

## What does Satan wanting to “sift you like wheat” in Luke 22 mean?

(Luke 22:31–34) And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

Let’s take look at some passages in the Bible:

(Proverbs 20:26) A wise king sifts out the wicked, And brings the threshing wheel over them.

(Amos 9:8–10) “Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,” Says the LORD. “For surely I will command, And will sift the house of Israel among all nations, As grain is sifted in a sieve; Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, Who say, ‘The calamity shall not overtake nor confront us.’”

(Isaiah 30:28, NIV) His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray.

From these passages, we can deduce several things:

- Sifting is a form of testing and/or punishment.
- God allows troubles to come upon His people.
- The intent is to turn their hearts back to Him.
- Only the wicked are destroyed in the sifting process; not one grain is lost.

The process of sifting separates the desirable from what is undesirable. The implication is that Satan wants to prove that the disciples will fail under severe testing. God allows the sifting to prove that they will ultimately come through the sifting process with a faith stronger than before.

Back to Luke 22:

- Jesus did not say that He would not allow the disciples to be “sifted.”
- The first occurrence of “you” in v. 31 is in the plural (humas). This refers to all the disciples in contrast to Peter, who is addressed (v. 32) by the singular “you” (sou).
- He prayed for Peter specifically because he would suffer in heart more than any of the disciples.

## Job

What other Bible character is known for the severe trials he endured? Job.

After God’s conversation with Satan about why he was attending this meeting, Satan turns to Job as proof that he owns the earth.

(Job 1:9–12) So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

- Notice that Satan says “stretch out Your hand,” meaning “You cause Job harm.”

- God's response is to allow Satan to bring Job calamity. God does not inflict pain, but He does allow it for the purposes of testing.

### **How Can We Apply This to Our Lives?**

We all will be tested, sooner or later. A positive outcome is determined by our choice to hold fast to God as we are sifted.

A few verses we can apply to ourselves:

(2 Timothy 3:12) Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

(James 1:2–3) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

(1 Peter 1:6–9) In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

(1 Corinthians 10:13) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.