

Olivet Discourse Part 4 Indestructible Faith Luke 21:16 - 19

*Ch. 21:12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. 13 “It will result in an opportunity for your testimony. 14 “So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. 16 “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, 17 and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 “By your perseverance you will gain your lives. Legacy Standard Bible*

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*When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Lk. 18:8b*

[People love to make endless lists of so-called contradictions in the Bible. Seems like this would be low hanging fruit right here.

*16b they will put some of you to death, 18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish.*

Yuk yuk yuk. Got ya. The book has errors. Throw it away.]

2 Sundays ago we spoke of the fact that Jesus plainly tells his disciples who have followed Him thinking they were on the ground floor of future but imminent glory, that what they can expect instead is hatred and persecution.

He **IS** the messiah. No one ever spoke with the power of His words. No one ever did the works that He did. Messiah rules at Jerusalem over the entire earth and brings in a golden age that rivals the garden of Eden. That is their expectation.

And that will happen! But not now. Right now the Shepherd is on His way to the cross to die for my sins and yours. These little fragile sheep of His are about to be scattered.

These words of His are designed to keep them safe in an unsafe world. They are designed to bear these men safely through a deep and dark valley of despair safely to the other side. They are just as potent today as then.

What this little section is about is the indestructable faith that God provides to us that survives anything, *anything* this world can throw at it.

Real faith, saving faith is that faith that doesn't originate with us. It is the gift of God to every believer that draws them into a relationship with God almighty, and then sustains every true believer through this life safely into the next.

Maybe the best way to approach this passage where Jesus is setting the stage, building within these men the groundwork of the faith that will sustain them through the coming disaster that they haven't even imagined yet, would be to listen to the words of one of the men present this day . . . after the disaster of Jesus death!

Listen to what Peter, who was there that day and endured because of Jesus words, says perhaps 30 - 35 years after this day, near the end of his life.

1Pet. 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 **who are protected by the power of God through faith** for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 that the **proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

It's one of those impossibly long sentences like Paul's. There's so much to say you just keep saying and saying and saying it until it's all unloaded. What did Peter just say.

Bless God because He caused something. God did something. What?

He caused us to be born again to a living hope, because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, we have this hope of obtaining an inheritance that is *imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for who?? you!*

Now he's going to tell me about me, the born again me. *you 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

I'm protected by the power of God, how? Through faith. Not a faith that originated or has anything to do with me. I'm protected by God's power with an indestructible faith. Protected by the power of God through faith for what?

Salvation. Real Christians, real believers have an indestructible faith that God gave them that protects them through anything! Then he says we rejoice, even though our faith is getting tested by fire, by trouble, by persecutions, by whatever, we rejoice because those tests prove that our faith is the real thing. Indestructible faith.

The old saints called this doctrine the perseverance of the saints. We persevere, if our faith is real, because the faith we have is a gift from God. God begins the work and God finishes the work with a faith given to us, from Him, it's an indestructible faith, it doesn't come from me, it doesn't depend on me.

Paul says to the saints at Philippi; *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* Ppn 1:6

There is a sense here that argues; it was forces outside of me that began this work inside of me and those same forces outside of me will finish what was started in me. I can't mess it up in my weakness. God began the work, and

God will finish the work in my heart.

That's really good news, if you have that faith in you. It means you can't fail. But it also means something else is possible. If you follow that indestructible faith idea to another logical conclusion, a great sadness is possible.

We will see people that we love fall away and turn their backs on the once for all delivered to the saints faith, when the going gets impossible, when the cost to be a christian gets to be too steep, because they didn't have the indestructible God given faith to begin with.

When christianity was easy and cheap it was easy for the wheat and the tares to be together, no questions asked, no particular costs to pay. But as the heat gets cranked up it becomes very clarifying who the wheat are, and who the tares are.

And that leads us into one of the most difficult and troubling passages in our Bibles. When the heat gets turned up and the cost of being a real believer who holds to every revealed truth in this book there is the distinct possibility, actually a fact foretold, that families will turn against each other.

What happens in Arab lands even as we speak when a guy goes around and spray paints a red N on houses that belong to christians. N for Nazarene. Those are the houses that get burned down and blown up.

What happens when only one family member in the situation is a christian. If it's a choice of getting your house blown up or safety if you turn in the one christian in the family; Cast out the christian. Cost is a game changer.

We spoke briefly last time we met of a scenario where christians who would hold onto the truths of this book above all else could be forced out of any connection with the computerized system that runs the cosmos. What then?

A new kind of poverty. Living outside the connected world. Cash only. No banking, no investments, no power to buy and sell, no communication except

face to face, no entertainment (that might be a plus), everything our telephones and connectability do for us today, gone. Because you believe the ancient truths of this book.

And trust me, if that happens they'll go right for the retirement accounts. No access to your own money. Sorry, just sign this form and you can have your life and your money back. Only a fool wouldn't do that. Or perhaps only someone who has real indestructible personal faith with the risen Jesus.

What happens when other members in your family unit say, I'm not going to be disconnected from the world over this! That's insanity. Family members turned against family members. It's a horrifying proposition because for us at least, our family members are the most valuable possessions we hold. Only Jesus is more valuable. Or is He?

*16 "But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,*

That particular scenario right there is perhaps the most difficult possible cost of having and keeping Jesus in our entire Bibles. Those who are closest and dearest to me might be so coerced that they would turn me into some authorities not only for the loss of all my possessions, but perhaps even the loss of my very life in this world.

The way we normally deal with that verse is; That verse is meant for someone else. Not us. That verse is meant for tribulation saints who will be chased all over the map by the anti-christ. And it is.

But tell that to some poor saint in Iraq or Syria who just got un-familied by their family who knows their house will be the next target for destruction if there's a christian living inside. Big red N gets painted on. Nazarenes in this house. Burn it down. Blow it up. No, get rid of the nazarene in the house and we'll be safe.

It's happening today and it has happened all through history to some extent

when the cost of being a christian starts to effect everyone else under the common roof. When the costs become real, and drastic, it becomes apparent who has the indestructible faith and who doesn't. But there will be heartbreak involved.

Listen to Matthews more complete version of what we've just looked at in Luke. From Matthew 24; Matt. 24:9 *“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 “And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 “And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 “And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13 “But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.*

You may have read that passage many times and not stopped to process what's actually there. vs. 10 and 11 are talking about a scenario within organized religion. Take another look;

*10 “And at that time many will fall away . . . .* Fall away from what? What I think I see here is a mega-church situation where some cost to believe some doctrine has gotten impossible to bear and the christians turn on the christians.

Or we could say the so-called christians turn on the real christians. Or perhaps we could say the tares will turn on the wheat. Why? Because of the realities of vs. 9 *“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.*

In order to hold onto the belief's clearly stated in this ancient book it costs you tribulation and perhaps in some cases death. Let's just go with tribulation.

You've got a mega church in some large urban area and on any given Sunday the parking lot in that place looks like the Auto Show in some huge arena. Gorgeous shiny gleaming cars filled with occupants who are busy making last minute deals and placing bids in the snipe engine on ebay so they can buy some antique goodie right in the middle of the sermon.

They message a couple of homies, and then they slide the silence button as they walk inside the giant cement sarcophagus. And you tell them they're going to become lower than the homeless people because they're going to be cast out of the communication grid, unless they can figure out some way to be inclusive with the combined LGBTQ+++ and Black Lives Matter agendas.

All of that wealth and power and buying and selling is going to vanish unless they can get on board with \_\_\_\_\_ whatever it is. You fill in the blank. Your ability to earn and trade and move money and, and, and, and . . . . all hangs in the balance over words in an ancient book??

You're going to be cash only, outside the grid, driving a 1989 Mitsubishi Mirage with duct tape tail lights and paying for gas with cash which is getting harder and harder to get. No one will hire you. Your retirement accounts are frozen or perhaps seized. Totally outside the information grid.

Or . . . . maybe there's a way to compromise. *10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.*

That sounds like a huge dividing of people within organized religion, where one group follows false prophets. False prophets?? Maybe false prophets who say, hold everything, we don't have to lose everything over this deal. Here's a way to have our cake and eat it too.

False prophets who say, *the book is wrong*. False leaders who will lead huge groups of people into some way to not have to give it all up over, Jesus?? It'll get heated. True prophets who are scrambling to figure out what to do next in that kind of situation, and the false prophets will turn on and hate the true prophets.

I'm looking out at you and I can hear your brains thinking, Jim, this is awfully dark. Where's the joy. Why would anyone join a group that's this dark? People want to feel good in church.

You're right of course. No one will pay such a price without the joy of having Jesus. Knowing Him intimately and personally as His Spirit dwells with you and in you. That inner joy is the single reason people would pay this high of a cost in order to keep Jesus. Only people with an indestructible faith that didn't originate with them but was given to them by God would pay that price.

The Bible pictures huge loss for Christians. Now. In this world. Who does that? Only those who have Jesus and to whom owning Him is worth everything else that they can lose. Only those who have an indestructible faith living inside their hearts. A faith, a person, who didn't originate with them and doesn't depend on their human weakness.

Listen to our final three verses this morning in view of all we've said.

*17 and you will be hated by all on account of My name. 18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 "By your endurance you will gain your lives.*

They're going to hate you and kill you, but not a hair of your head will perish?? Obviously we're not talking about physical hair here.

Not a hair of your head will perish is a euphemism of that day, and our day that speaks of survival in some threatening situation. They're going to kill Christians. What hair is this then? Spiritual life. This is spiritual hair. This is the hair on the head of your spiritual life. The hair of my faith. This hair is the faith burning within me that is indestructible God given, God caused life.

Enough of my explanations, let's let Paul explain what Jesus means here, shall we? Romans chapter 8. A very familiar passage about the indestructibility of spiritual hair on your head;

*35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written,*

*"FOR THY SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY*

*LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”*  
*37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Not a hair on my spiritual head can perish because I have a faith that didn't originate in me or of me, it was given to me, as a gift, and it is indestructible. Listen, if it was up to me to make it to the end of this journey, I'd have failed and been gone a long time ago.

*19 “By your endurance you will gain your lives.*

Again, not up to me. If the endurance here was up to me, I'm the world's biggest softest fluffiest wimp. This endurance that finishes doesn't depend on me. It's a package deal with the faith that was given to me 51 years ago when I was an 18 year old kid who didn't have a clue what he was getting into.

I just was surrounded by a bunch of other kids who had a joy I wanted, and I signed up. And here I am today. I'd have bailed a thousand times if it was up to me. It isn't. Listen to Jesus in His High Priestly prayer for us. John ch. 17;

*11 “And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, **keep** them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are. 12 “While I was with them, I was **keeping** them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I **guarded** them, and not one of them perished [there's that same word again] *but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 “But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.**

He says; I guarded them, I kept them and not one perished. Our faith is indestructible because the Father is keeping us and guarding us so that ultimately, not a spiritual hair of my spiritual head will perish, no matter what

this world does to me. We survive because of His joy that He gives to us.

It really boils down to the joy then, doesn't it. We're talking about some high stakes losses, some costs we've barely imagined possible in our lifetimes of ease and comfort.

We grew up in a world that respected families that all got into a car together in nice clothes and went to church. That was the respected norm. And families that didn't do that, we could hear the shouting in their house and we wished they did go to church. We sort of raised an eyebrow about the households where it was obvious, no one there goes to church.

That was 60 years ago. Fast forward. On our street; church is totally optional and almost no one goes. Now the ones you notice aren't the ones who don't go, it's the ones who do. A few oddballs with white hair, hanging onto old traditions. No cost so far, yet the churches are mostly empty. One church building in our town has a For Sale sign out in front of it. There has been a drastic change.

Secularism has replaced any sense of a Creator God who holds men to moral standards and judges lawlessness and sin. So much so that there is a new moral standard and it is anti-God. Christians actually find themselves upside down in the new moral code. We are the antagonists. The enemies of culture and the new *approved of* moral norms.

The new morality says anyone who would set a restriction on anyone else's freedom to do anything their evil hearts can imagine and indeed some things we can hardly imagine at all, that's what is evil. And anyone who doesn't join in with that agenda and agree with everything people are doing, that's evil, just to not affirm whatever it is they're doing.

Sounds like Romans 1:32 doesn't it. *and although they know the righteous requirement of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

Anyone who does not give hearty approval to what God hates and judges with death is the new enemy. The new moral rejects.

James 4:4 says plainly; *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world sets himself as an enemy of God.*

We're discovering that the inverse of that verse is true. We can restate the inverse of what James said; *You righteous called out ones, you christians, do you not know that friendship with God is hostility toward the world? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of God sets himself as an enemy of the world.*

In our lifetime experience this was never quite so. We knew it was out there, but we had the numbers. That has flip flopped. We're standing at the rim of the volcano looking in. And the current victors seem anxious to flex their newfound muscles.

We'll finish with the compelling question stated by Jesus that we began with from Luke 18.

8b *However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?* And actually if you go and look at the original language there is a definite article before the greek word for faith in that question. **The** faith. **That** faith. *when the Son of Man comes, will He find that kind of faith on the earth?*

What faith is He referring to? Well in the context of the passage when He asks the question, He's referring to those who would cry out to God to come and avenge them with justice against a world that is crushing them.

A world with a vehement hatred for anything and anyone who would cling to the words of this book. A world so violent against God's elect chosen out ones that they are literally hunting christians down and chopping off their heads.

Is there a faith that can withstand that kind of an onslaught?

We're about to witness that kind of faith with these 11 men who will be scattered and heart broken as they watch their Messiah be nailed to a cross and die. How do you survive that kind of trauma?

One of the disciples did not have that kind of faith. Judas. Yet he was so convincingly part of the group of 12 that not one of them had a clue that their faith was indestructible and Judas faith was a false faith. Until the moment that Judas sold them out for 30 pieces of silver, no one knew who was real and who was false.

There is a faith that does survive anything this world and it's ruler can throw at it. The night before that event, the cross and death of Jesus, He told His own men; *You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.* Jn. 15:6

You did not choose me, but I chose you. That's the faith that Jesus will find on the earth when He returns. Every person that He chose out of the world will have that faith. It originates with God. It is the gift of God. And it is an indestructible faith. Is that the faith you have this morning?

I often ask you to take spiritual inventory. *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is IN you, unless indeed you fail the test.* 2Cor. 13:5

Do you have the joy of the Lord living in your heart because the Spirit dwells in you. Is it the kind of joy that you would gladly lose everything in this world, in order to keep Him.

He hasn't proved that kind of faith in our homeland yet. But there's no guarantee that we won't see the worlds hatred before we leave this world.