plans for us. With our free will, we have the ability to hold God up with a stop sign. When we choose not to obey God's word and when we choose to make decisions that we know are not godly, we have put up a stop sign to the Lord.

God is sovereign but He is also a gentleman. He will not force Himself upon us. It is vital, then, that we understand the spiritual truth behind God's intent when He thwarts the enemy's plans. He always is willing to turn the devil's plans into His own but He wants us to get through the trial in victory. Our faith activates God's intervention.

God's perfect will is for each of us to use our free will to serve Him, wholly and without reservation. If we grant the Lord full authority over our lives to rule, to conquer, and to control us, then we have yielded our own self-control over to Him. He then can mold us into the Christians that He has intended us to be right from the beginning. In doing so, totally yielded to the Lord, sin no longer has dominion over us, self no longer has dominion over us, and death no longer has dominion over us.

We have, by the grace of God, put ourselves in a

position to know that God will come to our rescue because there is no stop sign. Every attempt of the devil to bring defeat will result in victory by the Lord. That does not mean that the devil won't get what *appears* to be a victory. But, ultimately, God will have won out. He always does. History has proven that every Christian who was martyred brought a large number of additional Christians onto the scene. The seed that dies and goes into the ground brings forth new growth. That, of course, takes faith on the part of the Christian, but if he is as sold out as we have indicated, that faith will be there for him.

PETER'S TRIAL

There is much spiritual truth in the short statement that Jesus made to Peter. First, He told him that Satan had asked to sift him as wheat. It is imperative that we realize that, as radical disciples, we have, by the grace of God, reached a place spiritually in which the enemy must ask God before he can harass or attack us. And if God allows him to, then He does so with a purpose in mind; an ultimate plan that will bring victory to us and glory to Himself.

The second thing that Jesus mentioned to Peter was that He was praying for him. His exact words were: "But I have prayed for you that your

faith will not fail." In other words, Peter, the enemy wants to do something bad to you but ... I have prayed for you. **What great confidence there is in knowing that the King of Kings is praying for you.** Why is He praying? So that your faith will not fail.

It is clear from the Scripture that Jesus understood that the Father was going to allow the devil to sift Peter. And Peter was going to have to exercise his faith in order to get through the ordeal. So, He prayed for him that his faith would not fail.

Friends, if Jesus Christ prays for you that your faith will not fail, then your faith will not fail. Then Jesus shared some of the future with Peter. He told him that *when* he turned back, he was to strengthen his brothers. First, it is clear that Peter was going to turn back. His faith was not going to fail. Secondly, he would learn enough from the trial to be able to strengthen his brothers.

And each of us will learn the same things. Satan will have to ask if he wants to sift us. Jesus, sitting at the right hand of the Father, is praying for us that our faith will not fail. And so our faith will not fail. And when we have come through the trial, we now have the requisite strength to become a blessing to our brothers.

Most of us are like Peter. We barrell ahead of the Lord and He has to reign us in. Then we lag behind and He has to push us forward. We yield to the devil's wiles and then think we are the lowest of the low. But it was all part of God's plan. He designed it that way before we were born. We must yield all to God and recognize that nothing comes our way except that it comes by the hand of God. And that includes the enemy and his plans.

But there is one other thing that occurred with Peter. Satan sifted Peter as one would sift wheat. Wheat is far more valuable after it is sifted than before. And Peter was, too. And so will we be more valuable.

God doesn't make any mistakes. We must get hold of this truth: that even the enemy can only do to us that which God allows him to; and He always only allows him to do those things that God wants him to do, things that will draw us closer to the Lord and conform us to the likeness of Jesus.

ALL THINGS ARE SPIRITUAL

Life is a spiritual existence, not a temporal one. It is vital, as Christians, that we see life as spiritual. Every thing that happens in our lives affects us spiritually. There is

constant warfare in the heavens regarding us. Though events are carried out here on the earth, most of what occurs was determined by the warfare taking place in the heavenly realms.

Most of us simply do not think in those terms. We do what we do and assume that it was because we chose to do it. It is not that simple. **God is the creator of all things; and all things that occur on the earth fall under His auspices.** Every person on this earth is being fought over in the heavens. Satan wants to take every one of us to hell; and God wants each of us to spend eternity with Him.

We must be able to transform from the natural to the divine. Everything that is natural will eventually pass away. Everything that is spiritual will remain.

Our hearts and minds should be tuned in to the Lord on a continual basis. If we do that, the devil can do nothing to us without our knowing about it. That, in itself, turns proposed defeat toward victory.

The closer we draw to the Lord, the more efficacious it all becomes. The more we yield to God, the more truth He allows us to know. **God's ultimate goal for us is to live in victory.** But we must understand that much victory comes through proposed defeat. In every war, the victor wins out over an enemy whose purpose was to

bring defeat to him. And, in many cases, the victor snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. And it will be the same with us. God is God. He is trustworthy. He understands all things. **Nothing is occurring of which He does not have complete understanding and over which He does not have complete control.** The only things keeping us from that ideal, that ultimate victory, is ourselves and our lack of faith. Yield all to God. It could be the difference between victory and defeat.

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