

**NEWS AND VIEWS**  
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*“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”*

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*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.” (Luke 22:31-32)*

In the construction industry materials that are used for building projects are tested for quality. The testing of concrete is an amazing thing. The goal is to test the integrity of the design. The concrete is subjected to massive amounts of pressure until it reaches the breaking point. The only way to know the strength of concrete is to bring it to a point of failure. The concrete is often explosive in its failure. It not only collapses, it ruptures from the inside out. You can not only see it, but you can hear it when it fails.

The testing of our faith is often like the testing of concrete. Faith is brought to the breaking point to discover the object of the faith or the integrity of the design. This will reflect upon the capability of the designer. Faith in self will always fail. The stress is too great. When our faith fails, it can be catastrophic in its result. Things collapse and even explode. Pieces of broken lives are very painful to put back together. Sometimes the jagged edges don't seem to fit.

God is in the business of testing and purifying. He tests the reality and purity of our faith by subjecting us to situations where we must choose who and what we believe. When we choose to trust God, no matter what the test, leaning hard on what He says, we will have passed the test. What Jesus told Peter before he was tested is greatly encouraging.

**I. IN TIMES OF OUR TESTING, OUR JESUS IS PRAYING.** The good news is that the enemy of our souls must request permission to attack. This really is a pretty one-sided war. Can you imagine a military commander on the battlefield asking his opponent's approval upon the target of his next combat operation? We can be encouraged to know that Jesus has real authority over the enemy and reinforces our decision to remain faithful and believe in God. He does this when He prays for us.

**II. IF OUR FAITH IS REAL, IT WILL NOT FAIL.** Jesus does not pray that Peter gets faith, he prays that the faith Peter has will sustain him. When we are born again by the Spirit of God, we are given the ability to believe. We, like Peter, are given faith as a gift. It is strengthened only when we are given the opportunity to believe God in times of testing.

**III. ONLY AFTER WE RETURN TO GOD, CAN WE REINFORCE OUR BRETHERN.** More concrete does not always strengthen more. It's the integration of steel that gives it strength in tension. Steel will bend and flex and keep it together. Also the inner action of the water and cement reaction will bring the concrete to the design strength as time passes. When the Holy Spirit acts within us we are often strengthened over time. The more we are tested, the more God can be trusted. God prays that our faith will not fail...He has designed the test...He has injected us with faith. Our part is to exercise it. God's grace provides that even after we have failed in trusting God, after we have stumbled in this walk of faith, we can always return to God. After we have been stretched to believe God, we can testify as to His faithfulness and integrity. God tests us to purify us. He has a plan for us to encourage one another. In our weakness, when we return to the source of our strength, it is only then we receive something to share...our faith in a faithful God.

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam