

A Dozen Dense Disciples

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[0 : 00] The new verses we'll cover tonight are Mark chapter 8 verses 14 through 21.

! For three weeks now we've been talking about how verses 1 through 21 go together.! And after we look at verses 14 through 21, we'll talk about the connection between all 21 verses.

But for now, let's go ahead and read Mark chapter 8 verses 1 through 21. It says, In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat.

And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away. And of course, that was Jesus speaking. And then in verse 4 it says, And his disciples answered him, How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place? And he said to them, How many loaves do you have? They said, Seven. And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people.

[1 : 18] And they set them before the crowd. And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied.

And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, Why does this generation seek a sign?

Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. Now here are the new verses that we will cover tonight.

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

[2 : 19] And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand?

Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see? And having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

They said to him, Twelve. And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, Seven. And he said to them, Do you not yet understand?

Understand? This passage teaches us something very important. God expects us to use our eyes, ears, and minds to understand and apply his word.

And that's the main idea for Mark 8, 14 through 21. Again, God expects us to use our eyes, ears, and minds to understand and apply his word.

[3 : 25] God's people often have a tendency to forget God's blessings. He meets our needs, but when the next problem arises, we complain or become frightened. As long as we are with him, we can be sure that he will care for us.

It would do us all good to pause occasionally and remind ourselves of God's goodness and faithfulness. In tonight's passage, we'll see the disciples fail to grasp who Jesus really is.

They know the facts, but they show that they have yet to internalize those facts and to apply those facts to how they approach life. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with verses 14 and 15.

In verses 14 and 15, we see the commands. So, the commands is your first set of blanks. Here are Mark 8, verses 14 and 15 again.

Now, they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. [4 : 29] We easily could use this passage to bash the disciples for their weak faith, but we need to notice something else first. Be sure to notice where the disciples were.

They were in the boat with Jesus. Of course, Judas later turned out to be an imposter, but the others in the boat had made a permanent, life-altering decision. We saw last week in verses 10 through 13 that Jesus had a volatile confrontation with the religious leaders. And because of the religious leaders' hard-hearted unbelief, Jesus turned his back on those religious leaders and left them in their permanent spiritual blindness. The disciples came to a crossroads as they had to decide whether or not to hold on to the system in which they were raised, and to identify themselves with the Pharisees and Sadducees, whom they had been trained to respect and honor.

The Pharisees were the recognized interpreters of the Jewish law and traditions, and the Sadducees were the religious aristocracy, which customarily included the high priest and the chief priest.

But the twelve did not hesitate in following Jesus. When he crossed back to the eastern Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee, the disciples came to the other side with him.

[5 : 43] The disciples, other than Judas, genuinely sought God's light, and they knew Jesus was himself that light. The disciples had seeking hearts, and God honored his promise to lead them to himself.

The genuine believers among the disciples became living examples of Jeremiah 29, verses 13, and the first part of verse 14.

Listen to the promise of Jeremiah 29, 13, and 14. It says, You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.

As we move deeper into the passage, we will see many things that the disciples could have done better. But let's at least give them some credit for being willing to get into the boat with Jesus. I almost made that the title of tonight's passage.

Because we need to remember that for Jews of that day, siding with Jesus represented a major commitment. Mark 8, verse 14 gives us some facts that at first seem to be of little significance.

[6 : 47] It says, Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. The fact that Mark knows that the disciples had only one loaf of bread in the boat shows that Mark got his information from an eyewitness.

That, of course, was most likely Peter. The type of loaf mentioned here is different from how we think of a loaf of bread. The Israelites made this type of bread loaf in the form of an oblong or round cake as thick as a thumb and about as large as a plate or a platter.

So perhaps the best way to think of it is maybe two or three slices of pita bread stacked on top of each other. So that's a small quantity of bread for at least 13 men plus any others that might have been with them in that boat.

Meanwhile, Jesus was reflecting on the showdown between him and the religious leaders. And we talked last week about how significant that confrontation was. We said Jesus leaving the Pharisees and Sadducees signified more than a temporary separation.

This exchange constituted Jesus' final conflict with the religious leaders in Galilee. His public ministry in Galilee had come to its end.

[8 : 01] When Jesus later made a trip through the region, he did so secretly. The populace of Galilee had been given ample opportunity to repent and believe, but they did not.

Having been finally rejected by them, Jesus shifted his focus to Judea and Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross. In our passage tonight, Jesus tries to warn the disciples about the significance of this last confrontation in Galilee.

Look again at what Jesus said in Mark 8, verse 15. He actually issues two commands here. It says, And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

Matthew's parallel account tells us that Jesus also warned the disciples about the Sadducees. Listen to Matthew 16, verse 6.

Jesus said to them, Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. As we work through Mark 8, verse 15, we're going to look at the verse from back to front.

[9:06] We talked about the difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees last week. The Pharisees were the conservative legalists and the Sadducees were the theological liberals.

Acts 23, verse 8 says, For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. The reference to Herod here either relates to Herod's attitude or to the attitude of the people who followed Herod.

We know those people as the Herodians. Either way, we come to the same conclusion about what Jesus meant by the leaven of Herod. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians comprised three influential parties in first century Israel.

They were very different from each other, but all three hated Jesus. Each posed a serious spiritual threat to the disciples. The Pharisees were guilty of both doctrinal errors and personal hypocrisy. Their system of works righteousness and superficial externalism produced spiritual frauds who looked good on the outside, but inwardly were full of death and uncleanness.

[10:17] The Sadducees promoted pragmatism, rationalism, and materialism. Their denial of key doctrinal truths like the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, and then their willingness to use the temple to exploit people financially, made their teachings as dangerous as those of the Pharisees.

The mention of Herod referred to the depraved, immoral behavior that characterized Herod Antipas and all those who emulated him. The Herodians were secularists who openly welcomed the immoral influences of the Roman culture.

That kind of worldliness had no place among the followers of Christ. Combining the traits of the three groups, Jesus' admonition provided a somber warning against the ever-present temptations of legalism, hypocrisy, rationalism, materialism, immorality, and worldliness.

When Jesus mentions the groups, he mentions the leaven of the groups. Leaven refers to yeast that is added to bread dough to make it rise.

And the metaphor suggests a small amount of a given substance that can radically alter anything into which it is mixed. With the exception of Matthew chapter 13 verse 33 and Luke chapter 13 verses 20 and 21, yeast or leaven in the New Testament symbolizes evil.

[11:41] In the rabbinic literature of the several centuries following the New Testament, yeast or leaven stands for the evil disposition in people. The parallel passage in Matthew 16 verse 12 identifies the yeast of the Pharisees as their teaching.

In Luke 12 verse 1, which reflects a different setting, we see that yeast is identified as their hypocrisy. So let's take a minute to look at those two cross-references.

Matthew 16 verse 12 is part of Matthew's account of this same exchange between Jesus and the disciples. And here is Matthew 16 verse 12. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Now listen to Luke 12 verse 1. In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, Jesus began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

The yeast of Herod probably was unbelief connected with miracles. Herod didn't demand a miraculous sign, but he misinterpreted the miracles of Jesus as an indication that John the Baptist had been raised.

[13:02] Leaven or yeast is an illustration of the dangers of false teaching and incorrect beliefs. Just a small amount of false teaching or unbelief can send people, churches, and even entire denominations off course.

Introducing a small amount of false teaching or unbelief is how Satan likes to begin attacking God's people and God's churches. If Satan or his agents approach a believer or a church with blatant false teaching, that false teaching will be obvious.

Satan and his agents are more effective at leading people astray by asking a simple, subtle question that is much more harmful. Satan first asked such a question like that in Genesis chapter 3 verse 1.

Remember Genesis 3 verse 1. It says, Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

That question in Genesis 3 verse 1 is the first question recorded in the Bible. And since that first question, countless people, churches, and denominations have been led astray by questions starting with, Did God actually say?

[14:18] Working back to the beginning of Mark chapter 8 verse 15 now, Jesus gave his disciples two warnings about the temptations of legalism, hypocrisy, rationalism, materialism, immorality, and worldliness.

Look at the beginning of verse 15 again. It says, And he cautioned them, Watch out, Beware. The ESV's translation of the word rendered as caution is too weak.

The word means commanded. And that's why the heading of this section is the commands. The King James and the New American Standard Bible give us a better sense of the word.

Mark 8 verse 15 and the King James starts with, And he charged. And then the New American Standard starts with, And he was giving orders to them. What Jesus said was more than a general caution.

It was an urgent warning. And it was a group of commands. The ESV does a better job of translating Jesus' first command. The ESV records the first command as, Watch out.

[15:27] And the imperative watch out has the basic meaning of seeing clearly or taking notice of. Jesus was commanding the disciples to open their eyes. Jesus adds more detail in the second command when he tells the disciples about the things for which they need to watch out.

Jesus says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. We've talked about everything in this sentence except for the first word, beware.

And here's part of what the Enhanced Strong's lexicon says about the original Greek word that's translated as beware. It says, And then it goes on to say, Definitions include to see, discern of the bodily eye, or with the bodily eye, to be possessed of sight, to have the power of seeing, to perceive by the use of the eyes, to see or to look, describe.

It can also be defined as to turn the eyes to look at anything, to look at or look upon or gaze at. It can be defined and described as to be perceived by the senses or to feel, to discover by use, or to know by experience.

And then the second category of definitions for it is metaphorically to see with the mind's eye, to have the power of understanding, to discern mentally, to observe, to perceive, to discover, or to understand.

[17:23] That can also mean to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, to contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, or examine. And as we go through the remainder of tonight's passage, we'll see that Jesus' warning has the sense of seeing with the mind's eye, of discerning mentally, and of understanding.

The commands that Jesus gives the disciples in Mark 8.15 are extremely important. And as we move into the next section of the lesson, we will learn that the disciples initially fail to understand what Jesus is telling them.

Mark 8.16 has the second section of our passage tonight. And in Mark 8.16, we see the confusion. So the confusion is your second blink. That confusion comes from the disciples themselves. Look at Mark 8.16 again. And they begin discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. So picture the scene here. The disciples' teacher has just had a major confrontation with the religious elites of that day. The disciples' teacher has physically and symbolically turned his back on those religious elites.

[18:42] The disciples, by following their teacher into the boat, have reached a point of no return. We might think that the disciples would be discussing such significant events.

Maybe they might even be singing a first century version of I have decided to follow Jesus.

Remember the verse in that song that says, I have decided to follow Jesus.

No turning back. No turning back. And that would fit the disciples' situation perfectly. But here we see that the disciples are doing none of those things.

Instead of thinking about the confrontation with the religious leaders and what that means, the disciples are worried about food. That's sad, but can you relate to that?

How often have we been guilty of immediately thinking about what our next meal is going to be as soon as we finish hearing a sermon or a lesson? Or perhaps instead of thinking about how the sermon or lesson applies to us, we instead start thinking about how ready we are to go home to watch a certain ball game or TV show.

[19 : 45] The disciples on that occasion were very much like we are today. They were focused more on earthly things than spiritual things. Because the disciples' thoughts were on physical food, they missed the spiritual warning.

When Jesus mentioned leaven, perhaps they thought Jesus was concerned that they might buy some bread to eat that was baked by a Pharisee or sold by a Sadducee. Perhaps the disciples thought that such bread would somehow be defiled.

But such things were of no consequence to Jesus. The twelve should have known that from what Jesus repeatedly said and did. Only a short while before, Jesus had made plain that whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him.

We saw that when we looked at Mark 7, verse 18. Jesus was not in the least bit concerned about whether the earthly bread they ate came from a Pharisee, a Sadducee, or Jew, a Gentile, or even a Herodian.

Such matters have absolutely no bearing on spirituality and godliness, and such matters were not in Jesus' mind when he spoke that warning. The disciples were confused about what Jesus meant because their earthly orientation was a great barrier to spiritual vision.

[21 : 03] Their response revealed how much they needed divine help and understanding. I wish that Mark had recorded some of the conversation among the disciples. Perhaps one of them said to another, We picked up seven man-sized basketfuls of bread, and you forgot to put even one of them in the boat?

Maybe another replied, I gathered many of the leftovers after Jesus fed the 5,000. Why do you think that I should have been the one to put the leftovers in the boat after Jesus fed the 4,000? So once again, we see that the disciples were in the boat physically, but their confusion over the meaning of Jesus' commands showed that they had missed the boat figuratively speaking.

And here's where we might be tempted to think, How can those dozen disciples be so dense? I can understand what Jesus is saying. And we might even be tempted to think something similar today when other believers struggle with Christian concepts that seem obvious to us.

Before we criticize the disciples for their slowness to understand Jesus' words, and before we criticize other believers for their slowness to understand the concept, remember these words from J.C. Ryle.

He said, We will find it useful to ourselves to remember what is here recorded of the disciples. It may help to correct the high thoughts which we are apt to entertain of our own wisdom and to keep us humble and lowly-minded.

[22 : 29] We must not imagine that we know everything as soon as we are converted. Our knowledge, like all graces, is always imperfect, and our knowledge is never so far from perfection as at our first beginning in the service of Christ.

There is more ignorance in our hearts than we are at all aware of. Ryle then quoted 1 Corinthians 8, verse 2, and here is what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 8, verse 2, If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.

So far we have seen the commands and the confusion. In the last section of our new verses, Mark 8, verses 17-21, we see the concern.

So the concern is your last blank. This part of the passage has several questions from Jesus. When we first read it, we might think that these questions were just a series of rapid-fire questions from a teacher who is frustrated with a dozen dense disciples.

But we need to remember that Jesus is God. And as we look closer at the questions, we will see that these questions are purposeful questions that tie into the main idea.

[23 : 48] This section is where we will see Jesus emphasize that God expects us to use our eyes, ears, and minds to understand and apply God's Word. We'll look at the section in smaller chunks.

Check out verse 17 again. Mark 8, verse 17 has the first three questions. It says, And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? In the last section, we had to speculate about what the disciples said.

Here we know what Jesus said. The piece of information we are missing is the tone. Some commentators say that Jesus' questions to the disciples represent an even harsher rebuke than what Jesus gave to the religious leaders.

And if you hear someone say that, you immediately know that the person missed the point of the passage. The religious leaders received the most serious rebuke possible.

[24 : 55] Jesus turned his back on them and left them in their unbelief. Nothing could be harsher than that. Jesus' approach to the disciples was different.

In spite of the disciples' weaknesses and shortcomings, the Lord was glad to teach them. The religious leaders were shut off from divine revelation due to their unbelief.

Jesus' followers, especially the twelve, were privileged recipients of his constant instruction. Even after Jesus' death and resurrection, the Lord continued to teach for forty days until he ascended into heaven.

Though no longer physically present with them, Jesus had already promised the apostles that he would continue to reveal truth to them through the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that the disciples would fail to understand spiritual truths immediately.

Remember what Jesus promised them in John 14, 26? And Jesus said in John 14, 26, But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[26 : 10] Later, Jesus made the statements recorded in John 16, verses 12 through 15. Here are John 16, verses 12 through 15.

Jesus said, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Going back to our Mark text, what are we to make of the questions that Jesus asked in Mark chapter 8, verse 17?

With the questions in verse 17, Jesus is telling his disciples that they're acting more like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians than they are acting like genuine followers of Jesus.

[27 : 16] We know that the religious elite failed to perceive who Jesus is. We know that the religious elite's hearts were hardened. The disciples, though all of them were believers except Judas, had let the cares of the world temporarily obscure what they already knew about Jesus.

Jesus was grieved that the Twelve, after so much clear teaching and so many miraculous manifestations, were still living by human rather than divine insight. But he was patient with them as he always is with his own, and he knew that they could not comprehend without divine illumination.

Let's move on to verse 18 now. Here is Mark chapter 8, verse 18 again. Jesus said, Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear?

And do you not remember? So notice the three questions there. Having eyes, do you not see?

Having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? Although Jesus phrased his words in the form of questions, he's telling the disciples to use their eyes to see what God has done.

He's telling them to use their ears to hear what God has done. And Jesus is telling them to use their minds to remember what God has done. You might be thinking, based upon this passage, the disciples seem to lack eyes, ears, and minds to spiritually comprehend what God has done.

[28 : 42] And if we just had this passage, that certainly would be correct. But Jesus has taught before about his followers having eyes, ears, and minds to understand such spiritual teachings.

Think back to Mark chapter 4 when Jesus was teaching in parables. Here are Mark chapter 4, verses 10 through 12. It says, And when he, Jesus, was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see, but not perceive, and may indeed hear, but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

That quote in Mark chapter 4, verse 12, comes from Isaiah chapter 6, verses 9 and 10. Here are Isaiah chapter 6, verses 9 and 10.

It says, And he, that's God, said, Go and say to this people, Keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

[30 : 03] When Jesus asked the questions in Mark chapter 8, verse 18, he likely wanted to make the disciples remember what he had told them in Mark chapter 4, verse 11. And here is Mark chapter 4, verse 11.

And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables. So Jesus confirms that he had given the disciples spiritual eyes to see his works.

He had given the disciples spiritual ears to hear his word, and he had given them the spiritual mind to understand and apply his word. That's what Jesus meant by giving them the secret.

The disciples needed to understand and apply what they already knew. Jesus gave the disciples more reminders in Mark chapter 8, verses 19 through 21.

The questions in verses 19 through 21 brought to the front of their minds what the disciples already knew. We can tell that the disciples remember what happened because they correctly answered the questions about the two feedings.

[31 : 09] Listen again to what Jesus said in Mark chapter 8, verses 19 through 21. When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

They said to him, Twelve. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, Seven.

And he said to them, Do you not yet understand? With the questions in verses 19 and 20, Jesus also reinforced a point from another earlier teaching.

When believers live on the level of spiritual trust and obedience, God makes provision for their physical needs. The disciples earlier heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount.

And that sermon included these words in Matthew chapter 6, verses 31 through 33. In Matthew 6, 31 through 33, Jesus said, And therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat?

[32 : 14] Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Paul echoed a similar statement in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 10. Here is 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 10. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

Going back to our passage tonight, Mark chapter 8, verse 21 includes a glimmer of hope. Look at Mark chapter 8, verse 21 again. It says, And Jesus said to them, Do you not yet understand?

That glimmer of hope is one three-letter word, and that word is yet. By thinking about physical bread, when Jesus warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod, the disciples were acting as if they were the same as those unbelievers, that Jesus and the Holy Spirit would keep teaching the disciples.

We only need to jump back to Matthew's account to see that glimmer of hope quickly turned into more than just a glimmer. We read Matthew 16, verse 12 earlier.

[33 : 40] This time, listen to Matthew chapter 16, verses 11 and 12. Matthew 16, 11 ends Matthew's account of the questions that Jesus asked the disciples, and here are Matthew chapter 16, verses 11 and 12.

Jesus said, How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

This lets us leave the disciples on a positive note. They are starting to see things a little more clearly. For three weeks now, I've been claiming that Mark chapter 8, verses 1 through 21 go together.

Many people think this is another of Mark's sandwiches to have a similar theme interrupted by something in the middle. And that theme, you probably noticed, actually is a sandwich about bread. The bread of the sandwich is actually talking about bread on each end, and the filling is the unbelief of the Sadducees, Pharisees, and Herodians. Taken as a group, the verses show three different responses to God's word.

[34 : 56] In Mark chapter 8, verses 1 through 9, the primarily Gentile crowd was so engrossed in Jesus' teaching that the crowd skipped eating for three days. In Mark chapter 8, verses 10 through 13, the religious leaders were so entrenched in their unbelief that nothing would change their minds.

And tonight, in verses 14 through 21, we saw that the disciples were so encumbered by worldly cares and distractions that those disciples failed to apply what they already knew. So in the 21 verses, we see two extremes of belief and unbelief, along with some middle-of-the-road distracted believers. Today, for both believers and unbelievers alike, God expects us to use our eyes, ears, and minds to understand and apply his word. God sent his son, Jesus, to redeem everyone who repents of their sins against God and accepts God's gracious offer of salvation through Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf. Remember what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 5, verses 6 through 11. Here are Romans 5, 6 through 11. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. [36 : 11] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. For those of us whom God already has saved by his grace, Mark chapter 8, verses 14 through 21 should cause us to reflect upon the state of our hearts.

R.C. Sproul said, How is your hearing? How is your perception of the things of God? How is your heart? Does the truth of God bounce off of it?

Or is your heart softened so that God's truth penetrates and sinks in? We all need to examine ourselves in the light of God's word to be sure the deadly leaven of the Pharisees is not working in us, blinding us to the light, and making us deaf to the life-giving word.

[37 : 32] Jason Meyer said, It is easy to look at the disciples and feel a little smug. How could they keep forgetting the things that Jesus has done? But the question comes right back at us like a boomerang.

He says, You too have seen Jesus do all things well. Lame people leap. Mewed people speak. Deaf people hear. Those with leprosy are cleansed.

Women who are sick and unclean and ostracized are called daughter. Dead little girls are raised up. Demons are cast out. The winds and the waves cease at Jesus' command.

Thousands of people are fed with five loaves and two fish and Jesus walks on water. And then he adds, You can make a list of all the things that you have seen the Lord do in your own life, too.

He continues, But what happens when the next hard thing comes? If you're anything like me, it is easy to panic and say, What are we going to do? How could this ever work out?

[38 : 36] How could I possibly do anything about this? Our initial impulse is to doubt and not trust. To panic and not praise. To throw up our hands instead of getting down on our knees.

I like that last part. To throw up our hands instead of getting down on our knees. And as you ponder that comment, here's some good news. The believer is given God's own word and the believer is expected to study and understand that word.

The believer is given God's indwelling Holy Spirit to illumine and interpret the word. A vital part of the Holy Spirit's present ministry is to clarify God's word and to apply God's word to the hearts and lives of those who belong to Christ.

When the passage we studied tonight happened, the Apostle John was in that boat with Jesus. Listen to what John wrote in 1 John 2, verse 20.

Writing to believers, John says, that you have been anointed by the Holy One and you have all knowledge. Just a few verses later, John wrote these words in 1 John 2, verse 27.

[39 : 50] But the anointing that you receive from Him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him.

In 1 John 2, verse 27, John is not denying the importance of gifted teachers in the church, but he indicates that neither those teachers nor those believers are dependent upon human wisdom or the opinions of men for the truth.

God's Holy Spirit guards and guides the true believer into that truth. So the ultimate question that this text has for us is the same one that Jesus had for His disciples and we saw that question in Mark 8, verse 21, and He said to them, Do you not yet understand?

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for this reminder that we're not just to quickly read Your Word. We're supposed to use our eyes, ears, and minds to understand and apply that Word. Help us do that more and more as we continue to dive deeper into what Mark has for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.