

When You Have Turned Back, Strengthen Your Brothers (Luke 22:32b)

Luke 22: 31-34

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you^[a] as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

³³ But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

We all admire good and justice since childhood. Education is a good way to learn and to follow nice examples to become a man of light, honesty, and integrity. No one is set to kill, to hate, to gamble, and to live in darkness. In other words, we all have a good and harmonious nature. It is like a wonderful built-in image to be developed into a great personality. Even, the past history teaches us how terrible the war out of hatred and confrontation could be. How many people lost their lives, or loved ones, or became homeless. It is clearly against our nature. But we have to admit it is inevitable. In fact, the good nature people can use all kinds of initiatives to fulfill self gain, or to justify killing. There is no doubt that people regret and try to make up. It is like what Ecclesiastes said: “a time to kill and a time to heal” (3: 3) Perhaps the problem is not so serious that we can fix it. Yet, we all agree the deeper we enter into the world, the more self in our nature that the pure and good nature is simply lost. Although we know the fact that no one is perfect, the bottom line is that we still hold some hope to ourselves. Give us more time it will be better. Perhaps we are naïve, which is a definite weakness. What on earth is the solution? We study history, and investigate human nature. We try so hard to search through the outside. Sometimes some ages appeared better than the other. But the good cause can hardly be duplicated. We admit we cannot exceed ourselves to find a true solution. This is another limitation.

Jesus pointed out a critical spiritual element in this passage, which is conceivable yet out of our control. There is an evil authority trying to trap us like wheat being sifted to drop from the good honest nature, or to become disqualified to give up. Yet we like to make friends with the same disqualified to find some comfort in struggling. Oftentimes, Satan does not force us to do things against our heart. But, once we are self centered our efforts oftentimes make it worse. Sometimes just a little temporary benefit we sell our purity. For a little dark pleasure we give up the light. After all, we may not commit killing, but everything for me is so evident. Bible says: “everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34) More precisely, sin is to depart from the good and just fountain. Simply speaking, away from God is under the temptation of Satan. Sooner or later we will drop into its snare. Sometimes we use a great calling to put family, society, or nation above ourselves as a high calling. If it is not connected to God, it will drop to another big self trap. At the end, it is still for someone else’s ambition. Thus, we may understand no one seems able to resist the temptation of the evil one. Even we have lessons from the history and good teachings from some great philosophers, we still fail even under careful discernment. After so many

generations, there is a fundamental catch: never give up on ourselves and “we” is the source of issue. We are simply in a cycle of working hard and regret and try again. Where is the escape? Bible tells us that Satan tried to elevated itself and, by God’s judgment, became the degenerated angel, which power is much greater than human being. The good news is that God is the ultimate authority.

We are so familiar with the struggle; heart is willing and body is weak. It is not we are unwilling. It is because we are under the control of sin, or Satan, so that what we are willing we don’t do, and what we are not willing we do. We are not immune from the struggle. But we really thank our Lord. He knew our weakness. It is like a dentist who suffered teeth pain himself before. He has sympathy toward those who are bound by teeth pain. The connecting point is by faith. Just like he prayed for Peter that he would not give up his faith to God’s sympathy. He did not ask Peter to rely on his flesh, or not to give up on yourself, instead, to trust in the Lord that even we are weak yet we would not lose our faith. After he turned back, strengthen your brothers. Peter disowned Jesus three times in public before the rooster crowed twice that night. He recalled what Jesus told him early that night; before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me. He went out and wept bitterly. It shows that he gave up on himself completely. After the weeping, we never see Peter complained about weakness of others. He knew everyone is so weak. This weeping really strengthened many brothers then to rely on themselves no more. It also strengthens a lot of brothers since then. We know we are not reliable. Even when we are weak or in failure, it is our Lord who pray for us to strengthen our faith. It is Peter’s weeping that we have hope even in an utter failure. We have the perfect life in us yet we are not perfect yet. When we gain a little faith to turn from our weakness, may our “weeping” help others love God and love one another more.