

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

76 – "If Possible"

Announcements:

7/12 @7:30 -

Prayer

7/13 @6:30 -

Grace Group

7/16 @8:30 -

Sunday School

ICE BREAKER: What is the *worst* piece of advice you have received?

READ: Matthew 24:23-26

Just in this portion there are a whole lot of difficult things in the text to wrestle with. Who (or what) is the abomination of desolation? Matthew tells us "Let the reader understand" something that is hard to understand! Prophetic and seemingly apocalyptic language. Then we have what we just read. In particular I would like to look at a phrase found at the end of verse 24: "... so as to lead astray, *if possible*, even the elect." This can bring with it a whole bunch of difficulties. What is Jesus saying, implying, or doing here? So let's dive in!

When I was in college I had a bible that I called my "debate" bible (which tells you a lot about my heart back then, but that is a story for another day!). In it I had a color coded highlighting system. Verses relating to certain topics would be highlighted in certain colors. In pink were the ones relating to the topic that I felt most strongly about and this verse was highlighted in bright pink. What did pink signify to young David? Verses that "proved" you could lose your salvation. In my mind we had the words of Jesus saying that even the "elect" must beware, because it is possible that some may be led astray. But was that correct? Well, the fact that I no longer have that bible because I was so misguided in many of the things I was doing back then can be your first hint that the answer is a resounding NO! But why the abrupt change? Sortly stated it is because of a bible reading principle: "Use clear texts to understand and illuminate unclear texts." So when you have a difficult passage in a prophecy that is hard to understand you go to much clearer passages to check what you are thinking. So John 10, Ephesians (like the whole book), 1 Thessalonians 5 and many other places are much more clear that those whom God Saves God will hold on to. Knowing this we can tackle what it does mean!

DISCUSS: Why is this an important principle to follow? Can you think of any other instances where this could be important?

So then we ask: Why is this warning here? And I think that we have two answers that are important for us. The first is by remembering what Jesus said in the Sermon on the mount. That "not everyone that says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 7:21). The ones that are truly God's, the ones saved and sealed by the blood of Jesus, the ones indwelt by the Holy Spirit, summed up simply as the elect, it is not possible for *them* to be led astray. There are a group of people, however, who may, for whatever reason, think that they are safe who are not. So in one sense this verse serves as a warning, be aware, make your salvation sure, cleave ever tighter to Christ. In your own strength, in your own self-righteousness, in salvation anywhere other than the perfect and completed work of Christ there is much danger. May this passage and many like it serve to drive us closer to our savior!

DISCUSS: How do verses like this minister to the hearts of those saved? In what other ways can God use them?

But there is one more lesson here, and truthfully I think this is the one that is at the heart of what Jesus is doing. It is this: just because it is not possible does not mean that these people will not try. So beware, be prepared and hold fast in the face of such trials and troubles. This is the force of all the commands of Jesus in this discourse. From "See that no one leads you astray" (5) to "Do not believe it" (23) the heart is that we should stand firm in the face of all that rages around us. Here for these believers in particular it is the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, but the message still remains for us. Be strong in your faith, stand to the end "the one who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it!"

DISCUSS: What comfort or consolation do we find in passages like this? (hint, just because they may try, where does our victory come from?)