

# The Sin of Unbelief

by Brian Brodersen

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*Brian Brodersen's sermon explores the sin of unbelief and its impact on receiving God's blessings and miracles.*

**Duration:** 1:01:52

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:3, Matthew 4:17, Mark 6:13-29, Mark 6:31-32, Hebrews 13:8

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Overcoming Unbelief"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of keeping our focus on the Lord amidst the chaos of the world. He encourages listeners to trust in Jesus Christ, who remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. The speaker suggests that taking time to be alone with the Lord and finding refreshment in Him is crucial in navigating the challenges of living as a Christian in a dark world. He also highlights the significance of studying the Scriptures to understand how God has worked in previous generations and to believe that He wants to work in the present generation as well. The speaker concludes by reminding listeners not to be discouraged if others have not yet responded to the gospel, as even Jesus faced rejection.

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## Transcript

Well, let's open our Bibles together this evening to the sixth chapter of Mark's gospel. Mark chapter six, and as you're turning there, I'll just remind you of one thing. On Friday nights, we have the Christianity 101, which is sort of a new believers class or a class for those who want to get a better understanding of the Christian faith.

And so, just want to keep that before people's minds, just remind you that that's going on in the fellowship hall on Friday nights, and just a great time to get together and learn about the foundational things of the faith. So, they've just started a new 10-week course, but you can actually pick up at any time and join in. So, encourage you to consider that if you're looking to get a better understanding of the basics of the Christian faith.

And then, just again, want to thank these guys that were here with us tonight leading worship. They don't have a name, they told me, so we don't even know what to call them. It's just these people came and these young people, but they did a great job and they came down from Modesto.

And it's just a great thing to me to see, you know, God faithfully raising up the new generation. And here, I'm sure they're, none of them are probably much older than 20, and here they're gifted by the Lord, and

they've been going around and just sharing with some of the different fellowships in the area. And they're heading back up Wednesday home, but it's good to have them with us.

So, we pick up tonight in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Mark. And so, we read in verse one, then he went out from there and came to his own country, and his disciples followed him. So, Jesus had in our last consideration, he had been called upon by the ruler of the synagogue to come to his home.

Jairus was his name, and perhaps you remember how his little daughter, 12 years old, had died. And so, Jairus came to Jesus hoping that there was something that could be done, and there was. Jesus came to his home, and he brought her back to life.

He brought her back from the dead. And so, now Mark continues with his rapid pace, going more or less from one event to another, and now he takes us from the area there of Capernaum back into his own country, which would be a reference to the city of Nazareth. Jesus was brought up in the city of Nazareth, which would have been a few miles west of the Sea of Galilee.

And so, he's now back in his own country, and he's there with his disciples. And when the Sabbath had come, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing him were astonished, saying, Where did this man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to him that such mighty works are performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? So they were offended at him.

So, Jesus has been gone for some time, and he had previously visited Nazareth just shortly after his public ministry had begun. And we read about that in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus had gone back and he had gone into the synagogue. And on that particular occasion, he stood up and he read from the scroll of Isaiah.

And he read that prophecy recorded in the 61st chapter, where the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, and so forth. He read it all the way through. And then he spoke to the crowd and he said, Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

And perhaps you remember how they were astonished at what he said there, they couldn't believe what they were hearing. And they marveled at the wonderful words that proceeded from his mouth, but they just couldn't embrace it. And so they became angry with Jesus.

And they drove him out of the synagogue and tried to cast him down a cliff there that the city was built upon. And so now some time has passed and he's gone throughout the land. He's gone throughout Galilee and throughout Jerusalem.

And now his fame has spread. And so he comes back now to Nazareth, having developed this tremendous reputation as being a wise man and being a man endowed with great power to perform miracles. And as he comes back to Nazareth, they're looking at him and again, they're stumbled by this.

They say, How did this man get these things? Wait a second, we know this person. He was brought up right here in our town. And how is it that he's performing these mighty deeds and all of this? We know his family.

We remember him when he was just a kid here in the village. And he's just the carpenter, the person that we would call upon to help us when we needed something done around the house. You know, he was a

handyman in that community.

And it says they were offended at him. And then Jesus said, a prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house. You know, you've heard the phrase, perhaps familiarity breeds contempt.

And that is really what we have in this story here. They were contemptuous toward Jesus because of their familiarity with them. They just couldn't accept even though they acknowledged, this is the amazing thing to me, they acknowledged that he had great wisdom, and that he demonstrated great power.

But they couldn't get over the fact that it was just it was Jesus, the one that they knew so well, they thought the one that, you know, they had seen grow up. And they were offended to think that he could be somehow superior to them, or that somehow they would have to come to him for some sort of a connection with God. They just didn't like that it, it really bothered them in the area of their pride.

And so they were offended, they were scandalized by him. But he declared a prophet is not without honor, except in his own country. And it's true to this very day, isn't it? We all know, I think probably by experience, at least to some degree, that the hardest people to really impact with the gospel message are the people that we know the best or the people that think they know us the best, particularly our family members.

It seems like those in the family are just always so hesitant. They're so reluctant. I'll never forget many years ago, speaking to some of my relatives, and always getting a similar kind of a response.

And, you know, it was more or less, now, aren't you that little runny nose kid that, you know, look, what are you going to teach me? Whether that was my uncles, or my grandparents, or even my, my parents, cousins, relatives, you know, they just, there's just this, this stumbling block there. And it's so true. And it's frustrating, isn't it? Because we love our family members, we want to see them come to know the Lord.

And, and we would think that, man, now that we've discovered the truth, they're going to listen to us, but so often they don't. And that was the case with Jesus. You know, a lot of times we think that if somebody's not listening, or somebody's not responding, or, you know, opening up and receiving, a lot of times we think that it's probably, to some degree, our fault.

You know, maybe it's a bad presentation, or something, or, you know, maybe we're not communicating as well as we possibly could have, or something like that. And, and so we walk away disappointed, thinking, oh, I, I blew that. You ever have that feeling? You get this great opportunity, finally comes, and here's the person you've been waiting for, for so long, to finally tell about the Lord, and the opportunity comes, and goes, and you just think you made an absolute idiot of yourself in the course of that.

I think of Paul the Apostle when he was there in Jerusalem, and he had, he had longed, and hoped, and wanted so desperately to preach the gospel to the Jews. That was his great passion, that if he could just speak to his own countrymen, because he reasoned that they'll, they'll understand that I know where they're at. When they hear my testimony, when they realize that, look, I used to be just like they are, Paul thought that he could persuade them.

And so he gets, finally gets this opportunity to speak to this large audience of Jews, and there he is, and he's giving them the message, and he says to them, actually, he says, you know, I understand you guys. I used to be just like you. I thought that I should stamp this thing out, this Christian thing, and I went about,

and he started telling this whole story about the high priest sending him to Damascus, and all of this, and he's got his audience right there hanging on every word.

And as he's going along telling the story, and I'm sure he's thinking, all right, this is the moment I've waited for. This is it, Lord. Thank you.

Thank you. You're giving me this great opportunity. And he's going along, and they're captivated by his message, and suddenly, he says to them, and then when I was in Jerusalem, the Lord spoke to me and said, flee.

They're not going to listen to you. I'm going to send you to the Gentiles. And it says that the crowd paid close attention to the apostle Paul until he said this one word, Gentiles.

And when he said this one word, it says they ripped their clothes, they threw dust in the air, they began to scream and shout, get rid of this fellow. He's not fit to live on the earth. And they had to drag him inside because they were about to kill him.

Can you imagine how he felt afterward? Why did I say Gentile? What was I thinking? I had him right there. My great opportunity. And he blew it.

He lost it. But you know what? He didn't. He gave a great message.

The problem wasn't really his delivery. The problem was their hearts. And the point is this.

Look, Jesus himself, they stumbled over him. They were scandalized by him. You can't get a better witness than Jesus.

So what I'm saying is don't be totally discouraged if those around you that you love so much just haven't responded to the gospel at this stage. Don't blame yourself for that. So many times people do that.

Oh, if I were just a better witness, they would have come to the Lord. Not necessarily. We have to remember that the problem is a heart problem.

It's a spiritual problem. And again, you can't improve on the witness of Jesus. He was there.

And like I pointed out a moment ago, they even acknowledged his wisdom. They acknowledged his mighty deeds. They acknowledged all of this.

But somehow they were still able to draw the conclusion that he wasn't any different than we are. Therefore, we don't really need to give heed to him. You see, it was their own sinful bias.

And that is still true to this day. And so we don't give up on family members and those that we are close to. We keep on praying, but we must remember that perhaps it'll be somebody else's task to bring them around to the Lord.

Maybe it won't be you. And I pray that myself for people that I know and love and family members. I pray the Lord will bring somebody into their lives that they will listen to.

If they won't listen to me because of the familiarity, because it's too close or whatever the case might be, that's fine. I just pray, Lord, get them some other way then. Send somebody else along that will be able to speak to them.

And so this was the case there in Nazareth. They were offended at Jesus because they just figured he's one of us. He couldn't really be a prophet.

And so it says in verse five that he could do no mighty works there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. Then he went about the villages in a circuit teaching.

So notice he could do no works there. We saw in our last study that Jesus was responding to the faith of both that woman that touched the hem of his garment that was healed of that flow of blood she had for 12 years. Remember how she said, if I could just touch his garment, I know that I'll be healed.

And she was. And then Jairus, how he just said to Jesus, I know my daughter lies at the point of death, but I know if you come, she'll get better. And we pointed out how those two people, what they did was they exercise faith.

They believed. And now here's the contrast. Jesus comes back to Nazareth, back to his own village, and they don't believe they're scandalized.

They're offended. They don't believe. And because they don't believe it says he could not do any mighty works there.

You see, it was their unbelief that hindered the Lord from what he wanted to do. He evidently intended to do good things. He intended to do great things there in Nazareth.

That was his desire. And had they embraced him in the synagogue. He probably would have done extraordinary things there in their midst, but he couldn't do it.

Now, we have to understand, it wasn't that he couldn't do it in the sense that he was incapable of doing it. But he couldn't do it more in the sense that he would not do it because God works in response to faith. And they had no faith.

And so it was their lack of faith that limited what God was able to do among them. Back in the history of the people of Israel, as we go through that story in the Old Testament, you know, all the way back to Exodus, all the way back to God delivered them from their bondage in Egypt and carrying them through the wilderness and all the things that he did for him through the time of Joshua and the judges and on through the monarchy and all of the different periods. You know, you find that they had their ups and downs.

They had more downs than they did ups, unfortunately. And what really becomes clear as you go through that history is that they never really attained to what God had for him. He had this wonderful thing in mind that he wanted to accomplish with them and through them, but they never arrived at it.

They fell far short of it. And in the Psalms, as a psalmist is recounting this history, he declares concerning them that their chief problem was unbelief and that they limited the holy one of Israel. They limited God through their unbelief.

They kept back the blessing that God intended to bestow upon them. And, you know, we have to be careful today not to do the very same thing. We can likewise limit God because of our unbelief.

And as we pointed out last week, faith is such a key ingredient in our lives as Christians. It is indispensable. We've got to have it because that's what the Lord is looking for.

He's looking for people who are believing him, trusting him, depending on him. You know, sometimes you see somebody and you look at him and it just seems like, man, the Lord is working extraordinarily in that person's life. And you might sit and observe and find that God is doing great things in the life of that person while you just sort of sit there as a spectator.

And maybe you get frustrated, maybe you get angry, maybe you get jealous. Well, why is the Lord doing that for them? And what about me? It probably is simply because they're believing the Lord to work and maybe you're not. And you see, we've got to have that faith.

We've got to have that trust, believing that God has a plan for us, that he's got a work that he wants to do in our lives. Individual faith is a very vital factor to attaining to what God intends for each and every one of us. But yet we're all faced with various obstacles and temptations, things that are trying to discourage us from trusting the Lord and believing expectantly that he's going to work.

And sometimes things go the other direction than we thought they were going to go. Things aren't developing like, you know, we thought they maybe should. And then the temptation comes along to doubt that God's really working and to be bitter and angry and resentful and all of those kinds of things.

And yet we've got to just hold firm and say, no, Lord, I believe that even through this present distress, you're still working, you're accomplishing your plan. And even though I can't see how this particular thing is really factoring in by faith, I believe that it is. Because I believe that you love me and I believe you have a good plan for my life and I believe you want to work.

You see, that's the person that God does truly work powerfully in and through. When you look at these Old Testament saints, for example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, all the way through, you can analyze their lives and you can find all kinds of shortcomings. You know, if you're looking for a perfect person in the scripture, you won't find one except Jesus.

Everybody had their shortcomings. Everybody at some point or another was, you know, missing the mark. But the thing that commended them to God always was their faith.

In the end, they believe the Lord, they trusted him, they depended on him. And so he would overlook all that other stuff and he would bring them forth as like Abraham, for example, he set forth as the father of faith. He's the example of faith.

Yet, when you look at Abraham's life, you see that he failed on several occasions, but the overall tenor of his life was he was trusting God, he was believing God. And because he was trusting and believing, the Lord was able to accomplish those things that he had promised Abraham. And so God's going to accomplish those things in our lives.

And so he's going to accomplish those things. But we have got to believe. We have got to believe.

You know, one thing for me personally, I find I fall into a trap myself quite often. And I've I can see it clearly. What happens is I take my eyes off the Lord and I start looking at everything else.

And when I start looking at all of these other things and not really concentrating on the Lord and his word, his promises and seeking him and trusting him, I find that I, like Peter, walking on the water, I can begin to sink. But as long as I keep my eyes on the Lord, it doesn't matter what else is going on out here. Because I see that the Lord is at work.

And I find for myself this peculiar temptation to really doubt the fact that God is wanting to work in a great way, in a powerful way, in an extraordinary way. I find that that temptation comes to me frequently. But it always comes when I've taken my eyes off of the Lord and I've got my eyes on everything else.

I look at a situation, I think, oh, that's so bad. Things are so desperate. What could be done under these circumstances? Rather than looking at the Lord and saying, Lord, it doesn't matter what the circumstances are.

I believe you're working. You said that you're at work. But you see, it's the man who believes that or the woman who believes that.

It's the person who trusts that God is indeed at work. That's the person who experiences that work of God. And others might have to sit along the sidelines and sort of spectate.

But who wants to do that? I don't want to do that. So what we all want to do is make sure we keep our eyes on the Lord. And remember that this Jesus who came to Nazareth with the intention of doing great things, this Jesus is here right now.

He's in Costa Mesa. He's in Santa Ana. He's in Newport Beach.

He's in Huntington Beach. He's in the Mountain Valley. He's in Irvine.

He's all around us here. And here's the question. Do we believe that he wants to work? If we do, he will.

If we don't, he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. He did heal a few sick folk. There are those, you know, they'll receive the blessing and the benefit because of their own faith.

But yet, how much more God really wanted to do. And so it's important that we keep that understanding that the Lord is looking for people to believe him. I've said this before, but I'm going to say it again.

As we look at the scriptures, you know, one of the main reasons why God gave us the scriptures was to show us how he works. The reason he gave us the stories of these different people that that's lives are recorded here was that we might read these stories and see how God worked in previous generations and realize that God is the same yesterday, today, forever. And he wants to work in this present generation just like he worked in previous generations.

But we could possibly fall into that same state that Israel fell into where they never really attained, not because God didn't have something that he wanted to do for them, but because they didn't believe. And so they limited the Holy One of Israel. I don't want to do that.

As a person, I don't want to do that. As a pastor, I don't want to do that. We as a congregation, God help us not to do that, but to believe the Lord and to believe that God is wanting to work even in these days as bleak as they are and as dark as things seem to be getting, we can still trust that God is working, that he has a plan, and we want to believe him for that.

And so in verse 7 it says, and he called the twelve to himself and began to send them out two by two and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff, no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. Also he said to them, in whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.

And whoever will not receive you nor hear you when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city. So Jesus sends them out, gives them some basic instruction, but notice, for those who don't receive, shake off the dust, and then he gives this warning, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in that day than for that city.

There's a principle that's stated throughout the scriptures, and the principle is, to whom much is given, much is required. Or the greater revelation one is subject to, the greater responsibility they have before God. And so Jesus is sending them out to these cities around the Galilee, and they're coming in his name with his authority, and basically they are becoming accountable.

So much so that in the future judgment there will be more tolerance for Sodom and Gomorrah than for these particular cities. Why? Because the revelation was so much greater, the judgment would in turn be that much greater. You see, this is a kind of a frightening thing, really.

The more you know, the more you're accountable for. The more you know, the more you're accountable for. Some people who sit in church week after week with a hard heart ought to stop coming and not listen anymore, because as you do that, you're just adding more and more judgment to yourself.

Now, I'm not really suggesting that you don't come or stop listening. What I'm really telling you is that you better start listening right now, and get things right, and get the judgment that's accumulating against you wiped away. You see, Paul told us a similar thing in writing to the Romans in the fourth chapter.

He's addressing people who had heard the word frequently, and he said to him, he said, don't you understand that the goodness of God is intended to lead you to repentance? That's what God's goal is, to get you to repent. And he's talking to people who had heard the message and experienced the goodness, and he said, but you, according to your hardness and your impenitent heart, impenitent means a heart that refuses to repent. You, according to your hardness and your impenitent heart, he said, you are treasuring up wrath for the day of wrath and the righteous judgment of God, who will judge the secrets of men in that day by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

So Paul gives them a severe warning. He says, listen, as you fail to respond to the goodness of God, as you fail to repent, you're just adding up more judgment for yourself on that day. And people are still doing the same thing today.

They're listening, and they walk away sometimes saying, oh man, you know, I know the Lord loves me. And that's just a means of excusing their sinful behavior or their intentions to go out and keep on sinning. Well, it is true.

God loves you, but it's not true that God loves you so much. You can just go keep on sinning without any consequences. God loves you, but that love is meant by God to bring you to repentance.

And if it doesn't bring you to repentance, then the fact that God loved you will be the very fact that you're judged by in the future. Yes, God loved you. Yes, God blessed you.

Yes, God did all of these things to try to get you to turn from your sin, but you didn't. You wouldn't. And so you see, the judgment becomes more severe.

I think we are living in a time when there's just a tendency by a lot of people to take this whole thing of salvation very lightly, very casually. A lot of times you hear people talking like salvation is something you can just take or leave. You can come and go with it anytime you want.

It's always going to be there when you get ready on your terms. Hey, you know, I'm not ready to really follow the Lord right now. I'm just going through a little time of rebellion.

You know, hey, God understands. No, he doesn't. You see, that's self-deception.

But there are a lot of people living in self-deception this very hour with that kind of rationale. Oh, I know the Lord loves me. But you see, although that's a truth, you have to be careful not to draw the wrong conclusion from that truth.

Yes, God loves us, but God commands us all to repent. And if we don't repent, even the love of God can't save us. That's heavy.

You see, God loved the whole world, but the whole world isn't saved, is it? And the great tragedy is that there will be multitudes of people in hell for eternity who God loved. God did indeed love them, but they would never respond to his love in the way that they were supposed to by turning away from the sin that God hates and receiving the mercy that he's offered. Now, the area there that Jesus is referring to, those cities around the Galilee, he says it's going to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those cities.

And I would venture to say that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than some of our modern cities. Because as one man stated one time, actually the title of his book, Sodom had no Bibles. You see, Sodom, we think of Sodom as, and rightfully so, we think of it as as a demonstration of God's judgment.

Or we talk about a, you know, a licentious community or something. We say, oh man, that place is like Sodom and Gomorrah. And Sodom and Gomorrah was judged in fire and brimstone.

But Sodom had no Bibles. They did not have one, probably one percent of the revelation that has come to us today. You know, we live in a, in a great country.

In so many ways, it's great. But in so many ways, it is also very perverse and wicked. And the frightening thing about this nation is that it's a nation that sins against the light.

And that's why the judgment could be more severe than other places that we might look at and think, well, surely God's going to judge them before he judges us. Not necessarily so, because they don't have the light that we have. We have churches, we have Bibles, we have freedom, we have Christian radio, we have TV, we have all of those things.

But with all of that, we still have the other. We still have all the sin. And that's the whole point, that because we have this, we have become more accountable.

Back in the days of, the declining days of the kingdom of Judah, God began to speak to the prophets and to tell them that he was going to bring the Babylonians to judge them. And Habakkuk, the prophet, he was

really troubled by that message. As a matter of fact, he just couldn't understand it.

And his question to the Lord was, Lord, how, how would you bring the Babylonians against us? I mean, come on, they're worse than we are. And that was true, but it wasn't true. They were worse in one sense, but they didn't have the understanding that Israel had.

They didn't have the revelation. So Israel's sins were actually greater because they had the knowledge of the true God, and they were sinning against it. And the Lord spoke to the people, I think it's in Amos, and he said to them, he said, because you alone I have known out of all the families of the earth, therefore, I will judge you more severely.

You see, it's that whole principle that's being talked about here. The more you know, the more accountable you are. So the more you know, means you better get right, and you better get right quick.

Because you're just adding to your accountability. And the more you resist, the longer you resist, the more you're storing up judgment for yourself on that day. Someone says, Oh, but you know, hey, I'm gonna get it right.

I'm just, I'm just not ready yet. But how foolish a thought, because how do you know you have enough time to get it right? How do you know that opportunity is going to come your way? Say, Oh, well, you know, of course it will. I'm young, and I'll be fine.

We just don't really know that, though, do we? But we can deceive ourselves into thinking that that's the case. But we don't know. Young, old, in the middle, no man knows the moment that he's going to be called to account, brought before the judgment seat of God.

That's why when we hear the message, it's so vitally important to respond to it and not to not to delay, not to wait. And so they went out and preached. Having received the instruction from Jesus, they went out and preached that people should repent.

Now, one of the things I want to touch on back in verse 11 for a second. Notice he says, and whoever will not receive you nor hear you when you depart from their shake off the dust under your feet. You know, that's a severe thing, really.

But what it teaches us is that, like the Lord said, actually to Noah, he said, My spirit will not always strive with man. God set a limit back in the days of Noah. He said, My spirit will not always strive.

I'll give man 120 years. And he did. There were 120 years between the time God called Noah to build the ark and the time the flood came on the earth.

But the Lord said, My spirit will not always strive with man. You see, there comes a place, and we've touched on this before because we've come across a similar passage, but there comes a place where God ceases to strive with a man. That is the most frightening possibility that there is.

When a person comes to that point where God is no longer striving with them, where, as Jesus said, they shake the dust off of their feet as a testimony against them. Man, that is a frightening place to come to. That's an unbelievably horrible concept even.

But it can happen. It can happen with places as well as with people. And of course, places are inhabited by people.

But there are those places where the Lord ceases to strive and he gives opportunity after opportunity after opportunity. But then the opportunities are then closed. And I think there are places where God has done that for periods of time, even for generations, places where God has poured out his spirit in blessing.

And yet people, as time goes on, they take it for granted and they begin to become contemptuous toward it because of the familiarity with it. And then eventually, they come to a place where they're so hardened. And then finally, God ceases to strive.

I'll tell you, I think that happened in Europe. And I think Europe is a great example of this sort of thing where the Lord, for a period of time, in one sense, almost sort of shook the dust from his feet and said, I'm finished with this place. I do believe that God is returning mercifully to Europe at the present time.

But there's been a considerable amount of time, pretty much the 20th century, where because so much was given to that place and so many extraordinary things occurred there concerning the gospel and the great privileges. But yet it was abused and it was taken for granted and it was held in contempt after some time and the hearts became hardened. And you think of the First and the Second World War and the things that have gone on there and the secular emphasis in those societies today and the communism that dominated parts of Europe.

And all of those things are almost, I think, it's kind of risky to say it, but I think those are examples of God ceasing to strive with nations. And one day it'll happen on a universal scale where God will no longer strive. And he will allow man and his sinful heart to attain all that it desires.

And Satan will come on the scene in the person of the Antichrist and the whole world will worship him. But again, the Lord is merciful. And people, places, God, I just marvel at his his grace, that he does come and show mercy even after a time of maybe leaving off his dealings with the people.

So they went out and preached that people should repent. Repent means to change your direction. There's been some confusion over two words, repentance and another word, penance.

Penance means to be sorry or remorseful over your actions. Repentance means to change your thinking and subsequently change your direction. See, a lot of times people think, well, I'm sorry for what I did.

And that's good if it's truly that you're sorry for what you did versus I'm just sorry because I got caught what I did, you know, doing what I did. And a lot of times it's hard to really distinguish, you know, just what is the case? I know in my experience in having to deal disciplinarily with people at times, when I know that a person is on the right track to repentance is when they come themselves unsolicited, not caught, no pressure, and just confess and say, you know what, I can't live with this anymore. This is what I've been doing.

I take full responsibility for it. When I see a person like that, I think, okay, there's a real repentance that's working there. But I've seen so many people that come and they have all of the external manifestations of that, but then you find out they're there because they got busted.

They're there because somebody found out and they're going to rat on them anyway, or, you know, their wife knows and she's kicking them out or whatever. And then you have to go back and think, okay, now, what is your motive really? But you see, God knows all of that stuff himself already. You see, repentance is to come to a place, not of simply being sorry, even, even if it's good sorrow, not sorrow at getting caught, but truly sorry for what you've done.

But repentance goes beyond just being sorry. Repentance says, not only am I sorry, I'm turning away from this. I'm going to start going in the right direction.

I'm going to do things God's way. I'm no longer going to do things my way. That's the message of the gospel.

The message of the gospel is that people should repent, not simply be sorry, but people should repent. People should turn from sin and turn to God. That's when a life has changed.

And, you know, there are a lot of people attending Christian churches today who have even gone so far as to maybe say a sinner's prayer, but they've never repented. They've never changed their direction. They've never turned away from the life of sin, the life of self, and turned to God.

And a lot of times that's the case because they haven't been really told clearly that that is what God is requiring. Sometimes people are so desperate to get a response, they just, you know, present a message to people that if you come to Jesus, He will make you a better person. Are you down in the dumps? Are you failing at your career? Well, come to Christ and He will make you a big success.

And people say, all right, that sounds good to me. I am a failure. I want to be a success.

I happen to be watching something on TV and it was a large church in some part of the country and they were, I think the theme or their motto for their church is something to do with everybody's a champion or something like that. And I think the choir was singing, we are the champions or we are the losers. I'm just exaggerating about that.

But, you know, as I'm listening to the message and it's all about, you know, how you can be this and you can find that and you can discover your gifts and you can, and you know, that's not the message. Not to say that God doesn't want to bless us and take care of us and provide for us and all that. He certainly does want to do that.

But the primary message is not that God wants to help us not to be failures in business or, you know, to have a low self-image or that's not the message. The message is that God wants us to turn from sin. And unfortunately, that message isn't clearly being preached and it needs to be because that's, of course, the message that Jesus himself preached.

And that's the one that he sent his disciples out to preach. Preach to the people, he said, that they should repent. And that's what they did.

And so they cast out many demons and they anointed with oil those who were sick and he healed them. And that's what he preached. Now, from verses 14 on through verse 29 here, we have the story of the martyrdom of John the Baptist.

And it's a story that I would encourage you to read over yourself. But John had been imprisoned by Herod. And Herod was, he was seemingly a confused man, to say the least.

Probably very superstitious. On the one hand, there was something about John that really, it sort of frightened him and yet drew out this respect for John. But yet, on the other hand, he was a puppet, in a sense, of his wife and of the whole political arena that he lived in.

And he was a person who wanted to, you know, please everybody, make everybody happy and all. And he had to arrest John because John was out there preaching that he was an adulterer, which Herod actually was. And he was put into prison and Herod would go and listen to John and he was intrigued by him.

But there came a day when Herod held a feast. And at the feast, he had his young daughter come and dance for those that were there at the feast. And then he promised to give her whatever she requested, up to a half of his kingdom, if she would dance.

And so she did. And then her request was not anything that he had thought. Her request was, by inspiration of her mother, give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

You know, we live in a debauched world and a bizarre and sinful culture. But it hasn't gotten this bad yet, at least not here. But I mean, can you imagine that? That's where they were at.

Give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And Herod, even though I'm sure that just sent a shock into his system, that was the last thing he wanted to do, to save face in front of everybody, he went ahead and granted a request. Now, we find out later he was haunted by that because when he heard about Jesus, he said, oh no, it's John the Baptist, come back from the dead.

So I'm sure he lived a life of torment over this. But they took John and just as Salome had requested, they executed him. They beheaded him and brought his head in on a platter.

You know, it's amazing how the world has disregarded the servants of God throughout all of history. You know, Hebrews 11 talks about those who wandered in sheepskins and goatskins and who were living in the caves and in the rocks. And it says this, of whom the world was not worthy.

And that's true of the servants of God throughout the centuries, of whom the world is not worthy. And the world has disregarded them. I was looking at a book the other day, and it's by a famous historian, Will Durant.

And it was, I can't remember the exact title, but it was something to the effect of, you know, the people who have influenced the world the most, or, you know, the wisest people in the world, the smartest people, who, I can't remember. But it was something like that. And as I thumbed through it, I just, I marveled at the disregard for the servants of God.

Oh, there was Plato, I think, and Aristotle for sure was there. And you know, on down through the years, there was just the different philosophers, and Marx, and even Newton was there, and some scientists. And I thought, amazing, where's the name of Jesus Christ? I'd say he's influenced the world a little bit.

Where's the name of Paul the Apostle? What about Moses? What about King David? You know, but it's just this blatant disregard from the world for God, the things of God, the people of God. And that's the way it's always been. Here is the man who Jesus said, of those born of women, there was not a greater man.

He is the greatest of the prophets. And just on a whim and in an instant, he's taken and he's beheaded. But of course, what people don't realize is that there's another ledger.

There's another accounting system. There's another court. And there's another opinion.

And that's the opinion that matters. It doesn't matter what the world thinks or doesn't think. It doesn't matter if they regard or disregard us.

What matters ultimately, finally, and completely is this one thing. Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Because unless it's there, that's the book you ought to be interested in. Whatever Will Durant has to say about history, who cares? I want to know, is my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? That's the one book that we want to mention in right there.

So John was taken and his disciples, and they heard of it. They took him away. They laid his corpse in a tomb.

And then, verse 30, the apostles gathered to Jesus and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And he said to them, come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they didn't even have time to eat.

And so we'll end there tonight, verse 31. But in the midst of this crazy world that we live in, in the midst of all that's swirling around us, we need to keep our eyes focused on the Lord. We need to trust the Lord.

We need to believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And the God who we're reading about in these pages is the God who's working today. And you know, the best way to keep that perspective is to make sure we do what Jesus suggested that they do here in verse 31.

Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while. We need to make sure we get alone with the Lord and get refreshed by him. It's a dark world.

It's a difficult place to live in many ways as a Christian these days. Not as difficult here as it is in some places, but you know what I'm saying, and you know the pressure yourself. And sometimes we can all be overwhelmed with everything and we can all fall into the trap of losing sight of the Lord and just being tempted to unbelief.

But the way we're going to have victory over that is to continually get alone with the Lord. Take some time, get away with him, and let him refresh you. That's what Jesus wanted to do with these disciples here.

Come away to a deserted place and rest a while. And we need to find a deserted place. It's not easy.

And I don't mean you have to go out to the desert, but a place where you can just get alone with the Lord. And just make that your goal on a regular basis. Do that as often as you can.

And you'll find that as you're doing that, as you're just getting away with the word, just you and the Lord, here I am God, cleanse me, refresh me, speak to me, Lord, work in my life. You're going to find as you do that, that your faith will be built up. You'll be strong in faith.

And you'll be one who's inheriting those promises, those promises that are based on that one thing, faith. And so let's commit ourselves to doing that. Let's commit ourselves to just making sure we take that time.

And I know just like you know as well that there are so many things that fight against that, aren't there? There's so many things that want to come in and consume our time. And things that press in on us and things that come and say, oh no, this is a priority. You've got to do this.

You can't do that right now. But I'll tell you what, we'd all be much better off if we just set all that stuff aside and said, no, this is the one thing I've got to do. And I'll close with this.

You remember in Luke's Gospel, the story of Martha and Mary. Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus. Martha was busy with a lot of things.

And Jesus said to Martha who complained that Mary wasn't busy like she was, Jesus said, Martha, you are distracted by many things. But one thing is necessary. And Mary's chosen that.

And that's not going to be taken from her. That is, that's so powerful to me. Remember that.

You're distracted by many things. I'm distracted by many things. But these are the words of Jesus Christ, our God, our Savior, the one who made us.

This is what he said. There's one thing that's needed. There's one thing that's needed.

All of these other things are peripheral. All of these other things are incidental. All these other things, although they have their place, they're not the one needed thing.

The one needed thing is to come apart for a while into a deserted place and rest with him. If we do that, then we will be strengthened, built up, men and women of faith walking in victory. And that's what we need to be doing today.

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