

# Mark 13:1-13

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[ 0 : 00 ] Mark chapter 13 is where we will be at. Mark 13, our text this morning will be verses 1-13. Mark 13 verses 1-13.

And we're really just opening up this section of scripture by looking at these first 13 verses. If you are familiar with this, you would find the parallel passage in Matthew chapter 24.

It is there quite often referred to as the Olivet Discourse. It is the teaching of Christ as it pertains to the end times. One of the passages of scripture that we refer to in looking at trying to interpret latter time events and eschatology of things and the study of our end times.

And here in this section of Mark, it may be titled in your Bible, Things to Come. And it's things to come at that time, historically some things which we have already seen come to be.

So as we study it, we'll hopefully come to a proper understanding and a right understanding. But our first passage this morning will be more of a preparatory one before we get into really the meat of the text.

[ 1 : 06 ] So it is all with meat. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God found in Mark 13 starting in verse 1. And we'll read down to the 13th verse and then we will pray.

And as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.

And Jesus said to him, Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down. And as he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew were questioning him privately.

Tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled. And Jesus began to say to them, See to it that no one misleads you.

Many will come in my name saying I am he and will mislead many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened. Those things must take place but that is not yet the end.

[ 2 : 09 ] For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places and there will also be famines. These things are merely the beginning of birth pains.

But be on your guard for they will deliver you to the courts and you will be flogged. In the synagogues and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake as a testimony to them.

The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. But say whatever is given you in that hour.

For it is not you who speak but it is the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death. And a father, his children and children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.

You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day.

[ 3 : 07 ] We thank you for this grand opportunity it is together with the people of God in War Trace. And we pray now that you would speak to our hearts and minds. Lord, it has been a great joy to look at your historical dealings with your people.

To be able to lift our voices up in song. And to be able to worship you through the giving of our tithes and offerings. Lord, now we pray that you would speak to us through your word.

Lord, may your word come to the very core of our being. And may we understand not only it, but may we understand you. That our lives may be committed to you, to follow you in all of our ways.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. This morning as we open up Mark 13, I want you to see the endurance that is needed in uncertain times.

Endurance in uncertain times. Before Christ really goes into great detail concerning these uncertain times, he encourages his people to live lives of endurance.

[ 4 : 16 ] The wording in the New American Standard says to be on your guard. In its literal translation, it means to watch out for yourself. To be certain that you are one who will endure through the times that were before them.

And the times of uncertainty that come upon each and every one. Now historically speaking, Christ is talking to his apostles. Apostles. Here are just a small group of them about some matters which they will face personally and individually.

Matters which the church would go through in its early stages. But the application applies throughout the history of God's interaction with his people.

The call to endure in uncertain times and in uncertain days is a call that resonates throughout history. It is one of the reasons why God has left those end times a part of his mystery.

Things which we do not know the hour nor the day nor the time nor the season. Surely we can see the birth pains as it is told in the scripture. We can see the beginning of these things.

[ 5 : 21 ] And we can look all the way back to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Which Jesus is referring to specifically here in this passage as the beginning of these things. And yet we look so many years later and we wonder surely the time draws near.

The greatest answer to that is, well it is closer today than it has ever been in history. And tomorrow if the Lord allows us to, it will be closer then. But the patience of God is not to be counted as foolish. Because God is patient and long-suffering and enduring. So that none may perish but that all will have an opportunity to come to everlasting. So we do not count the patience and the forbearance of God as foolishness.

As though he is slow about keeping of his promises. But rather we understand the uncertainty of the days in which we live. The church has always been called to live in uncertain times from its very inception.

The church has lived in the midst of uncertainty. As a matter of fact, if we were to look historically, it is when the church thought they really knew the times. And thought that they had everything under their control that the church got its most complacent.

[ 6 : 28 ] And the church became really numb. And backslidden for lack of a better term. But it is the call of God's people to live lives of endurance.

Throughout the book of Revelation, when we really get into the teaching of the end times, we see in his admonition to the seven churches, this repeated refrain, but to those who endure to the end, but to those who endure, to those who overcome.

It is the calling of endurance. Peter tells us that we ought to have a faith that endures, though it is tested and tried and proven. The call upon God's people is to have lives of endurance.

But how do we do it? In the passage before us, I would say there are three matters which need to be of chief concern to us. Things that we need to hold on to if we want to be those who endure. Understanding that the root of these matters is not found in our own abilities. We will see that later on. It is not found in our own self-will or our self-determination. It is not found in our own work, but rather it is found in Christ.

[ 7 : 35 ] But yet there are things which need to be applied to our lives. Matters into which we can look. And as Brother Mike shared this morning, the bride adorned herself.

We ought to be prepared and we ought to put these things into practice in our life. So we see here the call to endure. The first matter that we have before us is that we ought to live with an undistracted focus.

If we're going to live lives of endurance in the midst of uncertainty, then we ought to have lives of undistracted focus. It tells us this is the final week of Christ.

And as his daily habit was, he would go into the city and go into the temple. He would leave the temple, go back to Bethany. He would come back into the city, go into the temple. And over and over again, he would do these things, presenting himself as the lamb that would be slain for the sacrifice of the sin of the world.

And it is on one of those evenings, after that day of questioning, if we were to go back and read chapter 12 again, this day of questioning, in the temple where Jesus was teaching.

[ 8 : 42 ] And as they were departing the temple and they were going through the Kidron Valley, and as you exit the temple, and you're to go towards the Mount of Olives, which would take you down

some stairs, that would go across the Kidron Valley in the geographical region of Israel.

And if you were looking at your map, they would be kind of going southwest, I mean southeast a little bit. And as you exit the temple from that precinct, there were these ornate walls, these massive structures that had carvings upon them of grape clusters and vines and all these ornate buildings, skillfully done by the greatest of craftsmen.

And it was done to garner your attention. It was done so that you would be astounded at the wonder of it. It is Herod the Great's temple.

And he was not Herod the Great. We understand that because he was a great individual, but because of his building plans and his building purposes, they were magnificent nonetheless. And as they are leaving, it says, and as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings.

And he is captured by the imagery that is before him, by the beauty of the construction. He is awed at the wonder of man's work.

[10:04] And it is indeed one of the most wonderful building projects that has ever been done in the history of man. Massive stones, so neatly and tightly fit together that you couldn't put a sheet of paper between them.

So ornately carved by the greatest of craftsmen. And yet what we see is they are struck by it and they call out these stones and say, Master, look at how beautiful it is.

Look at the structure. And Jesus says, Do you see these stones? This great building. Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down.

We know that that will be the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Roman Empire so besieged the city that they finally broke through the walls and they came in. They starved the city, essentially what they did.

And they finally came in and they destroyed the temple and they knocked every stone down and they set the temple on fire so that they may garner the gold that was in its construction. But it's more than just the stones of a building which Christ is warning against here.

[11:11] because how easily distracted we are by the external realities. During the time of Christ, you had a magnificent building that was full of debauchery, that was full of wickedness and unbelief.

You had a building that was magnificent on the outside. We would read later in Scripture, they were like the whitewashed tombs that looked ornate on the outside but were full of dead men's bones on the inside. And the structure was wonderful and the building was grand.

But the teaching that was going on inside was atrocious. And Jesus is telling us to be careful how captivated we are by the external, not realizing the wickedness that is taking place on the inside.

And how easy it is to be distracted by external appearances, what we would refer to as the lust of the eyes or the appeal of the eyes. Things that look beautiful and ornate and things that look magnificent and there's nothing wrong with that.

There's nothing wrong with beauty and there's nothing wrong with ornate and there's nothing wrong with craftsmanship. But it is when it is just a show of appearances.

[12:20] When it is not filled with the spirit of truth and it is not filled with the grand things of the Lord God Almighty. Christ cautions his people here for they are distracted by what they can see rather than what they can know.

And it is a caution that is given to each and every one of us for many during the time of Christ would have assumed that God's favor rested upon his people for what a magnificent building they have. If we were to read in the Old Testament, we would see that one of the judgments of God upon his people would be the destruction of the building so that the nations would go by and shake their heads and say this is what it looks like when God abandons his people.

So to have such a magnificent temple under their control and to have such a magnificent building in their ranks was to surely be a sign of God's favor. But the problem is they had an ornate building but they didn't have his glory and they didn't have his presence.

And it is for that reason that when Christ walks out of the temple for the last time, he can say the glory has departed for it is only when Christ is present in the temple is the glory of God there. And it is when he leaves the last time that the glory had truly departed.

[13:28] And you could write Ichabod across it just as you could in the Old Testament time period. But yet how easy it is to be distracted by the external. Too often I believe we get caught off guard that way.

And the churches have it figured out. We have it figured out. Yesterday I was driving through another town and there's church after church with such magnificent signs.

And I don't know anything about these churches but they appeal to the external and they ought to. These magnificent signs and these wonderful immaculate gardens and all these wonderful buildings and it's declaring their upcoming Easter services and they know they want to gather you and garner your attention.

And hey, I understand it. You've heard me say it before. I believe that the church grounds of this property ought to be the best kept grounds and the best kept building in the town.

For it is a representation of our view of the Lord God Almighty. How we maintain the building and how we keep it I believe it ought to be reflected in our worship and our admiration for the things of God.

[ 14 : 33 ] And I appreciate those who labor and work so hard and I appreciate those who are behind the scenes to make sure that it is so. But friend, if it is beautiful on the outside but empty in teaching and doctrine on the inside then it is nothing but a distraction.

And we ought to be cautious. But that's not the only matter in which will distract us. For Jesus says that you will hear rumors of wars and earthquakes and famines and all of these things.

He said these things are coming about. Jesus began to see that no one will mislead you. It is easy to be distracted by current events.

And to look around and say, well, what's going on over here or what's going on over there? You know the events. Some of you know the events far better than I do. As a matter of fact, I'd say that most of you probably know the events far better than I do.

And you say, what do you mean, Pastor? Well, I don't watch news. I read very little news. And I don't subscribe to any news. You say, well, you don't know how to speak to your time.

[ 15 : 43 ] And I know there are great pastors. Billy Graham subscribed to every major city's newspaper around the world. Some pastors would say you need to preach with a newspaper in one hand and a Bible in the other hand.

And I trust these men. But I know me as well because those things can too easily be a distraction for me. And I'd rather focus on the truth and really be able to live it out because that's just how I am. I need to know what is going on. I need to be involved. I have people I ask. I have people I question. What in the world is going on nowadays? And I try to pay attention to that. And I try to listen to people.

And I try to be cautious on those people. But I know me. I know that I only have X amount of hours within my day. I have the same amount of time in my day as anyone else in the world.

But I know what will capture my attention and what will capture my time and what will cause me to be distracted. And that's not a judgment on anyone else. I just say I know me.

[ 16 : 44 ] And I know how easy it is to be distracted by the things of this world. And so I had to make a decision in my own life. Lord, I want to give you my time. You say, well, pastor, you're a pastor.

Right, which means I usually have more idle time than any of you. So I have to be very cautious and very careful about where I put my time. And I have to be very careful about the distracting elements that I allow in my life.

Why? Because how do we endure to the end? Read your history and see the people who fell away from the faith and fell away from the church. Look at those who are leaving the faith.

How do they do it? Well, they can't reconcile with this that they see over here and all these matters that are going on over here. And how do I put all this together? And their focus is looking at the wrong thing.

And their lens has been shifted. So we must live with an undistracted focus. It's not wrong to stay up to on current events.

[ 17 : 52 ] Some of us need to for people like me so that you can tell me. Some of us, we have to have. But know your limitations. Know your limitations.

If it becomes a distraction and it consumes you beyond what it ought to, then be cautious. For endurance is not found there.

Secondly, we see the need for an unhindered witness. Our focus directly impacts our witness. Now, this is just me personally.

Now, I speak of this. I don't, I'm a very transparent individual. And before anybody judges me too quickly on this, I've never been called to be a Billy Graham. I'm not judging Billy Graham. As a matter of fact, I enjoy my time at the Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center. And I enjoy it. I enjoy the refreshments and referral that I get from there and the teaching that I get there. And I've been really greatly filled.

[18:50] His doctrine and theology of mine are a little bit different when he was alive. But his calling was to preach to the multitudes in the mass and in the marketplace. So he needed to know that. My calling is to pastor a local church. My calling has been to proclaim the word of God on a daily, consistent basis and exegetically bring us through scripture.

And every week and week, I would say time and time again, just a side note, I'd say, Lord, you should have made me an evangelist. I could have had about five sermons and I could have preached on fire and I could have went on, but that's not what he called me.

He called me to do the long, enduring work and to continue to press on and to press into the word, to preach the fullness of the word. That's my calling. So therefore, to maintain that witness and that testimony, I have to guard my distractions.

I know what he's called me to do. You know what he's called you to do. And what we allow to distract us, what we allow to gather our focus will always impact the witness he has called us to have.

If your witness is in the marketplace, your focus will look a little bit different than mine. If your witness is among certain people groups, it will look a little bit different than mine.

[19:58] But we ought to have an unhindered witness because look at what it says. Many will come in my name saying, I am he and will mislead many. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened.

Those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places. And there will also be famines. And these things are merely the beginning of the birth pains.

What he's saying is, if you're focused on all of these things, you're going to lose the reality that you have an opportunity of witness. Because then, he says, but be on your guard or watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you.

Now, historically speaking, again, he's speaking to his apostles and they're going to go through the early church stages where the Jewish nation will rise up against them. They will have to give a defense before Jews and the Sanhedrin, the judges.

And then later on, as Paul would stand before the kings and say, in his chains, I wish that you were as I am, but for these chains. But the call was to be a witness. We don't live in those times, but the reality is that we are all called to stand before someone and be a witness.

[21:06] We are all called to stand. We may not stand before judges and synagogues and kings and princes, but we are all called in Christ to stand before someone and bear witness.

Maybe that is to be seated before others around your table as you bear witness to the wonders of Christ. Maybe it is to be a witness in your home with your children or grandchildren or to be a witness in your workplace.

We are all called to stand before someone at some time in some place and bear witness. So how do we remain unhindered in our witness?

Look at what it says. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations, and when they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.

Let me just go ahead and say right here. I have met and I have read to my great horror. Some pastors say, well, I don't do a lot of sermon preparation.

[22:17] I just want to say what the Spirit gives me in that moment. Now, to a pastor who spends most of his time studying, that not only, it doesn't offend me, but it scares me. Say, well, I'm just going to say whatever the Spirit gives me in that moment.

Paul would also say, do the work. Right? Do the work. Study to show thyself approved. So I want to caution you when you read this because all of us are called to bear witness, to stand.

You say, well, I just got to trust that the Spirit will speak to me in that hour. You're right. So that does not mean laziness on our part, but it means reliance upon the Spirit speaking through us.

Well, how does the Spirit speak? Jesus says that when I leave, the helpmate or the paraclete or the Holy Spirit will come and he will bring to mind that which I have said to you.

So the role of the Holy Spirit is to bring holy remembrance of the teaching and the word of Christ and to bring to mind what the word of God has said.

[ 23 : 22 ] Friend, listen to me. For lack of better way of saying it, be sure the Holy Spirit has something to work with in your life. Give him some ammunition to shoot out of the gospel gun when you're standing before someone.

Get into the word of God so that the Holy Spirit has something to bring to mind. Now, I believe that the Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity and the fullness of God and can work in mysterious ways and to draw people to himself.

I believe that it is God who draws people through Christ to come to salvation. I believe that the Spirit can speak through dreams and revelations and visions but every time that I read it in recent days he reveals himself to an individual and says, go find out what this means to this person and he sends them either to a book or to a person with a book or to someone who has understanding to interpret through the scripture, through the word of God exactly what the Spirit is revealing.

Be sure that when we are in that moment, how do we have an unhindered witness? We remain in relation with God through his word that when the hour comes the Spirit has something to bring to mind.

But it's a confidence as well. You don't have to know it all. You say, Pastor, I can't be a witness because my memory, I've had people tell me this and I say this with all due respect.

[ 24 : 43 ] People have come to me and say, Pastor, you have a photographic memory. That must be a gift from God. Hey, I do not have a photographic memory. I wish I had the memory some people thought I had because I don't.

That's why I love the church. We can all be brother and sister, right? If I don't know your name, hey brother. You know, I have to discipline myself to learn those things.

I do not have a photographic memory. You say, well, Pastor, I don't ever see you look at your notes but what I have is a surrendered ministry. Before I come up, I stand in the back.

Before I leave my office, I say, Lord, let me say what you want me to say. I've put it in the cup, Lord, whatever you want spilling out, let it spill out. If there are things you want me to leave out, I'll leave it out.

If there are things you want me to say I didn't put down, I'll say it. I surrender my memory and I say, Lord, these are your people. This is your word. I've put it in. I need you to bring it out. And he gives me boldness because I have never found the Holy Spirit wanting in the moment when he's called me to stand before his people and neither will you.

[ 25 : 56 ] You get into the word and you say, Lord, give me an opportunity. I'll promise you the Holy Spirit will do the work to bring to mind what you have put in and you will not find him wanting.

be unhindered in your witness. You don't have to know it all. Just know the one who does know it all because he will speak through you.

Third, be unfailing in your confidence. How do we endure? Be unfailing in your confidence. Jesus, assuredly, is talking about uncertain days.

He's talking about nation rising against nation. The testimony of God's working, speaking through his creation with earthquakes and various plagues and all these things, these famines and plagues and all these beginning of birth pains.

He even goes a little bit further saying, brother will betray brother to death, the father, his children, and children will rise up against their parents and have them put to death. What uncertainty there are in those days.

[ 27 : 04 ] Even the bond of the family has been broken. He says in verse 13, you will be hated by all because of my name. But to the one who endures to the end, to the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

There's your confidence. Be unfailing in that confidence. Jesus has promised that those who endure will be saved. You say, does this mean that I have to work for my salvation?

No. It means that your life is so surrendered to the promises of Christ that you are trusting in him to keep his word. That your faith and hope are not in your own abilities or your own efforts, not even in your own strength.

But you said, though I don't understand the days, though it is so uncertain around me, those things seem to be falling apart. Though everything is breaking down around me, Christ said he will save me and redeem me and set me free and I'm trusting in his promise more than I'm trusting in what I see.

Endurance is not found because we get the ability deep within us. Endurance is found because we find the assurance and the promise he has made us. He said that I will be saved but I don't know how it's going to happen.

[ 28 : 18 ] I don't know when it's going to come but he has promised me salvation and I will press on. I will lean into him because I will take him at his word. Lord, I don't know what's going on. All I know is it's all breaking down and falling apart.

All I know is that I found hatred on my right and I find hatred on my left. All I know is that the days around me are so uncertain and there's but one anchor of the soul the word of God says and that is Jesus Christ our only hope and he has told me that if I'll trust in him salvation is certain.

The wars and rumors and wars and plagues and earthquakes and famines those are certain too but we do not know where they go or where they lead but we do know the one who says but if you'll stay with me you will be saved.

Be unfailing in your confidence not in your own ability to make it through but in the assurance of what he has declared to you. Take him at his word and be confident no matter what the day brings. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day and we thank you for your word. We pray, Lord Jesus, that we would lean into you more and more each and every day and that our hope and confidence would be found in Christ and in Christ alone.

[ 29 : 32 ] It's in your sweet name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.