

FAITH BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

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Dear members and friends of FBF,

It should be a comfort to know that Jesus is now – right now – at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.¹ But sometimes I'm not so sure if I like the way Jesus prays. He once said to Simon Peter,

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:31-32)

I would have preferred Jesus to pray that Satan's wicked designs would be restrained. I like to pray for that “hedge of protection” – and make it full of thorns, too, so Ol' Scratch won't be able to get close enough to see me, let alone sift me. But isn't it ironic that the two main passages that speak of God's “hedge of protection” concern the *removal* of God's protection, and the exposure of His people to testing (Job 1:10) or discipline (Isaiah 5:5)?

Why doesn't Jesus pray for Peter's protection *from* sifting instead of just the preservation of his faith *through* sifting? Think about what “sifting” does. Sifting separates what is useful from what is not. Sifting removes the impurities. Sifting refines. How God demonstrates His power and wisdom by turning even Satan's evil desires to the fulfillment of Heaven's benevolent purpose! It's a classic case of, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”²

In the final analysis, we can trust Jesus' intercession on our behalf. He knows just how to pray for us. He knows how to weigh our circumstances with exactly the right sense of priorities. He knows that the most important asset a believer has is his faith; not his comfort, not his prosperity, not even his health. Put another way, Jesus knows that the worst tragedy that can befall us is not the loss of comfort, prosperity, health, or anything else, but the failure of our faith.

Jesus knows that God is perfecting the good work that He began in us when we first came to Him in faith.³ He knows that some of the most important lessons of the Christian life cannot be learned in a Sunday School classroom or a church sanctuary, but only in the crucible of trial and suffering. The Christian life isn't for sissies – that's for sure.

So no matter what your trial is right now, be comforted. Jesus is interceding for you. He is asking the Father to help you hold fast to your faith, to help you cling to His goodness, His grace, His mercy even when He seems far away – even when it feels like you have been abandoned behind enemy lines. He will not allow you to be tested beyond your strength, and when the time is right He will come to your rescue.⁴ And you will praise the Lord for His deliverance, but also for how you have been transformed by the refiner's fire.

Yours in the cause of Christ,

Chris

¹ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25

² Genesis 50:20

³ Philippians 1:6

⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:31