

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Spiritual Blindness, Part 1

Scripture: Mark 8:11-21

Code: 41-37

Let's open the Bible to Mark chapter 8...Mark chapter 8, so blessed to be back in Mark. Been waiting with bated breath to pick up the story where we left it off in chapter 8 verse 10, and we now come to verses 11 to 21.

Now the theme of this section from 11 to 21, I have identified as spiritual blindness...spiritual blindness. There's actually only one reference in the whole text, verse 18, to the issue of being able to see and not see. But that one little phrase sort of casts its shadow over the entire section. And to understand this section is to really understand the issue of spiritual blindness by virtue of two illustrations. The first is an encounter with Jesus and the leaders of Israel, the religious elite. The second is an encounter between Jesus and the disciples. They illustrate to us two kinds of blindness, permanent blindness and temporary blindness.

It has to be said at the very beginning before we look at the text itself that spiritual blindness is a universal malady, it is a universal human condition. Every human being born into this world since the Fall of Adam has been born spiritually blind. And it is not a superficial blindness, it is a profound blindness, it is a total blindness, it is a complete blindness. It is essentially living in the darkness with no light at all. That is the biblical diagnosis of the universal human condition.

And I know that runs contrary to what people think. Why we all are exposed to those who are self-proclaimed very spiritual people, are we not? I'm a very spiritual person, you hear frequently, as if they had some real insight into the spiritual realm. There are even people who are professional spiritualists who can connect people with the spiritual dimension. And there are those great spiritual leaders, those transcendental gurus who have been identified with the eastern part of the world, but there are many of them that come in many shapes and sizes that have found their way across the planet in very different garbs than just Hinduism. Those people who think they can see into the spiritual realm, who think they have ascended to some level of mastery of spiritual reality.

Every religion on the planet, every single religion claims to have the key to the door to the spiritual world. They all do. It's what they sell. They'll lie. They all lie. No religion in the world apart from true Christianity can give anybody sight, everybody in every religion except the true one is in the dark and it is a black darkness and it is a deep darkness and it is a profound blindness. There are not transcendental masters, there are no elevated souls, there are no spiritualists who know spiritual truth genuinely. That doesn't come within the framework of an unaltered human life.

This is the testimony of Scripture. Turn to John chapter 1...John chapter 1 and verse 5, the Lord Jesus is introduced here as the light in verse 4. "In Him was life and the life was a light of men." Jesus is called the light. He Himself said He was the light. John 8:12, "I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness," that's the only way out of the darkness, to follow Christ. There is no other way out of the darkness. There are no elevated spiritual masters, there are only people who follow Christ and He alone leads out of the darkness. He is the light. The light shines in the darkness, verse 5 says, the darkness did not comprehend it.

This universal spiritual blindness has no capacity to comprehend light. The true light came, the darkness didn't comprehend it. There came a man from...from God, sent by God whose name was John, John the Baptist, the forerunner to Christ. He came as a witness to testify about the light. That is to say the light came. Even before the light came a prophet came to tell people the light was coming. And John did that. He testified about the light so that all might believe through him. He was not the light but he came to testify about the light. There was the true light, namely Christ, which coming into the world enlightens every man. He was in the world, the world was made through Him and the world didn't know Him. He came to His own, the Jews, those who were His own, didn't receive Him. Therein is the darkness.

This is the universal human condition. When the light is at its brightest, when the light is standing in front of you, looking you in the eye, when you can reach out and touch the light, when you can hear the voice of the light, when you can see the power of the light displayed in miracle after miracle, day after day after day, there is still no capacity in the darkness of the human heart to grasp the light to comprehend the light, to understand the light.

And this is a condition here described of Israel who were believed to be by themselves, at least, the most enlightened people on the planet. They had the Old Testament Scripture, they had the Law of the prophets. They had the ordinances. They had the Covenants. They had it all. They had the complete revelation of God throughout the whole Old Testament as it had been revealed. As we heard from Tom at the beginning, God spoke in many ways through many means, in many portions and gave them the Scripture and it gave them the light and they didn't understand it and they had an apostate religion framed out of that true revelation. They deviated from it and perverted it to the degree that they had an apostate form of Judaism in Jesus' time. When He came, the light was looking them in the face and they couldn't understand it. That's how deep human blindness is.

In Romans 1 the issue is spread abroad. In John 1 John is talking about the Jews primarily, "Came into His own, His own received Him not." But here it's the Gentiles that are in view in Romans 1. God's wrath is revealed in verse 18, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. This blindness, this darkness is so profound that even when exposed to the truth, they suppress it. And this is talking about all men.

He goes on to say, "That which is known about God is evident within them." It's inside of them. And how is that realized? Two ways. One, reason...human reason leads you to a cause for every effect and human reason followed will lead you to the primary cause, the ultimate cause, the first cause of all effects. You have to go there, there has to be a first cause, there has to be God...human reason. Chapter 2 he says, "The Law of God is written in their hearts," that's a moral Law, an ethical Law.

So God has displayed Himself in reason and in morality in every human being. That's light. That's light. That's made evident to them. Beyond that, the creation of the world displays, verse 20 says, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature. When we look at the creation, not only as in effect from a first cause, but looking at the effect itself and picking it apart we learn a lot about God, don't we? We learn about it, the vastness of His mind, the massive infinite power that He possesses. The attention to detail that He has given to the minutia of the composite atomic structure of the universe. We learn so much about God's power, about His attributes. We also learn from human life in relationships that God has communicated to us attributes that are true of Him, that we possess. So we know about Him in terms of His power, we know about Him in terms of His personality. So the whole world has this much light.

However, "Even though they knew God," verse 21, "they didn't honor Him as God, or give thanks. They became empty in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened." What happened was, the light they had went out...went out. They turned away from the light.

In Ephesians chapter 4 there's another description of this worthy of our consideration. In Ephesians 4:17, talks about the nations, or the Gentiles, the *ethnos*, ethnic groups, they walk, it says in verse 17, in the emptiness of their mind. Empty headed, they can't make the conclusion the light in them should lead them to make, following reason to God, following moral Law in the heart to a lawgiver, to a standard of righteousness, a God who is righteous. So in this empty-minded existence, verse 18 says, "They have become darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart." Hard hearts, ignorant minds, darkened understanding, that's how all human beings are defined.

The psalmist said in Psalm 82:5, "People walk in darkness." The prophet said, "People have eyes but can't see." Isaiah said that and Jeremiah said it. The Proverbs say, "The way of the wicked is darkness." Blindness and darkness characterize human nature. That's just part of being human. The light is there but the capacity to follow that light to a fuller light is not there. And this blindness, as I said, is not a superficial blindness, it is a profound blindness, a profound blindness.

Let me show you a little further from the first chapter of John, look at the third chapter of John. John chapter 3, here our Lord is talking about light. Verse 19, "This is the judgment that the light has come into the world." Now you have light, not only the light of reason and the light of moral Law and the

light of creation, but you have the light of Christ coming into the world. And men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, doesn't come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. He who practices the truth comes to the light so that his deeds may be manifested that they have been wrought in God.

The blind are profoundly blind by nature. It's human nature. And they are even more profoundly blind because they are not only sinners but they love their sin. And that is the sort of second-degree of their blindness. The first degree is it's their nature to be blind. The second thing is their sin is what they love and that makes their blindness even more compelling, more profound.

It doesn't end there. Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4. The Apostle Paul is talking about the same issue exactly. Second Corinthians 4:3 and 4, he says, "If the gospel that he preaches concerning Christ, concerning the light, is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. They can't see it. In whose case the God of this world...meaning Satan...has blinded the minds of the unbelieving."

So they are blind by nature. Double blind by sin. They are triple blinded by Satan so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. We're again not talking about a superficial blindness but a deep and profound blindness. Blinded by nature, blinded by sin and the love of it, blinded by Satan and his power over the soul.

And there is another kind of blindness that shows the depth of this. In the nineteenth chapter of Luke we come across, I suppose, what you could call sovereign blindness. Jesus approached Jerusalem in verse 41, saw the city and wept over it. And He said, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace, if you only had known that I was here and the peace with God that I came to bring, but now they have been hidden from your eyes." Boy, that's the saddest of all aspects of blindness, when the blindness can't be remedied, it's now hidden. You had your moment. You had your opportunity. You had your time. You didn't respond. It's over. From now on, you can't see what you wouldn't see. "And the days will come when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side," talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, "and level you to the ground and your children within you, not leave one stone on another because you didn't recognize the time of your visitation."

You didn't know who it was who had visited you, you didn't embrace the light because you loved the darkness and judgment is going to come and you're going to die and your children are going to die and hundreds of thousands of Jews, of course, died in that horrendous Roman assault in 70 A.D. and they were all catapulted who did not see the light of Christ into hell and hell is described in the Bible repeatedly as outer - what? Darkness. Outer darkness. This is profound blindness, the blindness of nature, human nature...the blindness of sin, the blindness of Satan, the blindness of judgment and the blindness of eternal punishment. This is the condition of all people.

Now, all of us are in that condition but we fall into two categories...those who are permanently blind and those who are temporarily blind....those who are permanently blind and those who are temporarily blind. For some, the blindness is forever. For others, the blindness is only for a time. And you're in either one or the other of those two groups.

The text before us is very instructive in regard to this issue and it presents both permanent and temporary blindness. And we're going to look at that this morning and next time. Let me read the text to you.

Back to Mark chapter 8 verse 11, and let's meet the permanently blind. "The Pharisees came out, began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven to test Him. Sighing deeply in His spirit He said, 'Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. Leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side. And they had forgotten to take bread and didn't have more than one loaf in the boat with them and He was giving orders to them, saying 'Watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.' They began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus aware of this said to them, 'Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes, do you not see? Having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for five thousand how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?' They said to Him, 'Twelve.' 'When I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?' And they said to Him, 'Seven.' And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?" And Matthew adds a footnote to that passage at the end of his parallel account, he says, "And they did understand."

The first group are left in darkness. The second group are led to light. The Pharisees, permanent darkness; the disciples, temporary, and for them the light kept expanding every day they spent with Jesus.

Now you have to parallel this passage in its fullness with Matthew 16 if you're going to study it. Matthew 16:1 to 12 covers the same thing and adds a few details here and there that always enrich as the gospel writers look at the same events from two perspectives. But the resolution comes in combining two accounts, as you know. This encounter with the Pharisees includes also the Sadducees. Matthew 16 says the Sadducees were there as well. This is our Lord's final conflict with the leaders of Israel in Galilee. Remember, His Galilee ministry is coming to its end, He's going to go down to Judea for the last months of His life before He goes to the cross. He's wrapping up this extensive more than a year that He has spent in a very small area of Galilee. This is the last encounter with the Pharisees and the Sadducees are there as well. It's a milestone. It really is. It's a milestone because it is the last time these leaders of Israel will face their Messiah and Savior in that area.

This is it. From here on, whenever He relates to them He relates to them as a condemning judge. Up to this point there have been invitations extended to the leaders of Israel to believe. No more. Denunciation now. But it's a milestone then for a second and corollary reason. Since He is through with the leaders of Israel, He is through also with the people who follow the leaders of Israel. And from this point on, our Lord's instruction and His power displays are not for the leaders of Israel, not for the rejecters anymore but for those who believe. So from here on, everything that takes place is driven directly at the disciples.

For example, if you look at chapter 9 verse 30, "He went out again, a final sweep through Galilee, but He didn't want anyone to know about it because He was teaching His disciples." So from on, the disciples are the focus, both of His miracle power and His instruction. He is preparing them for the future ministry. And they're at a critical point, really the high point of the whole book of Mark is in chapter 8 verse 29 where Peter on behalf of all of the followers of Jesus says, "You are the Christ. You're the Christ." They saw the light. They recognized the light. They got it. That's the highpoint, the midpoint of this gospel, what we call the great confession of the followers of Jesus.

Do you understand it is at this point that Jesus is a vilified man, He is discredited openly and publicly. He is denounced by the leaders of Israel. He is rejected by the people who follow the leaders of Israel, all of them in the darkness who love the darkness and love their sin. He's rejected by all of them. Now all they want to do is kill Him, so they're on the hunt to kill Him.

Those who follow Him therefore, know they are making a break with their former religion. They're leaving their rabbis and their priests and their chief priests and their high priests and the Pharisees and the scribes. They're turning their backs on the apostate Judaism that had been their life. They're following the discredited, despised, hated, scorned, mocked, blasphemed leader, Jesus, because they're sure of one thing, and they say it right here finally, "He's the Christ." He is the Messiah, the light has broken on them. The darkness has been dispelled. And the light will get brighter and brighter as He spends day after day with them, right on through the cross outside the other side of the grave and for 40 days with them, instructing them concerning the Kingdom before the ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit when they are ready then to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is a great milestone moment when the permanent blindness of the leaders of Israel and those who followed them is fixed. And when the temporary blindness of those who followed Christ is ended and the light begins to shine ever brighter.

We have to start, this morning, with the permanent blindness, verses 11 to 13. Again our Lord is face to face with those who hate Him. They love their sin. They love their self-righteousness which was their chief sin. They love their hypocrisy. They are naturally blind. They are sinfully blind. They are satanically blind. And they are now about to be sovereignly blinded and they will be eternally in the darkness.

Just to set the scene a little bit, it's been a while. At this point in Jesus' ministry, He has just come back from a tour of Gentile areas. Remember back in chapter 7 about verse 24 when it says that He left Galilee and went north up to Tyre and Sidon? That's Gentile territory and He traversed through that for an extended period of time. Went way north of the Sea of Galilee and then swept down to the southeast portion, the southeast portion of the Sea of Galilee to an area called Decapolis, meaning ten cities, they were Gentile cities. And His ministry was among the Gentiles and He was teaching His disciples that this gospel is not just for the Jews, but it's for all. They needed to see that. They needed to learn that.

And in Decapolis, you remember, chapter 8 begins with an amazing miracle that He did there that parallels the miracle He did in Galilee. In Galilee He fed five thousand men plus women and children. In Decapolis, the Gentile area, He feeds four thousand men plus women and children, a very similar feeding miracle. That's where we end in verse 10.

After that miracle which happens on the southeast side of the Sea of Galilee, He goes across in the boat to the northwest, up by Capernaum to a place called Dalmanutha, you notice that in verse 10, or Magadan is another name from that area, just near Capernaum. That was His headquarters.

So back He goes into Jewish territory. As soon as He arrives, verse 11, the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him. They're just relentless. They are on the attack. He never has to look for them. He never has to find them. They're there. He's just arrived back from the other side, docked their little boat at a place called Dalmanutha, gotten off the boat not far from Capernaum and somewhere immediately on the path wherever it was from the shore to Capernaum, which perhaps was the direction they were headed, they're ready for Him. And as soon as the word goes that He's arrived, and He's been gone a long time, weeks, they're right there in His face wasting no time with their attack. They hate the light. They hate the message of repentance. They hate the message of faith and grace. They love self-righteous sin. They love the sense of achieving their own redemption through their own morality and their own religious ceremony. They're in love with that. They hate the truth. And so they come out again. They want to discredit Him publicly. There's always a crowd around Him.

And so, we see in just this little brief section, 11, 12 and 13, three features that mark the spiritually blind and they come out very readily. Number one, and I've got to hurry on this. They're...people who are spiritually blind are comfortable only with others who are also blind, even if they're enemies. It is amazing how universally the blind hate the light. That is to say, people of all false religions collectively, even though they are antagonist to each other in their religions, will agree to hate the truth. Right? The one thing the multiple false religions of the world will agree on is that they all resent Christianity, they all resent the gospel...on that they agree, even if they are mortal enemies.

“The Pharisees,” and Matthew 16:1 adds, “and the Sadducees,” without “the” being repeated, “The Pharisees and Sadducees,” one article is a Greek way of unifying them. They couldn’t be more antagonistic toward each other, it would be impossible. The Pharisees hated the Sadducees and vice-versa, they were severe enemies on a theological level. And yet they become one and are united in a common hatred of the light. That’s characteristic of the darkness. The darkness is comfortable with other people in the darkness. The systems may vary. The viewpoints may vary. But the common darkness ties them together.

You have the legalists, that would be the Pharisees, the ritualists, you have the Sadducees who would be the liberals or the rationalists, they are one in hating the Son of God. The Sadducees aren’t mentioned a lot in the New Testament, only a few times. They are seen there witnessing the baptizing work of John the Baptist. They appear testing Jesus without the Pharisees during His Passion Week, they confront Him and He confronts them and denounces them. And then you have this incident here recorded in Matthew and in Mark. And our Lord only refers to them in Matthew 16 because they weren’t really the theologians of the people. They were the ones that ran the temple operation and the people didn’t like them because they extorted money out of them, right? They basically jacked up the prices of animals for sacrifice and they would examine the animals the people had brought and disqualify the animal from being sacrifice and make them buy one of their own animals that was for sale in the temple ground at an exorbitant price. They wouldn’t accept the money that the people brought, they would have to exchange their money and they would extort money out of them in the exchange. They ran a racket at the temple. They didn’t have a lot of convictions about moral issues because they were liberals. That is, they took a liberal approach, they denied the existence of the resurrection, they denied the existence of angels. In effect, they were skeptics regarding the supernatural.

On the other hand, you had the Pharisees who were fastidious legalists who wanted to read something spiritual into every tiny word of Scripture. They were children of the Ascetic Movement, the Hasidim, meaning the pious, the saintly. They were the Jews who, first of all, were committed to the Law of God and as a secondary reality, they hated Greek culture. They hated Greek culture, they hated Hellenistic things and therefore they hated the presence of the Romans who were a Hellenized group of pagans. The Pharisees were separatists, they hated the pagans, they hated the Romans, they hated the heathen. They separated themselves from Publicans and sinners. They separated themselves from the general Jewish population. They separated themselves from any kind of defilement that they thought would make them ceremonially unclean. They were the literalists and the legalists and the separatists.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, they were anything but separatists. They were happy the Romans were there. They commiserated with the Romans and made money off of it. They were compromisers, anything but hostile to Greek culture, they were attracted to Greek culture, they were

the aristocratic, irrationalistic, skeptical materialist. They were opportunists who denied scriptural data and they got together with their enemies, the Pharisees.

In fact, in Acts 23 there's an account given where the Sadducees and the Pharisees are at each other's throats. They rejected tradition. They rejected the prophets of the Old Testament. They were very, very different than the Pharisees. The point is this, they shouldn't have been together in any common cause. They really wanted nothing to do with each other. But they had this common enemy, truth, the light, Jesus Christ. And so they got together on that basis.

That is the way the darkness works. If you're in the darkness, you're comfortable with other people in the darkness. However they define their darkness, it's still darkness, however they define their blindness, it's still blindness. Evil company is better than righteous company even if the evil company is your enemy.

So they begin to argue with him. They just walked up and started a fight. Here's their approach, this is a dispute. The Greek word argues...dispute. They wanted to discredit Him before the people. So this is what they desire. "They seek from Him a sign from heaven to test Him."

As a test, they want Him to do a sign from heaven. Now there's a reason for this. The Jews had a superstition. The superstition of the Jews is that God could do heavenly miracles, but demons could only do earthly miracles. That God could do heavenly miracles but demons could do earthly ones. You know, like the magicians in Pharaoh's court did when they mimicked the miracles of God through Moses and they did their false miracles, this and perhaps the actual supernatural activities of demons through the centuries had created this kind of notion that demons could do earthly miracles, if you will, but only God could do heavenly ones.

And so, they come to Jesus and they say, "Look, do a sign from heaven," literally, "out of heaven." A miracle in the sky, stop the sun, Joshua did. Bring fire down from heaven, Elijah did. Eclipse the moon, rearrange the constellations. Start and stop a storm. And they did it to tempt Him. They really wanted to discredit Him. And, of course, it's supposed to be a rock and a hard place. If He says I'm not going to do that, then the people are going to know He can't. And if He can't, then He's discredited. He's a fake. Maybe He's doing what He does by the power of Satan which is what they had said all along. And if He says I can, and I will, and they don't believe He can, then He'll fail. So in either case, this is the dilemma He can't avoid. If He says He's not going to do it, then the people can assume He can't and all He can do is what Satan does. And if He says He can and tries it, He'll fail because He's not the Messiah, He's not from God, they were sure of that, and He'll be discredited either way.

Did they really need another sign? And it wasn't as if they had signs that weren't from heaven. Do you remember the leading teacher? Do you remember the name of the leading teacher among the

Pharisees? His name was Nicodemus, John 3. He came to Jesus, this is his statement, John 3:2, "Rabbi, we know." We...who's we, Nicodemus, who you talking about? "We, my group." Who's your group? The Pharisees. "We know that You have come from God as a teacher for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

They didn't need more signs, more evidences. They had plenty. But there was, after all, you know, the notion that in the time of the Messiah's arrival and the establishment of the Kingdom and judgment and all of that, there would be signs in the heaven, didn't Joel chapter 2, didn't the prophet say the sun will be darkened and the moon will turn to blood and there will be signs in the sky? I mean, the prophet did say that. And oh, by the way, that will happen when Jesus returns again to establish His Kingdom and judge the ungodly, read Matthew 24 where Jesus Himself is a sign in the sky and all His holy angels with Him. Read the book of Revelation, they'll come signs in the sky.

But this is so ridiculous, as if they needed any proof when their own leader testifies that they knew He had to come from God because no one could do the signs that He did. This is how deep the darkness is.

The first thing you see about people in the darkness is they're comfortable with other people in the darkness and the second is, that the darkness deepens. They're comfortable with the people who are in the darkness, and they're consigned to deeper darkness. The more evidence you give them, the deeper they go. They get near the surface and they run deep into the darkness the more the light shines. Creating food for masses, creating eyes for blind people, ears for deaf people, vocal chords for people who couldn't speak, legs and arms and organs, raising people from the dead...that's not enough? Jesus said it was. John 5:36, "Believe Me for the work's sake." How can you explain them? Well Nicodemus explained them, you come from God, nobody can do the signs You do unless he comes from God.

But they were no different than Pharaoh. You remember after all the signs and wonders that Moses did, it says, "Pharaoh hardened his heart." That's the second reality that's so tragic. They're comfortable with others in the darkness and they're consigned to a deeper darkness. The more light you shine on them, the deeper the darkness comes.

I remember reading years ago, Voltaire, the French atheist, and some of his skeptical statements. One of them stuck with me, he said this, "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open marketplace before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle." Well you had a whole generation of Voltaires in Israel. Unbelief will always find a way to reject the truth and drive itself down deeper into darkness. It was that tragic figure Woody Allen who once said, "If God would give me a clear sign, I would believe, like making a large deposit in my name at a Swiss bank," end quote.

The blindness that we'll never see is that which looks only to the darkness for its fellowship and plunges deeper into that darkness when the light appears. Jesus saw this in verse 12, sighing deeply in His spirit. That's such an interesting statement. Only once used in the New Testament, here is that verb, compound form. The simple form is used in chapter 7:34 when He sighed, it's a Greek expression. He sighed over a physical suffering, we read about it in chapter 7, deafness, He sighed. Here it's compound, He's sighing deeply. Stronger emotion over spiritual blindness and over physical suffering. It breaks His heart, that's why He wept when He entered Jerusalem, Luke 19, John 11. He wept at the grave of Lazarus when He saw the power of sin, impact of sin to produce pain. His grief is profound over this hard, hearted, obstinate unbelief in the face of massive evidence, massive signs.

He laments His rejecters' willful ignorance. And He said this, it's a soliloquy, really, speaking to Himself. "Why does this generation seek for a sign? For what reason? What else could possibly be done?" And He sees beyond the Pharisees, "This generation," this *genea*, the people at this time. They were just like their ancestors. Deuteronomy 32:20, they're indicted there. "The Jews, they're a perverse generation, sons in whom is no faithfulness." Psalm 95 adds to that indictment of Israel, "Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." I'm not doing a sign from heaven. I'm not doing another thing. Strong resolute, "Truly I say to you," that phrase is used here and in chapter 3 verse 22 by Mark, and it's an unalterable thing that is about to be said, "No sign will be given to this generation." I wish I could show you the Greek construction on that, it's a conditional clause but it's a very unique conditional clause that if you translated it accurately it would sound like this, "If I give a sign to this generation, may I die." That's how strong that statement is. I'm not giving anymore signs.

And this then is the third thing. The first is the blind are comfortable with the other blind. And they are consigned to deeper blindness. And thirdly, they're condemned to terminal blindness. They're condemned to terminal blindness. That's it. No more.

Now if you were to compare Matthew 16, you can read that on your own, Jesus says a few things that Matthew records that Mark doesn't. Jesus said to them, "You can tell the weather but you can't discern the signs of the times," you remember that statement? You know, you're better meteorologists than you are theologians and you're just primitive at meteorology, but you're really bad at theology. That's why in Matthew 15:14 He called the Pharisees blind leaders of the blind. In Matthew 23 He called them blind guides, fools and hypocrites. He says you can't discern the *kairos*, the seasons, the epochs, you don't get it. You don't know what season this is, this is the time of the Lord's salvation.

Then He says to them, according to Matthew 16, "You're a wicked and adulterous...and He doesn't just say group...generation." That means all you leaders and all this nation that follow you, scathing statement. You'll have one more sign, according to Matthew 16, Jesus said, on the same occasion and it's the sign of Jonah, remember that? A sign of Jonah is given by our Lord in Matthew 12:39 and

40, He says, "As Jonah was in the whale for three days with a great fish, I'm going to be in the ground for three days." That's the only sign you'll be given. No more signs

And when that sign came and the word got back to the leaders of Israel that He had risen from the dead, according to Matthew 28:11 to 15, they called the soldiers in who were guarding the tomb and bribed them to lie about the resurrection. That's fixed darkness. They would deny it when they knew it happened.

To be in the dark is to be comfortable only with those who are in the dark. To be consigned to deeper darkness, literally to be condemned to everlasting darkness. Verse 13, two words, we'll leave it there, "Leaving them." That was it. Abandoned them. Like Romans 1, Gave them up, gave them up, gave them up... very symbolic action. Last encounter with them in Galilee, leaving them.

That's tragic, isn't it? The whole world is full of people like this who live in the darkness. Oh, they may think they are spiritual and they have transcended and they are mystically aware of the spiritual realm. The truth is, they are in total darkness and they are consigned to even deeper darkness and they are condemned to permanent eternal darkness.

On the other hand, rather than the blind who will never see, there are the blind who will see and we'll look at them next time. That's our group.

Lord, again it's so wonderful to dig in to Your Word and its treasures are inexhaustible. Another day, another experience with our Lord. Thank You for the truth that it conveys that brings to us, we cherish it, we thank You for it. Lord, we thank You that You have promised that whoever comes to me will not walk in darkness, I am the light of the world. Whoever comes to Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Light is life, light is truth. Thank You, Lord, that You still are pleading with us. There are people here who are in the darkness but the darkness is not yet fixed. They may be being exposed to the light, plunging into deeper darkness and headed toward everlasting darkness. But, Lord, we would pray that You would be gracious to them and may they turn and come to the light, the one who is light, the only one who leads out of the darkness, the Lord Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Draw men to Him now and women, young people out of that darkness, rescue them from that outer darkness, that everlasting darkness. We thank You, Lord, for doing that for so many here. Thank You that we were once darkness and now are light. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Your dear Son. We thank You for that. Thank You for that gift of grace and mercy and may we live lives of gratitude in all that we do, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Before you go, just to comment. The prayer room is open for anyone who wants some spiritual counsel or prayer or help in this matter of salvation, church membership, baptism, any spiritual need, you're welcome to come.

Let me just give a benediction and we'll let you go.

Father, we ask even as the psalmist did, how long, O Lord, will Your wrath hide itself? Lord, we pray that Your grace will continue to be extended so that others may come to the light and bless Your name forever and ever. Use us in that, we pray and give You the glory. Amen.

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