

## *The Sifting...*

*by Bill Randles*

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31-32).*

Everywhere I turn lately I have been seeing brothers and sisters in faith undergoing intense trials in many areas of their lives. Of course we know that the christian life consists of manifold trials, for as the book of Acts tells us, "through many tribulations shall we enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

But recently it seems to me that for those around me, the trials are of a particular intensity and seem to be focused upon the tearing apart of families and the putting to the proof of the faith of children who have been raised in highly conscientious christian homes.

I have asked the Father in heaven for wisdom and I believe He reminded me of this scripture as an answer. What we are experiencing is the end times sifting of the faith of our families, especially our children.

Jesus told us that this pressure upon families would be one of the evils to endure as a consequence of the last days before He returns,

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (2 Timothy 3:1-4).*

Time and again I have been hearing from heart-broken parents who have given their children a christian home, education and environment, yet whose children upon coming of age, have seemingly rejected it all, repudiating their own upbringing and abandoning their faith.

These parents are stunned that seemingly devout and compliant children are defecting in various degrees from the spirituality that the family had raised them in.

What we are going through is what Peter went through, on the night Jesus was betrayed. The events leading up to and including the crucifixion, foreshadow the last days and the tribulation that we must partly endure. Satan has been allowed to sift us.

### *Everything that can be shaken is being shaken...*

The sifting is designed to "put to the proof," or reveal to us how much of our faith is truly grain and how much of it is bran, husk, pebbles or other debris. That element must be sifted out of us, but this trial is admittedly painful and bewildering.

A good many of us who have been Christians through the last twenty years and have raised children as Christians, have done so almost believing that our commitment to alternative education (Homeschooling, christian school), and discipline (Proverbs, spanking, correction and training) would guarantee the salvation of our children.

Although such things are certainly Biblical and greatly beneficial, and can even tend towards the ultimate

acceptance by our children of the grace of God revealed in Jesus the Savior and Lord; they are certainly no substitute for Salvation.

Salvation is of the grace of God alone. Our home schooled, highly disciplined, creation believing, counter culturally raised children, are still sinners in need of the Savior. Unless they are born again, they are only well-behaved, highly educated, well spoken, Bible versed sinners.

There are so many ways our children, even in the best of spiritual circumstances are being appealed to by the world and seduced by the Spirit of the Age! The only true refuge from the world for our families is the Lord himself.

Simon was so sure He was ready to go down fighting for the Lord, even if all else deny Him! How *'confidence in the flesh'* collapses in the time of sifting! This had to be exposed in Simon. He had to be put into a position that brought this out!

God wasn't surprised by Simon's collapse and denial—only Simon was surprised. God allowed Satan to expose Him so that He would truly turn to Jesus and be saved.

So it is with the homes and families of many of us going through serious personal tests. Children who were formerly compliant are telling off parents, willfully defying them, casting off respect, reverence, love and commitment that they might follow their own lusts.

Satan has requested it and God is allowing this sifting. But Jesus is praying for us that our faith not fail us. He wants us to know that He cares for us and our children. *"I have prayed for you that your faith fail not."*

*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).*

Don't despair if your family is in the sifting, cling to the One who lives to intercede for us in all of our weakness! Don't forget that even the best trained children are yet sinners in need of New Birth! Jesus has allowed this exposure for their salvation.

Remember that Jesus looked ahead and told Peter *"When you are converted..."* Not if, but *"when!"* There are promises from God for our children to plead before the throne in the time of sifting, such as,

*Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children (Isaiah 49:24-25).*

Finally Jesus predicted that these *"children of the sifting"* would one day be converted and strengthen their brothers. We have often pleaded for our children, *"whats it going to take?"* So why should we be surprised by what the sifting reveals?

Many will fall, many parents hearts will be broken before its over, but these children will come back stronger than ever one day, and be used to strengthen and refresh the brothers.

*And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end... (Daniel 11:35).*

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