

This Sifting Season We're In



by Ms. Smallback

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“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan [the accuser] has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Luke 22:31-32 NASU

And that word translated “demanded permission” can also be translated “obtained by asking” and comes from the Greek root “exaiteomai” which means “to demand for trial”. Most of us know the rest of that story, that Simon went on to deny Christ at great personal cost to himself, but was later restored and led the disciples in upheaving the world for the Gospel. [literally the good news of Christ]

The concept of sifting wheat is to remove the chaff from the grain. The chaff is the inedible part, the worthless part (for use). Some of the implication we can draw from this is that the enemy is used to separate the worthless from the good.

The season we are in...

This is part of the season we are in; the sifting has started. The interesting part is it's going to vary person to person. The chaff that I need removed from my life is probably not the same chaff you need removed from your life. God is a personal God, and the powers of darkness are not ignorant to the weaknesses and compromises of humans either corporately or individually. I don't think time is going to

be wasted taking you through financial hardship if it won't address the chaff in your life. Your trial is more likely to come in an area that will put a finger on the sensitive area that will bring the areas of correction needed for you, if you heed the lessons before you.

There are precious few people I know right now that are not going through some sort of direct or indirect (someone they love) trial or tribulation of varying degree. Our nation as a whole is going through a sifting, and there's a lot of chaff here. There are a lot of worthless attitudes, belief systems, demonstrations, etc. that permeate our society and culture. Do I think they'll be eradicated by this sifting process? Some, but not most.

The purpose of the sifting will be to expose, to lay bare that which is worthless. Dealing with humanity we still have the reality that choices are still options. Because a particular music or entertainment "star" is exposed for worthless or vile activity, does not necessarily mean they will be shut down. What it will do is lay bare their intentions and alliances. Now we can choose with better information if we want to align with them. (And believe me, even with exposure, some will still choose the vile. They will ignore or excuse it, and they will not turn from it.)

So on a national level, industries and organizations, persons and personalities are being sifted. We should be watching for the chaff that is coming to the surface. We should be reassessing our own views of these institutions (including the U.S. Government). We should be breaking alliances and allegiances to things found worthless and vile. It's a painful process, but a necessary one.

Sifting is separation.

What is God separating? The worthless from the useful or valuable. We should be grateful God is allowing this sifting

season. If we were to hit the season of judgment before the season of sifting, we'd all fall condemned. But because He is sifting FIRST, we have the opportunity to be cleansed of what would condemn us. We have the opportunity to let the sifting process do its work in us that we may be found of value as judgments are released.

Study Ezekiel 9 to begin to understand the implications of this season. Here's an excerpt for emphasis:

The Lord said to him[angelic servant of God], "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst." But to the others He said in my hearing, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare. Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary."

Ezek 9:4-6NASU

During the sifting process, the records of Heaven are taking note. Are you sighing and groaning over the abominations in our midst? Or have you turned a blind eye? Or worse, are you joining with them? Applauding them?

[Don't miss that He starts in the sanctuary. The Church is the first place He begins. (1Peter 4:17) Watch the idols of the church be exposed. Watch practicing sin be exposed.]

There's a marking going on. Remember Malachi 3:16-18?

Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." So you will

again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

God is paying attention to our conversations. It's not lost on Him. A book of remembrance is taken down of those who esteem Him. He makes plain that there will be a distinction between the righteous and wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. Those who He has marked will be spared on a future day of calamity and judgment.

I can already hear some of the protests. But if that's true, why is evil so prevalent? Why hasn't there been an accounting before now? Why have I suffered for doing good while my neighbor or family member has prospered who is friends with the ways of this world? Because God has a timetable.

Recall that when God was making His covenant with Abraham, He said there would be a delay for the promise for four hundred years. Why? Because the "iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete". [See Gen. 15:16]

Last time I checked, God has not revealed His timetable for judgment. What it takes for the sins of a people to become complete unto judgment has not been disclosed to me. Why it took four hundred more years for a people group who served other gods to be judged I do not know. Why America has not been judged for the increasing and prevalent wickedness in its midst, I do not know. I do know, that his patience is mercy, but there is a time patience is spent and mercy is set aside. When that time comes, being positioned under the shadow of the Almighty is the only place of protection.

There are two places a sieve (tool for sifting) is used in Scripture. Notice that both times it is an expression of judgment.

We should posture ourselves correctly during this sifting

Remember what Peter admonished:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

1 Peter 4:12-13NASU

This trial, this tribulation you and/or those you love are facing right now, Peter calls a "fiery ordeal". I would say the same for the trial my family is under right now, and even those around me in the midst of fiery ordeals and trials. What did Peter say it is here for? **Your testing.**

And he should know.

While the national sifting is one thing, our personal sifting is another. There are areas in each of our lives that will not withstand the winds of judgment. (and they **are** coming) God, in His mercy, has unfurled a season of sifting to get our attention to things that need put under the Sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Christ.

Learn to seek Him in your trial in a way that isn't just asking for reprieve or rescue. Learn to ask what you're supposed to be learning. Learn to listen and observe what He is bringing to the forefront in your own thoughts, attitudes, words and actions. There are clues in them. They will show areas not submitted to God, areas of pain or anger (or other things) that we're holding on to that are keeping us bound.

I thought it was interesting that the words of Christ to Peter warning him of his upcoming trial, the word "sift" was selected as opposed to other word(s) usually associated with trials. Thayer defined that word as, "to sift, shake in a sieve, by inward agitation to try one's faith to the verge of overthrow".

Are you being sifted right now? Is there a trial in your life that is shaking you? Do you feel inward agitation? Do you realize it is designed to try your faith in order to overthrow

it? Get rid of the chaff so that the kernel of value is not lost because you're holding on to the chaff (which will be burned). Let the sifting process have its way so the worthless is removed and you can be protected in the shelter of the Most High.

Let the chaff be separated from you and then...

Lastly, remember what Christ told Peter: that He prayed for him. He prayed that Peter's faith not fail.

Ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for you. Recall Paul's instruction in Romans 8:26-27...

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Then remember Christ's instruction about what we're to do when we get through our own trial(s) of faith: strengthen your brother.

Take your strengthened faith and reach out to your brothers and sisters still in their trials. Pray for them, minister to them, encourage them in the faith to hold to the teachings of Christ, to submit to the discipline of the Spirit, to respond with repentance at exposure of sin, wrong thinking, wrong attitudes, disobedience, etc.

Meditate on Psalms 51 and 91. Psalm 51 for your cleansing, healing and restoration. Psalm 91 for your position in Him and for your protection. Let the sifting prepare you for the days ahead. Understand the separating is for your benefit (if you submit) and not your harm. His mercy is available for this process, but will not be as readily available for the next. Thank Him for His mercies.

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