**Unless Those Days Be Shortened**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Mark 13:12-27**

**Sunday Morning**

**August 11, 2019**

**12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.**

Saints, Jesus warned that in the coming persecutions his followers would be betrayed by their family members and friends, as well as by religious and civil authorities.

Certainly this was a reality for the Roman believers to whom Mark was writing. The fear of being killed for one’s Christian faith would pit family members against one another.

**Luke 12:49-53**

49 "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.

52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

**13 And you will be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

Saints, Jesus’ followers will face the reality that everyone will hate them because of their allegiance to Christ. For a Jew to convert to Christianity would soon become very dangerous because it would lead to hatred and ostracism.

And Jesus’ words looked forward to the time of the end when hatred of Christians would again occur. To believe in Jesus and endure to the end will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Severe trials will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers.

Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us; it marks us as already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us going through the times of persecution. While some will suffer and some will die, none of Jesus’ followers will suffer spiritual or eternal loss.

**2 Timothy 2:9-13**

9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

**14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his garment. 17 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18 And pray that your flight may not be in winter.**

Saints, Jesus warned against seeking signs, but as a final part of his answer to the disciples’ second question, he gave them the ultimate event that would signal coming destruction. The sacrilegious object that causes desecration refers to the desecration of the Temple by God’s enemies.

A more precise explanation might have been dangerous for them if the Gospel fell into the wrong hands, so Mark urged them to understand Jesus’ words in light of the prophecy from the Old Testament prophet Daniel (see Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11).

**Daniel 9:27**

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

**Daniel 11:31**

“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”

The sacrilegious object refers to pagan idolatry and sacrifice. The sacrilege would occur in the Temple itself (standing where it should not be) and cause it to be abandoned.

**1 Kings 16:1-4**

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying: 2 "Inasmuch as I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made My people Israel sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins,

3 surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields."

Jesus’ words may also look far forward to the end times when the Antichrist will commit the ultimate sacrilege by setting up an image of himself in the Temple and ordering everyone to worship it (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? 6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

**19 For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.**

Saints, Jesus gave this warning to get out quickly for these will be days of greater horror than at any time since God created the world. This language, while sounding like an exaggeration, is not unusual in Scripture when describing an impending disaster.

**Revelation 16:14-16**

14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." 16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

While Jesus’ words could be taken as referring to the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, they are so emphatic and clear that they must point ultimately to the final period of tribulation at the end of the age, because, as he stated, it will never happen again.

**20 And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.**

While a certain amount of persecution happened in the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus may also have envisioned the persecution of believers throughout history. The persecution will be so severe that unless the Lord shortens that time, that is, if it had not had a specific ending time, no one would survive.

This refers to physical survival and spiritual survival. The time would be cut short for the sake of his chosen, the believers. The shortening of the time will limit their duration so that the destruction will not wipe out God’s people and thus their mission. God is ultimately in charge of history and will not allow evil to exceed the bounds he has set.

**1 Peter 1:2**

“elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:”

**Ephesians 1:4-5**

“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”

**1 Thessalonians 1:4**

“knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.”

**John 15:16**

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

When the time of suffering comes, the important point for the disciples and all believers to remember is that God is in control. Persecution will occur, but God knows about it and controls how long it will take place. He will not forget his people.

**21 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.**

Saints, The Old Testament frequently mentions false prophets who claimed to receive messages from God, but they preached what the people wanted to hear, even when the nation was not following God as it should.

**Jeremiah 23:16-22**

16 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD.

17 They continually say to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You shall have peace" '; And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, 'No evil shall come upon you.' " 18 For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, And has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it?

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD has gone forth in fury--A violent whirlwind! It will fall violently on the head of the wicked. 20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.

21 "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in My counsel, And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.

There were false prophets in Jesus’ day, and we have them today. They are the popular leaders who tell people what they want to hear—such as “God wants you to be rich,” “Do whatever your desires tell you,” or “There is no such thing as sin or hell.”

Jesus also said that false messiahs would come, and he warned his disciples, as he warns us, not to be deceived by whatever signs and wonders they might produce. They will be able to perform miracles designed to convince people that their claims are true.

But their “power” will be by trickery or from Satan, not from God. Both false and true prophets can work miracles.

**Revelation 13:11-13**

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

Yet will they be so convincing that they might even lead God’s chosen ones astray? Is it possible for Christians to be deceived? Yes, and Jesus pointed out the danger.

**Galatians 3:1**

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?”

The arguments and proofs from deceivers in the end times will be so convincing that it will be difficult to be faithful. If we are prepared, Jesus says, we can remain faithful. With the Holy Spirit’s help, believers will not give in and will be able to discern what the deceivers say as false.

**24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in heaven will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.**

Saints, the phrase, at that time, signaled that Jesus was talking specifically about the end times. After the time of tribulation, nature itself would experience change.

As taught in Romans 8 and 2 Peter 3, the entire universe became involved in humanity’s sin predicament; thus, the entire universe will be changed when humanity is changed. The changes in the heavens will be an intended contrast to the pseudo “signs and omens” (13:22) of the false messiahs. These words also recall the words of the prophets.

**Isaiah 13:10**

“For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.”

**Joel 2:10-11**

10 The earth quakes before them, The heavens tremble; The sun and moon grow dark, And the stars diminish their brightness. 11 The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?

**Revelation 6:12-17**

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

After these cosmic events, all the people on earth will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds. Jesus’ return will be unmistakable; no one will wonder about his identity. Jesus’ Second Coming will not be as a humble, human carpenter, but as God’s Son with great power and glory.

**In Closing:**

**27 And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.**

Saints, upon his return to earth, Jesus will send out his angels to gather together his chosen ones from all over the world.

The angels’ gathering of the elect signifies the triumphant enthronement of the Son of Man, who will be revealed in all his power and glory. When he comes, the whole world will know that Jesus is Lord, and Christians’ hope and faith will be vindicated.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**