

Beware

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 June 2012

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0:00] Open up your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 8. Chapter 8 is the middle of the Gospel of Mark.! We're right in the middle. And we're going to cover several verses this morning.

We're going to cover verses 1 through 21 this morning, but I'll try not to take too long. Every Sunday morning, just about, Nate says, Dad, is your sermon long today or is it short today?

And I don't know that I've ever preached a short sermon, but none of them are too long. And then a couple of minutes ago, right after the welcome, Calvin whispered to Nate, Is the sermon over now? So, we've got 21 verses.

That's all I'm saying, okay? So Mark, chapter 8, beginning in verse 1. I ask you guys to stand in honor of God's Word. Let's read. Mark writes, 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?

[1:15] 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. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

And there were about 4,000 people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with the disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.

And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.

And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, Watch out.

[2:24] Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

Do you not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see? And having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

And they said to him, Twelve. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, Seven. And he said to them, Do you not yet understand?

Let's pray. God, we do ask you to come and take your word by your spirit. Open our eyes to understand it and open our hearts to receive it. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. I know that this is a fairly long passage, but it does divide up neatly into three parts. Where we see first Jesus feeding the crowd in verses 1-10, and then we see him fighting with the Pharisees in verses 10-13, and then in verses 14-21, we find him teaching his disciples.

[3:42] So if you want to remember, basic outline of the passage that we're looking at today, remember that he's feeding people, he's fighting people, and he's teaching people. He's feeding the crowds, fighting with the Pharisees, and teaching his disciples.

Now, last week, I showed you a map because Jesus has been on this journey with his disciples, a journey which he began in Capernaum, which is kind of his home base for operations in Galilee. And they left. They left not only Galilee, but they left Israel, and they went northwest to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. And we're told that Jesus wanted to be alone during that time period. He didn't want to be greatly bothered by people, and so he tried to keep it a secret where he was because he wanted to spend the time there teaching his disciples. He is about to begin his march toward Jerusalem.

And in fact, next week, we'll see him begin to teach his disciples in detail about his impending death. But he is about to move towards Jerusalem, his death, his resurrection, and that final week that will take up so much of the Gospel of Mark.

[4:47] He's headed in that direction. And before he begins that sort of final phase of his earthly life, he wants to spend some time with his disciples teaching them. And he decides to do that in this trip where he leaves Israel.

Because, as we've seen over the last couple of weeks, one of the things that he's teaching his disciples is that with the ushering in of the New Covenant under his ministry, with the beginning of the New Covenant, the Gospel is going to begin to move out beyond the borders of Israel.

It's going to begin to go out into the Gentile world. And he wants them to understand that. So he takes this trip. And you can see the red lines are sort of maroon on there.

I don't know what color they are. But you can see he began in Capernaum. He traveled up around Tyre and Sidon. And then last week, he turned to come back to the Sea of Galilee. But he didn't take the shortest route, which would have been to just trace his route toward there.

Instead, he takes sort of a roundabout way, and he goes all the way around to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, so that he is still technically in Gentile territory.

[5:50] He's in the territory known as the Decapolis, or the Ten Cities is what it means literally. So that's where he is when we open up in chapter 8. He's there in the Decapolis.

And he performs this great miracle in verses 1 through 10, one that is a repeat of probably his largest miracle, the feeding of the 5,000, which is really the feeding of the 20,000 or 25,000, or something along those lines.

Now he repeats that, but on a smaller scale. Instead of feeding 20,000 or more, he feeds a smaller group that's still large of 4,000 people using a measly amount of bread and fish.

So he's repeating on a smaller scale one of his largest miracles, but he's doing it again in Gentile territory. And then he's going to move on from there, and we're told that he goes to the district of Dalmanutha, which I had trouble discovering and figuring out exactly where it was as I was looking through my Bible, because nobody really knows for sure where Dalmanutha is.

It's not really mentioned anywhere else. But thankfully, Matthew gives another name for this location so that we can figure out that where Jesus went was to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, back into Israel, back into Jewish territory, and he's there for a very short time.

[7:03] We're not sure exactly how long, but a very short time. He has a confrontation with the Pharisees before he gets back in a boat to head to the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

So he's taking a kind of a strange route in our passage that we're looking at, crosses the sea, argues, gets in a fight, heads back across the sea, but not to the exact same location.

So those are the things that are happening. And in the midst of all of these things that are happening, Jesus gives to us, and Mark helps us to see, three warnings.

He warns us of three dangers that I think can creep into our lives and that we can fall prey to. First, he warns us about the danger of seeking after signs, which the Pharisees are guilty of.

And then he warns his disciples about the dangers of false teaching. And then after that, he warns us about the dangers of misunderstanding his teaching.

[7:59] So I want us to look at this text and see those three warnings and then see the remedy for those warnings. I said in verses 1 through 10, he performs this great miracle, which really sets the stage for his confrontation with the Pharisees in verses 11, 12, and 13.

So we're going to jump in at verse 11. We're told that the Pharisees came. So he's on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He's in this district of Dalmanutha. He's in Israel. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him.

Now remember, he hasn't been there long. He's just landed. They hear that he's there. And the first thing, first order of business for the Pharisees is to argue with him, to dispute with him. That's what they were doing with him before he went on this long trip.

They argued with him about his disciples. Why don't your disciples wash their hands? Why don't they follow all the traditions of the elders? And it really frustrated Jesus. And he took off on this trip through Gentile territory. Now he sets foot back on Israelite soil.

And the first thing that happens, these same religious leaders come to him and they begin to argue with him again. But the argument now is different. It says they came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.

[9:12] Now, that seems like a strange request initially when you first read it. I mean, has not Jesus already performed enough miracles? He's performed miracles in their presence over and over.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus began his ministry in earnest in Galilee in the synagogue.

The Pharisees were in charge of the synagogue. They were there. He healed a man.

He cast out a demon. That's day one. They've seen him at work. They have been there on the fringes, Mark tells us, over and over, watching him, taking note of all the things that he's able to do. And they've never questioned his ability to work miracles. They've never questioned that. And now they come and they demand a sign from him. That's one of the reasons.

I don't think that the Pharisees here are necessarily demanding that Jesus perform another miracle. We see the word sign and sometimes we assume that it's a reference to a miracle.

[10:10] In fact, that's the way that John uses the word sign. Throughout his Gospel, if John's going to talk about a miracle, nine times out of ten, he's going to call it a sign. But that's not the word that Mark normally uses to describe a miracle.

Mark normally uses a word that just means power or a display of power to describe miracles. But here Mark says that the Pharisees came seeking a sign. And then he adds an important qualification.

A sign from heaven. I don't think the Pharisees are coming to Jesus and say, listen, if you want us to really believe all the things that you're claiming, we want you to do a miracle for us.

They've seen miracles. They don't have a problem with Jesus as a powerful worker. They want to see Jesus provide evidence from heaven, which is another way, a Jewish colloquialism for saying, from God.

Show us proof from God Himself that you are who you claim to be. The miracles are not enough. Your teaching is not enough. We need absolute proof from God Himself that you are the Messiah.

[11:15] They demand it, we're told. But we sometimes do the same thing. We are often guilty of saying to God, just give me a sign that this is what you want me to do.

Give me a sign that you are who you claim to be. Just show me in some way. Or sometimes we approach trying to reach our lost family and our lost friend by showing them signs.

Again, not miracles, but signs. And so we will work very hard and we will try to argue our best to try to prove that the Bible is true, to try to prove that Jesus is who He claims to be.

And all the while, when Jesus is asked to do that very thing, to prove who He is, Jesus doesn't respond by attempting to prove it.

Jesus responds with frustration. In verse 12, we're told that He sighed deeply in His Spirit. We saw this same word last week when Jesus healed the deaf man, the deaf mute.

[12:23] And we're told that before Jesus healed him, that He sighed. And I told you then that this word expresses a kind of groaning, a kind of anguish and frustration.

That's what it shows us. This is the same word I told you that is used in Romans chapter 8. We're told that all of creation is groaning. It's groaning because of the weight of sin and the weight of the fall upon it.

Well, now here Jesus sighs deeply. It's the same word, but it's strengthened. In fact, in Greek, a lot of times, if you want to strengthen a verb, if you want to add emphasis to a verb, you just add a prefix on the front of it.

And that's exactly what we have here. We have the same verb that we see here, that we see in chapter 7 when Jesus heals the deaf mute, except that there's a prefix added onto it, which means that it's intensified, which is why most of our translations say something like, He sighed deeply. He's really frustrated. And this is deep down. He sighed deeply in His spirit. He's frustrated with His own people. He's frustrated with the Jewish people.

[13:35] He's frustrated in particular with their leaders, with their religious leaders. They demand a sign. And He replies in frustration, in anguish, He replies, Why?

Why does this generation seek a sign? And that word generation, I think, in this context, means why does this people, why does this race, why do the Jewish leaders, He's saying, why are you demanding signs?

Why do you want proof? And then He says, Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.

I don't think we're to take away from this the idea that signs are a bad thing. They're not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, we see throughout the book of Acts, we see the apostles offering various signs via miracles, but we see the apostles offering various signs which serve as further proof for the gospel, which come behind the proclamation of the gospel and help and strengthen people's faith. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us that the word of Christ was proclaimed through the apostles, through the means of various signs and through preaching. So the signs in and of themselves, I don't think are necessarily a bad thing.

[14:59] In fact, while Mark tells us that Jesus says, no sign will be given to this generation, Matthew gives us the full quotation from Jesus where Jesus says, no sign will be given to this generation except the sign of Jonah.

What is the sign of Jonah? Well, Jesus tells us. He tells us in the gospel of Matthew that the sign, He says, no sign will be given to this generation except the sign of Jonah.

And He says, just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be buried, will be dead for three days.

The only sign that Jesus offers, really, to the Jewish people. And I think the only real actual evidence and proof for the claims of Christ that we find put out there in the New Testament is the resurrection of Christ.

So Paul is fine with saying in 1 Corinthians 15, he says that after Jesus was raised, He appeared to Peter, He appeared to the other disciples, and Paul says He appeared to 500 other people, most of whom are still alive.

[16:07] In other words, if you don't believe me about the resurrection or if you have your doubts about it, there are over 500 people who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and they're alive. You can talk to them, Paul says.

But that's the only sign. It's the only sign that they'll be given. There's nothing wrong with signs in and of themselves. The problem is that they demand a sign.

The problem is with sign seeking. Because I'm firmly convinced that the signs that are often provided are there to strengthen faith.

They're there to help us to see our great need for our faith to grow. But when you demand a sign before you will believe, no sign will be given.

Jesus says, Beware of sign seeking. Beware of demanding proof that God is who He claims to be or that He demands what He demands.

[17:09] Beware of it. And the antidote to sign seeking, the way to protect yourself against sign seeking, is to begin to trust in the Word of God. Rather than asking God to provide some sort of proof for His calling of you, or some sort of proof for what He wants you to do,

instead of that, trust His Word.

In fact, I want you to turn over to the passage we read earlier in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, where Paul begins in verse 18 by saying that the Word, note that, the Word of the cross, that is the Gospel Word, is folly or foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

So that's what Paul holds up. He holds up the Word of Christ or the Word of the cross, the Gospel Word that we have now in our New Testaments. He says, the Word of God is power to us, foolishness to the lost.

And then he goes down in verse 22 and he says something that should sound familiar to us in light of Mark chapter 8. He says, Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom.

But we preach what? The Word of the cross. Christ crucified, which is a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, that is to believers, whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[18:38] If you want to free yourself from the weakness of demanding signs and asking God for proof all the time, the way to do that is to trust in this book, to trust in this Word.

God has no need of providing additional proofs when you begin to trust what He says. It is a dangerous, dangerous thing to constantly be saying to God, I know, I know that I felt that you called me to do this thing, but my faith is lacking and so I just need you to give me some sort of sign that you really want me to do this.

No. Look to His Word and you'll see what He requires you to do. You'll see what He requires you to believe. So there is a great danger that Jesus and that Mark wants us to be aware of in seeking after signs because once you begin to demand signs, nothing's going to be enough.

Remember, Jesus has just duplicated one of His largest miracles. Now He has fed multitudes twice. He has performed multiple miracles with many of these Pharisees present.

They've seen miracles. It's never enough. They want more. They want something from heaven. They want something from God. I don't know what they want. Do they want an audible voice? I don't know, but they want more.

[19:58] Once you begin seeking signs, once you begin to base your faith upon what you can see, it begins to grow weaker and weaker and weaker. It's never enough.

Beware of seeking signs and instead trust in the revealed Word of God. And there's more. Verse 13 tells us that He left them, that is the Pharisees, and He got into a boat again and He went to the other side.

And now as He's traveling with the disciples, as He reaches the shore to the other side, He has a discussion with His disciples. Here's the context. It says, Now they, that means the disciples, they had forgotten to bring bread and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

That's a big deal, okay? Because where they are on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, where they are is a fruitful land. Israel is a fruitful land.

I mean, we may not think of it as fruitful because we picture it as deserts, but it's a fruitful land. There's bread to be had there. They're heading across to a more desolate area.

[21:05] Remember what He said earlier when He was going to feed the 4,000? And they said, How are we going to feed these people in this desolate place? Because on that side of the Sea of Galilee, it's desolate.

It's harder to get bread. The cities are more spread out. And even in those cities, it might be more difficult to find what they need. And now, here they are, they're headed over and they realize, we forgot to buy our stuff while we were there.

They probably weren't there long enough to buy anything. We forgot to get more bread. So they think that they're in trouble. They're in a difficult situation because they're headed to a place where it's going to be tough to get any food and they don't have enough food.

They got one loaf for all of them. They don't know how long they're going to be there. They're a little frightened. And then Jesus begins to teach them.

In the middle of their fear, He begins to teach them. He says, watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

[22:06] And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. So they don't get it. They don't understand what He's saying. And Jesus, aware of their failure to understand, says to them, why are you discussing the fact that you don't have any bread?

Why are you even talking about this? Do you not yet perceive or understand or your hearts hardened having eyes? Do you not see? Having ears? Do you not hear? Do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the 5,000?

How many baskets full of pieces did you take up? Twelve. And the seven for the 4,000? How many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? Seven. And then He says, do you not yet understand?

They don't know what He means when He says, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. Leaven, of course, is yeast.

It works its way through the bread. It causes the bread to grow. It spreads throughout. Leaven is known for its ability to move out and infect everything, everything of which it's a part.

[23:11] And we have to search and begin to ask what, they don't understand what He means by leaven, but what does He mean by that? Maybe by beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, maybe He means they're sign-seeking because they were just seeking a sign.

Maybe He means don't be like the Pharisees and seek after signs. No, that's, I don't think that's what He means. Maybe He's referring to their legalism because that's what frustrated Him before, before He went on this trip was their legalism and their adherence to tradition rather than to the Word of God.

So maybe it's His frustration with their legalism. That's not what He means by the leaven of the Pharisees. The Gospel of Matthew tells us. It tells us that they later on understood that He was speaking of the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

He's warning them to beware of the things that they teach. Beware of false teaching. It's everywhere. And they are surrounded by it.

The Pharisees' false teaching was bound up with legalism, was bound up with the traditions, but they refused because of all those things to see who Christ was, they refused to accept Him for who He claimed to be.

[24:30] And then you have on the other hand the other religious leaders, the Sadducees, who I think Jesus probably has in mind when He says to beware of Herod. In other words, beware of those who are in political power. In the Gospel of Matthew, He does say, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And the Sadducees had aligned themselves with the political rulers of the day. So I think Jesus is saying, beware of the teaching of the Pharisees. Beware of those who would prop themselves up and say that they are the great teachers and beware of the teaching of those who have power and are in a place of political influence.

Whether He calls them Herod or Sadducees doesn't matter. The point is still the same. Beware of both groups. Beware of all false teaching because it can come at you from any angle.

It can sprout at any place. In fact, turn over to the letter of 1 John, not the Gospel of John. Turn towards the end of your New Testament. I want you to hear this very broad warning from John on false teaching in 1 John chapter 4.

In verse 1, John tells the readers of his letter, he says, Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

[25:47] Why? For many false prophets have gone out into the world the world. The world is full of false prophets. It's a dangerous place.

There's false teaching all around us and it will not always come from the expected locations. We have come to expect false teaching from televangelists, haven't we? I would assume that most of you have come to expect them to be, most of them to be false teachers.

We've come to just sort of expect that. We've come to expect false teaching to come out of other religions. Otherwise, they wouldn't be other religions, right? They would be Christianity. So we expect false teaching to come from there but it can crop up anywhere.

In fact, if you look over in the book of Acts, you don't have to turn there if you don't want to. But in the book of Acts, Paul calls the Ephesian elders, that is, he calls the pastors of the church in Ephesus to come and have a meeting with him and he begins to give them some warnings. I want you to listen to one of the things that he says to them. He says, I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

[26:57] And, he says, from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. Pastors within the church, he says, will rise up and they will teach twisted things and they will draw people after them.

pastors within the church. It's not always out there. The danger is not always away from us. The danger is within us. Don't, don't believe what I say.

Don't believe everything that I tell you. Test it by the word. Look to see how closely I align myself with the word of God.

Do I veer from it? In any of it, do I draw people away to myself? Am I creating a group around me? If so, then something's wrong. These elders draw people away to themselves.

John, in 1 John chapter 4, warns that the primary problem that false teachers make is they preach false Christs. They don't accept the truth about who Christ is. Jesus warns His disciples, many will come and there will be many false Christs and He says, many will come in My name.

[28:14] It's not always out there. It could arise from within. It doesn't matter whether there are 20 of us or 200 of us or 2,000 of us. It can arise from within.

Always, always be aware of false teaching. The antidote to false teaching once again is the word. To devote yourself to the word and test everything by the word. How do you know whether or not someone is teaching the truth about who Christ is?

You just test it with this. Is what they say about Jesus, does it line up with the scriptures? Does what they say about, say, the atonement or the cross, does it line up with what the New Testament teaches us?

Is it in line with the word of God? We have a tendency, I think, and this is why I so frequently find myself addressing the issue of false teaching and false doctrine.

[29:22] Because we live in a day and we live in an age in which people will assume that because a person is nice and kind or because they are engaging or because they seem to care about you or because they seem to really believe in what they are saying that they should be trusted.

And that's not necessarily the case. In Romans chapter 10, Paul laments the failure of his kinsmen, of the Jewish people as a whole, to embrace the gospel.

He is lamenting that. And he says, brothers, my heart's, my prayer for them and my heart's desire is that they might be saved. Why? Because they're not saved.

And then he says, for they have a zeal for God. They have passion for God. And then he says, but not according to knowledge.

Why? He goes on to say, because seeking to establish their own righteousness. Why? Because they misunderstand the gospel. They don't accept the gospel of Christ crucified in their place, on their behalf.

[30:34] they try to establish their own righteousness. And Paul says, despite all of their zeal, despite all of their religious works, despite all of their sincerity and passion, they are not saved.

And I pray that they will be saved because they lack knowledge. In other words, they haven't embraced the truth. They've embraced false teaching. Be careful.

It can arise from within and it can arise from those who seem very, very sincere. it's all around us. Test everything by the scriptures.

And then the last warning that I think we're meant to see in this text, the last thing that we're to be aware of, is not just false teaching out there or not just false teaching arising from among us, but a misunderstanding that's within us individually.

again, he says to them in verse 17, we just read this, he says, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not perceive? Do you not understand? Are your hearts hardened?

[31:42] Having eyes, do you not see? Having ears, do you not hear? Do you not remember? And then he says in verse 21, do you not yet understand? understand. So there are those who simply teach things that are untrue and there are those, and I think that we are far more likely to be among this group, and there are those who hear the truth but don't have ears to hear, who see the truth but don't have eyes to really see, and so we don't understand.

Now we are all, I know, at various levels in our walk with Christ. I understand that. Some of you are more mature than others. Some of you are at the beginning of your walk with Christ and your knowledge of the Scriptures is fairly limited, or maybe you'd say, I've been a Christian for a while but I really have not been plugged into a place where I'm really being taught the Bible and so even still your knowledge of the Scriptures is low but you're growing in it.

For some of you, you're much further along and you have a great knowledge of the Scriptures. Most of us are probably somewhere in between, somewhere along this continuum, and I get that, I understand.

We're always growing in our understanding but there's always the danger that we will misunderstand the Word. In fact, most of the problems that arise in churches, they come from two things.

Either one, a refusal to obey the Word, which is probably the most common, or two, a misunderstanding understanding of the Word. See, I've been asked dozens of times by different people, why, if we're all reading the same Bible and we all have the same Holy Spirit living within us as believers, why do we keep coming to such different interpretations of the Bible?

[33:32] Why is that the case? Why, Chris, do you believe this in this other pastor over here that I think loves the Lord and is really in His Word? He says something different from what you say.

I mean, there are people that I would personally consider heroes in the faith, but on certain issues of doctrine, I differ with them and I disagree with them. Why? Why would two people who've devoted their lives to the study of the Word, who've devoted themselves to teaching the Word to other people, who are looking at the same book, who have the same spirit within them, to illumine their minds, why would we come to different interpretations of the Bible?

What's happening there? And if that's the case for preachers and teachers, how much more the case for those who don't get to devote their whole day in the course of days at a time in the course of a week to studying the Word, how does that happen?

Why does that happen? Why is it so frequent? And the answer's really simple. We're not a whole lot different than the disciples. We are sinful people. And sin is not something that affects merely your behavior.

It's not something that merely affects the way that you feel about things. Sin affects your mind. One of the things we've got to understand is that when Adam and Eve fell, everything about who they were and therefore everything about who we are as human beings was affected by the fall.

[34:48] And one of the things that was affected by the fall is our brains, believe it or not. Our brains do not work as they were designed to work in the Garden of Eden.

Our brains are impacted by sin. And so we don't think clearly all the time. We don't come to the right conclusions all the time. We hang on to bad information.

We hang on to bad ideas. And sometimes, despite all of our efforts to the contrary, sometimes we bring those bad ideas and those misconceptions to our study of the Scripture.

And so even the greatest teachers of the Scriptures are fallen sinful people and come to the wrong conclusion sometimes and misunderstand things. And Jesus, in warning His disciples and us, tells us, you're all prone to it.

Do you still, do you not yet understand? Here I've been, He's been walking with His disciples. They've seen these great miracles. Isn't it amazing? This text begins at the beginning of chapter 8 with His disciples actually really wondering how they're going to feed people in the wilderness.

[35:59] Well, I don't know, guys. Maybe He'll do what He did a couple of chapters ago and feed all these people with a couple of loaves. I don't know. I'm just guessing here. Right? And now here they are just a few verses later in the boat. They got one loaf of bread and they're

concerned that they're not going to have anything to eat.

What's going to happen? Well, I don't know. I mean, He fed thousands with seven. I'm pretty sure He can feed twelve with one. That's probably not going to be a bit of a problem for them. I mean, their level of understanding, misunderstanding is incredible sometimes.

And then when Jesus tells them something that is clearly not meant to be taken literally, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. They're thinking something along the lines of, gosh, we have this one loaf.

Where did it come from? And if we go over there and we get bread, what if the bread's got the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod? I mean, how do we know? Seriously. I mean, it's not like Jesus made up this little saying about leaven.

It's used symbolically all the time. I mean, you can even read in writings of rabbis that predate Jesus or of religious teachers that predate Jesus. They use this image of leaven symbolically. It's not like Jesus is grabbing, making up symbols on His own.

[37:05] This is common, but they still don't get it. We're not a lot different, are we? I mean, sometimes. Sometimes it's right here in the Word, right in front of us.

But because we come to the Word expecting to find something different than what's there, we will read onto it the thing that we expect to find. Don't we?

Because the disciples are consumed at this moment with literal bread, Jesus says something that is clearly symbolic, and they impose their own present concerns upon what Jesus says, and they don't get it.

And we do it all the time. So what's the antidote to that? In some ways, there's no final, ultimate antidote in this life because we are fallen, we're sinful, we're going to get things wrong.

So in some ways, I can't say, well, here's the cure for misunderstanding the Scriptures because you're still going to misunderstand it sometimes, and I know that. But there is a very simple way to avoid a lot of frequent misunderstanding of Scripture, and it's so easy.

[38:16] Read it over and over and over and over. It sounds pretty elementary, sounds pretty basic, but when I say read it over and over, I mean read the whole thing over and over and over.

Here's what starts to happen when you read the whole Bible, and not just once, but you read it frequently. You begin to see connections that you would have really never seen before.

So sometimes I'm reading the New Testament and I come up on a phrase and I go, I know that phrase. I know that. Isaiah said that somewhere.

I know he said that somewhere. So I'll go and I'll look it up and I'll find it in Isaiah and then I'll read the chapter in Isaiah and I, aha, now I understand what he was saying. But if I hadn't read Isaiah enough times, I don't have the whole book of Isaiah memorized, but if I hadn't read it enough times that it's somewhere there in my brain, I'd have never caught on to that.

Or sometimes it's not a direct quotation, sometimes it's just an allusion to another part of Scripture and you won't catch it if you haven't read it over and over. You'll never catch all those things and you won't understand it.

[39:25] Or, maybe you'll do something like what we're doing here. We're working our way through the Gospel of Mark a few verses at a time. Sometimes just four or five verses, sometimes 21, but we're working our way through the Gospel of Mark a few verses at a time.

And if you haven't ever read the Gospel of Mark before, you'll misunderstand things because you don't know what he says later on that helps you understand what he's saying right here. See, many times so much of what I tell you about the Gospel of Mark is really based upon what I know is coming up in the next few chapters.

But if you haven't read the Gospel of Mark enough times and you're reading chapter 8 or chapter 7, you don't know what's in chapter 10, you'll misunderstand it. See, the easiest, the easiest way to avoid misunderstanding the Word is to spend more and more and more time in the Word.

And what you will find is that your theology begins to be shaped by all the Scripture and not just by a couple of verses that you were taught to memorize for this particular doctrine.

We'll quote this when you talk about this. Well, that's fine. I can, you can go to John 1.1 if you talk about the divinity of Christ, but it might be far more effective if you just show how Christ

demonstrates that He's the great I Am and just look at Lord all over, I Am all over the Old Testament.

[40:46] That might be an easier way to talk about the divinity of Christ rather than having to argue with somebody about the meaning of one verse. Just look at the whole big picture. Or, in understanding the cross of Christ, it's very helpful.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, you've got to love it where he says that Christ became sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of... There's the atonement bound up in one verse. Christ taking our sin upon Himself, us receiving the righteousness of Christ as a gift.

That's a great verse, but what would help you in that would be to understand the entire sacrificial system, to understand the whole issue of the Passover and the Lamb being offered in the place of the people.

Passover. You see what I'm saying? It's great to memorize individual verses. All of us should do it. But you only really begin to understand those individual verses when you know this whole thing. You want to avoid misunderstanding? You don't have to get smarter. You don't have to learn Greek and Hebrew. You just have to read over and over and over again.

[41:52] Beware. Beware, he says, over and over and over throughout the Scriptures we're told to beware. And here in this text I think that what Mark wants us to see and watch out for in our own lives is this sign-seeking, false teaching, and misunderstanding.

And the antidote to all of those things is the word of the cross. Foolishness and folly to the world, but to us power of God. Let's pray.