

The Blind Leading the Blind

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[0 : 00] We're working our way through the larger section of Mark chapter 8 verses 1 through 21.

! This week we'll cover verses 10 through 13, but let's read Mark chapter 8 verse 1 through! verse 13 to set the context. 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 his disciples answered him, How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?

And he asked 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.

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.

[1 : 19] 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. This passage has a strong message.

That message is, Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. That's the main idea.

Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. That wording may sound familiar.

It comes from Psalm 95, verses 7 and 8. Psalm 95 contains an Old Testament parallel to this encounter between Jesus and the religious leaders.

[2 : 23] So let's read Psalm 95, verses 6 through 11. Psalm 95, verses 6 through 11 say, O come, let us worship and bow down.

Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.

For forty years I loathed that generation and said, They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways. Therefore I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest.

Notice how the speaker changed in Psalm 95, verse 9. God began speaking in Psalm 95, 9, when he talked about the fathers putting him to the test, though they had seen his work.

When Jesus arrives on the scene in our Mark passage, centuries have passed since the Israelites wandered in the wilderness. However, human nature has stayed consistent.

[3 : 34] The religious leaders want to put Jesus to the test. Because Jesus is God, Jesus has the same response in tonight's passage that God did in the Old Testament.

Jesus warns that people who harden their hearts to Jesus' message will never enter into Jesus' rest. In our passage tonight, Jesus returns to the mainly Jewish region of Galilee, after several days of ministering to Gentiles.

Remember what the disciples learned on their field trip. The disciples saw Jesus exercise a demon from the daughter of a Canaanite woman. In just one of many healings, the disciples saw Jesus restore speech and hearing to a deaf and mute man.

And the disciples saw Jesus feed a crowd of 4,000 men, plus women and children, with only a few loaves and a few small fish. As we discussed last week, the Gentiles would have considered feeding Gentiles to be much more significant than healing them.

And the Jews would have considered feeding Gentiles to be much more significant than healing them as well. That's because the Jews had rules instituted by the rabbis without any support from Scripture that prohibited Jews from eating with Gentiles.

[4 : 51] The disciples witnessed the Lord's compassion dramatically displayed toward people whom first-century Jews treated with scorn and disdain. It made sense to them that the Messiah would perform miracles for the people of Israel, but to think that they would cast out demons, heal diseases, and create meals for Gentiles represented a major paradigm shift.

Yet it was a lesson that the disciples desperately needed to learn as Jesus prepared them to take the message of salvation to the ends of the world. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with verses 10 and 11.

In those verses, we see the sign requested. So the sign requested is your first set of blanks. Let's read Mark 8, verse 10 again.

Verse 10 occurs just after the feeding of the 4,000. It says, And immediately he, that's Jesus, got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Dalmanutha was probably on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, about three miles north of modern Tiberias, and that was about five miles southwest of Capernaum. The parallel passage in Matthew, Matthew 15, 39, identifies their destination as the region of Magadan.

[6 : 14] Matthew and Mark use two different names to refer to the same area between the towns of Magdala and Capernaum. Jesus' return to Galilee brought his excursion into Gentile territory full circle, from Tyre to Sidon to the Decapolis and then back to Galilee.

The cross was now less than a year away, and it would not be long before Jesus transitioned his ministry to focus on Judea and Jerusalem. We might expect that the people of Galilee would be happy to have Jesus back from his trip, but Mark 8, 11 shows us that Jesus received the complete opposite of a nice welcome.

Here's Mark 8, 11 again. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. We've seen this movie before.

The reception that Jesus receives is par for the course. Think about the many confrontations between Jesus and the religious leaders that we've already seen in the Gospel of Mark.

Several of those confrontations came in Mark chapter 2. Mark chapter 2, verses 6 and 7 happened after Jesus told the paralytic that the paralytic man's sins were forgiven.

[7 : 31] Here are Mark chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that?

He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Listen to what the religious leaders said in Mark chapter 2, verse 16, while they were watching Jesus have dinner with Jewish outcasts.

Here is Mark chapter 2, verse 16. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

Two verses later, the religious leaders criticized Jesus' disciples for their failure to fast. Here is Mark chapter 2, verse 18. Mark 2, verse 18 says, Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? Leaving Mark for a bit, Luke chapter 5 documents Luke's version of the feast with tax collectors and sinners.

[8 : 46] Luke 5 also includes Luke's account of the fasting question. And Luke 5, verse 33 says this in reference to the scribes and the Pharisees. It says, And they said to him, The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.

Luke's gospel is why we know that the religious leaders also ask that fasting question. Going back to Mark's account of the previous conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders, the next conflict is recorded in Mark chapter 2, verses 23 and 24.

Here are Mark chapter 2, verses 23 and 24. One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

And the Pharisees were saying to him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? When we studied that passage in detail, we saw that the disciples' actions were permitted by

Mosaic law.

The Pharisees just had wrongly come to see their own man-made regulations as being equal or perhaps even better than Scripture. From the beginning of Mark chapter 3, we saw another conflict with religious leaders.

[10:09] That encounter took the animosity between Jesus and those leaders to a whole other level. Listen to Mark chapter 3, verses 1 through 6. Again, he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with the withered hand.

And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, Come here. And he said to them, Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?

But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. The Pharisees and the Herodians disliked each other, but they were united in their hatred for Jesus.

So here was the first case where we saw the Pharisees joining forces with their usual enemies in a combined effort to get rid of Jesus. Later in chapter 3, listen to what Mark recorded in Mark chapter 3, verse 22.

[11:26] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He, that's Jesus, is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons, he cast out the demons.

So the scribes said that Jesus was possessed by a demon, and they repeated that accusation in Mark chapter 3, verse 30. Here is Mark chapter 3, verse 30. For they were saying, He has an unclean spirit.

Skipping ahead to Mark chapter 7. Mark 7, verses 1 through 5 record another conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. Here are Mark chapter 7, verses 1 through 5.

Now when the Pharisees gathered to him with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.

[12:32] And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

This time the scribes and the Pharisees were savvy enough to admit that the disciples were only violating tradition rather than the law. But as always, Jesus easily shot down their argument.

Listen to what Jesus said in Mark 7, verses 6 through 9. Here are Mark 7, 6 through 9. And he said to them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites?

As it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition.

[13:45] We took the time to look at those conflicts because we need to remember how much hatred the religious leaders had for Jesus. The corrupt religious leaders had one mission and one mission only.

That was to discredit Jesus and preferably kill him. But Jesus consistently refuted their challenges and exposed them for the hypocrites that they were.

In spite of Jesus' numerous miracles and teachings that give evidence that he is the Messiah, the religious leaders reject what they see and hear and they raise the stakes in their confrontation with Jesus.

Each one says by his actions, My mind is made up about this fellow Jesus. Let's not let the facts get in the way. The background of the previous confrontations sets the context for Mark 8, verse 11.

Listen to Mark 8, verse 11 one more time. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.

[14:49] We know from Mark's account that the Pharisees had company. Listen to Matthew, chapter 16, verse 1. Matthew 16, verse 1 says, And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to

test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

Back in Mark, chapter 3, verse 6, we saw the Pharisees join forces with the usual enemy, the Herodians, in a plot to destroy Jesus. Now, with tonight's passage, the Pharisees joined forces with the Sadducees, another group with whom the Pharisees normally disagreed.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were at the opposite poles of the Jewish religious spectrum. The Pharisees were the fundamentalists of their day. Everything was literal, and they lived by the minutest detail of law.

To protect them from breaking the real law, they built the protective fences around it to prevent them from coming close. If they had lived in a day when a speed limit on the road was 70 miles an hour, they would have made it mandatory never to exceed 60 miles an hour to prevent themselves from coming close to breaking the real law.

They were the ultimate legalists in that sense, and we've seen that legalism numerous times already. The Sadducees were the liberals of their day.

[16:16] We lack as much information about them as we do the Pharisees, but they prided themselves on independent thought and saw it as a virtue to dispute with their teachers. They accepted the written law of Moses, but rejected the scribal and traditional laws that had grown around them and which gave so much substance to the Pharisees' position.

The Pharisees believed in angels, demons, the resurrection of the body, the supernatural, and the afterlife. The Sadducees believed in none of this.

They saw themselves as rational skeptics about such things. Acts 23, verse 8 gives us the Bible summary of the biggest differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Here is Acts 23, verse 8. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

Do you remember the easiest way to tell which group believes in resurrections and which group denies resurrections? I see some of you shaking your head out there. The Sadducees deny resurrections, and that, of course, is what makes them sad, you see.

[17:29] As you might expect from the previous conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders, the Pharisees' and Sadducees' actions in Mark are more sinister than how they first appear in English.

Mark says that they began to argue with Jesus and that they wanted to test Jesus. Argue is a good translation for the first part of verse 11, but the English word test is weaker than the Greek word that it translates.

The word here translated test is translated tempted in Mark 1, verse 13. And that, of course, was when Satan was tempting Jesus in the wilderness.

So Mark, perhaps, is suggesting that the Pharisees were in league with Satan in trying to tempt Jesus. The Greek word translated test indicates that the Pharisees were out to verbally attack Jesus and to harass him, not merely to have polite discussion or debate.

They were deeply hostile toward Jesus, and this hostility manifested itself in a demand for a sign to prove his divinity. A popular Jewish superstition alleged that demons could mimic earthly miracles like the signs performed by the magicians in Pharaoh's court back in Exodus, but only God could work wonders in the sky.

[18:52] The religious leaders could not deny that Jesus performed miracles on earth, but they insisted that he did so through the power of Satan. We saw that back in Mark 3, verse 22.

So if Jesus were unable to perform a miraculous sign in the heavens, it would boaster their leader's claim to the people that he was not empowered by God. Jesus had been going through the region of Galilee with a blaze of miracles.

Everywhere he went, he healed the sick and those with various maladies and disabilities. The Pharisees, though, were convinced that Jesus had performed these works by the power of Satan, so they didn't want to see them as true divine authentications of Jesus as a trustworthy prophet. They wanted what they could judge to be a conclusive sign, one that would settle the matter once and for all. In basic terms, their challenge was this. They were saying, Jesus proved to us that you really are from God.

The religious leaders kept pressing this demand on Jesus all the way to the final moments of his life. When we get to Mark 11, verses 27 and 28, we will see a similar challenge.

[20 : 10] Listen to Mark 11, verses 27 and 28. And they came again to Jerusalem, and as he, that's Jesus, was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, and they said to him, By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?

Even after Jesus had been crucified, listen to what the religious leaders do as Jesus is hanging on the cross. These verses are Mark 15, verses 31 and 32.

Mark 15, 31 and 32 say, So also the chief priests and the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, He saved others. He cannot save himself.

Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.

Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the end of his earthly life, the corrupt religious leaders kept repeating two lines. They claimed that Jesus' power came from demons, and they asked Jesus for a sign to prove otherwise.

[21 : 26] But the religious leaders had no interest in seeing another sign. They already had made up their minds. We saw that from Mark 3, verse 6, when they began to plot to destroy Jesus.

Here's a quote from John MacArthur. He said, Among the Pharisees who interacted with Jesus, Nicodemus is the only recorded example of one whose salvation faith began to come to life when he recognized the self-evident truth that Jesus' power was divine.

Nicodemus said to Christ in John 3, 2, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Yet most of the religious leaders rejected Jesus anyway. They did not recognize that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God standing in their midst, was himself the ultimate sign from heaven.

Being God, Jesus sees right through the religious leaders' request for a sign here in Mark 8, verse 11. And we'll see that as we move into the next section of the passage.

[22 : 36] Moving to the second section of the lesson, we see Jesus' response in verse 12. And in verse 12, we see the summary received. So the summary received is your second set of blanks.

Here's Mark 8, verse 12 again. 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.

On this and other occasions, the religious leaders exhibited another characteristic of permanent spiritual blindness. They responded to additional light with more intense rejection.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were no different than Pharaoh who, with each sign that Moses performed, hardened his heart even more. Rather than responding in faith to the light of the Savior, the religious leaders retreated even further into the darkness.

Jesus responded emotionally to their resolute faithlessness by sighing deeply in his spirit. A simple form of this same verb is found in Mark 7, verse 34, where Jesus sighed in response to the suffering of the deaf man.

[23 : 55] But here the word form expresses even stronger emotion. The willful blindness of the religious leaders broke the Lord's heart, later causing him to weep over the people of Jerusalem.

There was deep meaning in that sigh. It came from a heart which mourned over the ruin that these wicked men were bringing upon themselves and on their own souls. Enemies as they were, Jesus could not see hardening themselves in unbelief without sorrow.

Jesus' sigh also carried with it an element of exasperation. R.C. Sproul said, Again, the English language fails to provide a full understanding of how Jesus reacted.

The Greek indicates he did more than sigh, even more than give a heavy sigh. It tells us that he came to his absolute limit, humanly speaking, of exasperation.

He was sick and tired of this kind of response. So does hearing that the Greek word also means that Jesus reached the point of exasperation make you a little uncomfortable?

[25 : 06] Well, listen to what Sproul went on to say. He said, We might be tempted to think that because Jesus was sinless, he should have been more patient at this point.

However, he had been exceedingly patient with these religious leaders. Remember, the Bible often talks about God's patience, his forbearance, his long-suffering, but nowhere does it ever say that his patience is infinite.

In the days before the flood, when the wickedness of men was growing exponentially, God said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever. That comes from Genesis 6-3.

Scripture plainly teaches us that there are limits to God's patience. He may forbear with us week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, until we become at ease in Zion and think, He will always forbear with us.

But there have been times in redemptive history when God's patience was exhausted and he gave people over to their sin. Mark records only a summary of what Jesus said after the sigh.

[26 : 15] Mark indicates that Jesus said, Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. Jesus refuses to play their game.

He gave the crowd a sign out of compassion for their need, but he refuses to give the Pharisees a sign because their request does not come from a true place of need. No more sign is needed.

Jesus does not want them to think that he is under their judgment. They are under his judgment.

Matthew records the longer response from Jesus. Listen to Matthew's version.

These verses are Matthew chapter 16, verse 2, through the beginning of verse 4. Matthew chapter 16, verse 2, through the beginning of verse 4 say, He answered them, When it is evening, you say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.

And in the morning, it will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

[27 : 26] An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. Because the Pharisees and Sadducees insisted on seeing a sign in the sky, Jesus used an illustration involving the heavens to expose their folly.

Their method of predicting the weather by looking at the color of the sky was primitive and crude, but ironically, they were better meteorologists than theologians. They could recognize a coming storm from something as subtle as the color of the sky, that they failed to recognize the coming Messiah in spite of the abundant evidence that was right in front of them.

If the countless miracles Jesus had already performed could not convince them, nothing else would. Jesus' reference to the sign of Jonah referred to his death and resurrection, the ultimate testimony to his power and to his victory over sin, death, and Satan.

Sadly, even that would be knowingly rejected by the religious leaders who bribed the Roman soldiers, instructing them to spread lies about what actually took place at the tomb on that resurrection morning.

This section might be raising a couple of questions in your mind. One question could be why Mark included only a summary of Jesus' response. And another question could be how the situation here differs from what we see in the Old Testament when Gideon twice asked for a sign from God.

[29 : 03] For the question about why Mark included only a summary of Jesus' answer, we need to remember the audience for the book of Mark. Mark wrote primarily to Gentiles.

Daniel Achan noted that the Gentiles would be unfamiliar with the life of Jonah. Mark, therefore, focused on the fact that Jesus refused to give the religious leaders a sign when those leaders asked for one.

For the question about how this encounter differs from the Old Testament account of Gideon, the answer has to do with the motivation behind asking for a sign.

To see that, turn over for a minute to Judges chapter 6. We'll look at Judges chapter 6 verses 36 through 40. Here are Judges 6, 36 through 40.

Then Gideon said to God, If you will save Israel by my hand as you have said, Behold, I am laying a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew on the fleece alone and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will save Israel by my hand as you have said.

[30 : 13] And it was so. When he arose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece, he wrung enough dew from the fleece to fill a bowl with water. Then Gideon said to God, let not your anger burn against me.

Let me speak just once more. Please let me test just once more with the fleece. Please let it be dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground let there be dew.

And God did so that night, and it was dry on the fleece only, and on all the ground there was dew. What we see from this is that Gideon had weak faith, but Gideon never questioned that God was God.

Gideon's question was whether God had chosen Gideon to be the deliverer of Israel. The Pharisees and Sadducees that we see in our passage tonight refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, despite overwhelming evidence proving Jesus' deity.

In our study of the book of Mark so far, we already have seen Jesus prove many times that he is God. The Pharisees and Sadducees goal is to discredit Jesus before the people, not to test him with a view of authenticating his ministry.

[31 : 31] It's one thing to put the Lord to a test in faith, it's another thing to test him in unbelief. And that's the difference between Gideon and the religious leaders.

Gideon was testing the Lord in faith, the religious leaders were testing him in unbelief, trying to prove him wrong. So far in tonight's passage, we've seen the sign requested and the summary received.

In the last verse of the section, Mark chapter 8, verse 13, we see the status revealed. So the status revealed is your last set of blanks.

Check out Mark chapter 8, verse 13, again. It says, and he, that's Jesus, of course, left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

This perhaps is one of the saddest verses in the Bible. The beginning of verse 13 spells out the terminal consequences of the Pharisees and Sadducees' willful unbelief.

[32 : 34] Jesus left them. Knowing the Pharisees and Sadducees would not believe, Jesus abandoned them to their own self-righteous demons and delusions. They were blind men and blind guides leading their followers to hell by knowingly refusing to believe.

The consequences of their terminal blindness were forever irreversible. They had long since rejected the Messiah, and he consequently rejected them. The Bible appropriately describes hell as utter darkness because it is a place of everlasting spiritual blindness.

The tragic reality is that the whole world is filled with people who, like these apostate religious leaders, have rejected that light. Because they love the darkness of their sin, they will one day be cast into the darkness of everlasting punishment.

If you have any doubt that Jesus thought that the religious leaders were blind to the truth, listen for how many times Jesus uses the word blind in Matthew chapter 23 verses 13 through 26.

These verses are just part of the woes that Jesus pronounced on the religious leaders. So here are Matthew chapter 23 verses 13 through 26.

[33 : 53] Jesus said, But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

And now here he goes, Woe to you blind guides who say, If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath, you blind fools, for which is greater the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?

And you say, If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath, you blind men, for which is greater the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?

So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it, and whoever swears by the temple, swears by it and by him who dwells in it, and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

[35 : 19] Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done without neglecting the other, you blind guides, straining out a net and swallowing a camel. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence, you blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

If you were counting, that's five times in those verses that Jesus referred to them as blind. The worst part is that these blind guides were leading others astray so that their followers would suffer the same eternal consequences unless those followers repented.

Jesus leaving the Pharisees and Sadducees signified more than a temporary separation. This exchange constituted Jesus' final conflict with the religious leaders in Galilee.

Once again, they tried to put him to a test that he would fail, and once again, they failed and Jesus rebuked them for their hard-hearted unbelief. From this point forward, the Lord's miracles, like his

parables, would primarily be intended for his disciples and not for the religious leaders or even the crowds.

[36 : 55] His public ministry in Galilee had come to its end. When Jesus later made a trip through the region, he did so secretly. We'll learn about that in Mark 9, verse 30.

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 the cross.

These religious zealots were physically close to our Lord, but they had never been further away in where it really mattered, and that was their hearts. They have lost him. Not long from now, they will crucify Jesus, and we see that unbelief is evil and tragic when it says no to the gospel and to God's son.

Remember the main idea. Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts. The Bible clearly says that all people are sinners who deserve eternal punishment.

However, God sent his son to pay the penalty for the sins of everyone who repents and believes in Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5.21 tells us about the great exchange that takes place when we repent and believe in the gospel.

[38 : 16] And here is 2 Corinthians 5.21. For our sake, he, that's God, made him, that's Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And of course, that verse is very familiar. But when we read that verse, we often stop there. But listen to the two verses that come immediately after 2 Corinthians 5.21.

These verses are 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 1 and 2. Here are 2 Corinthians 6, 1 and 2.

Working together with him, that's God again, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain, for he says, in a favorable time I listen to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.

Behold, now is the favorable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. In 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 2, Paul quoted the Old Testament verse of Isaiah 49.8, and the quote that he used was, in a favorable time I listen to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.

And of course, that is God speaking there. For those of us who already are believers, we also must be aware of the reality that some of those with whom we share the gospel will refuse to believe.

[39 : 43] When that happens, we should have the same attitude that we saw from Jesus in Mark chapter 8, verse 12. Jesus had reached the limit of his patience, but he was genuinely grieved by the religious leaders' unbelief and the prospect of their eternal punishment that awaited them.

This quote from J.C. Ryle has some Old English, and it sounds a bit awkward, but the message is important to hear. Ryle said, Let us leave this passage with solemn self-inquiry.

Do we know anything of likeness to Christ and fellow feeling with him? Do we feel hurt, pained, and sorrowful when we see people continuing in sin and unbelief?

Do we feel grieved and concerned about the state of the unconverted? These are heart-searching questions and demand serious consideration. There are a few surer marks of an unconverted heart than carelessness and indifference about the souls of other people.

He continued, Finally, let us never forget that unbelief and sin are just as great a cause of grief to our Lord now as they were 1900 years ago. And of course, we could add about 150 years to that since he wrote that.

[41 : 02] But then he said, Let us strive and pray that we may not add to that grief by any act or deed of ours. The sin of grieving Christ is one which many commit continually without thought or reflection.

He who side over the unbelief of the Pharisees is still unchanged. Can we doubt that when he sees some people persisting in unbelief today, he is grieved? And then he says, From such sin may we be delivered.

Only one option leads to a good outcome for eternity. And to see that, go back to Psalm 95. We read Psalm 95 verses 6 through 11 in the introduction.

This time here are Psalm 95 verses 1 through 6. Psalm 95 1 through 6 tell us, O come, let us sing to the Lord.

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise.

[42 : 08] For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth. The heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands

form the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this passage tonight.

It's a difficult passage because we see the religious leaders doomed to forever suffer because of their unbelief and their permanently hardened hearts. help us to be sensitive to that and help us to be willing to do everything we can to prevent others from suffering that same predicament.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.