LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

Acts 13 :4-52

Not everyone wants to hear the truth

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 18, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We are in the book of Acts, so open your Bibles there to Acts chapter 13. All right, let's pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity this morning to come together as the body of Christ and just open our hearts to your Word, to the ministry of your Holy Spirit. Lord, as you teach us and as you instruct us from your Word, we just want to be students and grow in grace and understanding. So, Lord, fill us with all that you desire to say.

We give you this time in Jesus' precious name. And all God's people said, Amen. All right, last week you'll remember we studied about the calling of Paul and Barnabas, and that took the first three verses. We talked about how important it is to know your calling, to know that you've been called by the Lord and that ministry is not just your own idea. This whole idea of the calling of the Lord is really kind of re-emphasized in the first verse that we're looking at here this morning, which is verse 4, which says, so, notice this, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, it says they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

And so, you know, you see that emphasis, you see that understanding here in this passage that these guys were being sent out by the Holy Spirit. Yes, the church laid hands on them. Yes, the church said, all right, go. And even today, you know, we may support people who go out, but ultimately they've got to be sent out by the Holy Spirit. They've got to.

I mean, if you're not sure that you're starting a ministry and you're not sure that it's the Holy Spirit who has, you know, sent you out to do that, boy, I tell you, just go back and get that figured out first because that just takes care of a multitude of issues. And, you know, this whole idea of the necessity of the Holy Spirit. Do you guys remember when, for those of you that were here when we started the book of Acts, you know that we talked about the fact that this book is about the Holy Spirit. It's called the Acts of the Apostles, but it is a book about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. Empowering, strengthening, sending, using, guiding, directing, you know.

And we're going to see that here in the rest of this chapter too. We're told that they went down to Seleucia, which was a city on the coast of the Mediterranean. From there, they sailed to Cyprus. Let me show you a map here on the screen. You can kind of see that they started off in Antioch.

We talked to you last week about the fact that the Christian church was really happening in Antioch after the persecution of believers in Jerusalem. So they went to this coastal city of Seleucia and then hopped on a boat and sailed out to the island of Cyprus, which by the way, was where Barnabas was raised. So this was kind of a logical first step in their journey. So at verse 5, we're told that when they arrived at Seleucus, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues, notice that's plural, of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

So they came into the first port city of Cyprus there. And as you can kind of see on the map, that city is really the first one you come to when you sail over. And we're told here that they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And the fact that you hear of plural synagogues tells you that not only is this a large city, but this is also a fairly healthy Jewish population on the island of Cyprus, because there are multiple synagogues. And this was Paul's tradition when he arrived into a new area, to reach out to the Jews first and then the Gentiles.

You'll notice that it also says at the end of verse 5, they had John to assist them. This is John Mark. He's a young man at this time. He's the author of the gospel of Mark. But at this time, he is a little wet behind the ears.

And we're going to find out what happens related to John in just a few verses. Verse 6 goes on and says, when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, and you can see on the map that Paphos is on the other side, on the west side of the island. It says they came upon a certain magician. And your Bible may say sorcerer, and that's probably a little better translation, because here in America, we tend to hear the word magician, and we think of somebody who grabs a deck of cards and says, you know, pick a card, any card. Or something like that.

Or who, you know, pulls a rabbit out of a hat or something, you know, dumb like that. But this Greek word is something very different. In fact, you'll notice that Luke goes on to refer to him as a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. Now, you need to understand the difference between, or what a proconsul was, because this was a high-ranking Roman official, different from a procurator like Pontius Pilate.

A procurator is put into his position by the emperor. A proconsul is put into his position through a vote of the Roman Senate. And he was an important man who managed an entire Roman province. And this particular man is over the island of Cyprus. And he was an intelligent man who wanted to hear what Paul and Barnabas had to say.

The problem was, he had someone who was kind of assisting him, who was this man, this Jewish false prophet, who was kind of always in the proconsul's ear. And we're told in verse 8, But Elimus, the magician, for that is the meaning of his name, opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Now, once again, this is a man who is actively opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He doesn't want the proconsul to hear the gospel message, and so he's actively standing in the way. We don't know exactly what he's doing.

But he's doing something that is trying to hinder the proconsul from hearing the gospel. And you've got to know, this is the MO of the enemy. This is the work of Satan, if you will. And so, here is this false enchanter, if you will, who is doing his level best to keep the proconsul from hearing what Paul and Barnabas have to say. And I want you to notice what happens.

But it says, But Saul, who was also called Paul, and so this is that place in the Bible where they switch from his Hebrew name, Saul, to the Roman pronunciation, because now he's essentially out doing the work of reaching the Gentiles. So they're going to call him Paul from this point on. It says, Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? It almost sounds like Paul is talking directly to Satan, doesn't it? Yeah, well, and I think we can be pretty sure that that's probably where Elimas got his abilities.

I want you to remember, when the Bible uses this word magician or sorcerer, it's, by the way, it's the Greek word magos. It's actually where we get the word magi, because it can refer to an astrologer. It can refer, you know, to a lot of respectable people. But it can also refer to what the way Luke is referring here to this man as a false prophet or a false enchanter. And these people didn't just do sleight of hands tricks.

They were invested with the power of the enemy, and they could do genuine supernatural things. You'll remember back in Acts chapter four, Peter dealt with, we saw another man by the name of Simon, in fact, who was a sorcerer. That's the same term that is used there. And it says that he used to impress all the people with his power. Well, where does that power come from?

It comes from the enemy, and Paul recognizes that. So he literally speaks to the enemy. He, you know, filled with the Holy Spirit. He says, look at this in verse 11. He says, The hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time.

And immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the procounsel believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord." Pretty cool, huh? You know, wouldn't you like that ability to go around just kind of making people blind? Well, we'll talk about that in just a second here. But I want you first to notice a phrase that Luke uses when Paul begins to confront this man.

He says again, Paul filled with the Holy Spirit. Do you guys remember what that means? That is a term that is used to describe a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit to empower. And this is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now guys, you'll remember, we talked about this back when we were introduced to the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 1.

We saw the falling of the Spirit, the baptism of the Spirit in Acts chapter 2. And we explained the fact that this is different from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Because the indwelling of the Holy Spirit happens when you come to faith in Jesus Christ. You receive the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. In other words, His Spirit literally comes to dwell inside of you, and that is the process by which you are born again.

That happens once. You don't get born again twice, or five times, or ten times. You receive that born again experience once, and you're made a child of God. The baptism of the Holy Spirit happens multiple times. It happens whenever the power from the Spirit is needed.

And that's why Luke says, Paul filled with the Holy Spirit. The Greek is in the present tense. It doesn't mean Paul having been filled with the Holy Spirit. It means Paul, now again and afresh, filled with the Holy Spirit, said. So this is a current, present filling of the Holy Spirit in the Apostle Paul, equipping him to deal with this sorcerer who is standing in the way of the procounsel hearing the Word of God.

Right? So, you know, it's a beautiful thing that God does in our lives when we need power. And you'll remember that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is all about power. Remember what Jesus said in Acts chapter 1? You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

He didn't say you'll receive salvation. That had already happened. Right? On the very evening of the resurrection, when he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. No, he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

So this is the power of God that is happening here in this situation. And what that tells us is that this wasn't Paul's decision to arbitrarily strike this man with blindness. Because we don't have that power. We can't use God's power arbitrarily. In other words, what Paul is doing here is he's responding in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

It's the Spirit moving upon him to do what he's doing. If we had the power to arbitrarily inflict blindness, we'd all be blind. Because somebody somewhere would have struck us with blindness. Right? You know, just because they didn't like you very much or whatever.

So he's acting out of obedience to the Lord. Well, what's the result? What's the result? Well, it's not Elimas walking around blind. Because guys, he was already blind.

Elimas was already blind. He was spiritually blind. What God was doing is simply showing him that, you know, he's kind of giving him a physical blindness as a picture of what was already going on in his life, which was spiritual blindness. So he's kind of saying, here you go, here's a matched set. You got both of them now.

How does that make you feel? No, that's not the result of what Paul did. The result is that the proconsul believed. Because of this situation, the proconsul responded. And it says he believed.

Now again, this is one of those words where we Americans, in our understanding of the English language, we very often misunderstand and misinterpret what believed means. Sometimes we'll go on, you know, because the Bible uses that word a lot. It even goes on as far as to say that if you believe in Jesus Christ, you will be saved. Right? And so we tell people that and they respond by going, well, yeah, I believe in God.

And they think that believe means I believe he exists. Guys, can I just tell you, believing that God exists will not save you. Satan believes God exists. Right? James tells us the demons believe and shudder.

No. In the Bible, the word believe means to put one's faith and confidence in someone. So when it tells us here that the proconsul believed as a result of what happened, it means that he made that decision at that point to put his faith and confidence in the message of what Paul and Barnabas were saying to him. Because they were obviously talking about the cross of Jesus Christ. And they were telling the proconsul that Jesus died for his sins, to pay for his sins on the cross.

And when this whole thing happened and they saw the power of God manifest against this man who was coming against them, it says he believed, he put his faith and confidence in the work of Jesus. Moving

on. Verse 13. Look with me in your Bible. It says, Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia, which is modern-day Turkey.

We'll show you this now on the map. The arrow tells you the direction that they sailed from the island of Cyprus and went up to that coastal city of Perga, first of all. And then we're suddenly told in the end of this verse, look at this. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem. This is again John Mark.

He's a young man. He's going to grow up. He's going to mature. But for right now, he's a little wet behind the ears. And he got scared.

And he got freaked out. Because a lot of wild, spiritual, wacky things were happening as far as he was concerned. And he just wasn't prepared to deal with it. And so he departed. He literally abandoned them.

Because we're told that John came along to help as an assistant. Well, this move on John Mark's part is actually going to figure very prominently in Paul and Barnabas' second missionary journey. Because after they return home and decide to go out a second time, Barnabas is going to want to take John Mark again. Because Barnabas was an encourager. Plus, John Mark was his relative.

And so they got to talking about it. We'll deal with this when we get to Acts chapter 15. And Barnabas said, let's take John Mark again. Let's give him a second chance. And Paul said, I don't think that's a good idea.

I think he's a liability. And in fact, they could not come to a place of agreement between the two of them. And they decided to part ways. Paul and Barnabas split at that point. And Paul will take a man named Silas and go with him instead.

So what's interesting about this is that this abandonment that we're reading about here by John Mark is going to have unintended consequences down the line. And again, we'll talk more about this. But I have to wonder if this is one of the reasons why when Paul, many years later, was writing to Timothy, he said this on the screen from 1 Timothy chapter 5. He said, do not be hasty in the laying on of hands nor take part in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

So as Paul is giving Timothy guidance and advice, as Timothy is now in a position of leading a fellowship, he simply says, hey, just be careful, Tim, not to lay hands too quickly on people because that can be a problem. I've witnessed how it can be a problem in the past. You know, I've told you guys many times in the past that I was the quintessential too-quickly-raised-up person. I was in my 20s. Sue and I had just come off a very traumatic time in our marriage.

We hadn't, you know, I told you guys before, we didn't walk with the Lord at all in the first five years of our marriage. Didn't go to church. Didn't darken the door of a church. I didn't want to go to a wedding and certainly not a funeral. I didn't want to go to church.

I didn't want to be around a church building. And I made good on that too. Well, then our marriage fell apart and that ended up driving us to the Lord where we surrendered our lives to Jesus. And he brought great healing very quickly in our lives, but about two or three weeks after we patched up our marriage and just, well, I say patched up our marriage. That took a long time.

I will say two or three weeks after we decided we weren't gonna divorce each other, I was the youth leader at the church. Yeah, two or three weeks later. And Sue was alongside me. And that was frankly a very foolish decision on the part of that pastor. I still love that man to this day, but I just got raised up way too quickly.

And I wasn't ready. And it caused a lot of problems in my life and in the body of Christ until I was frankly mature enough. Sometimes I'm not sure I'm still mature enough to pastor a church, but it's been 33 years and I guess I'm in. But, you know, I mean, it just, I was raised up too quickly and I shouldn't have been. It was not a good decision.

And this is wise advice. Be very careful about that. So anyway, let's move on. Verse 14, but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch and Pisidia. Once again, while on the map, we'll show you now where they've landed, which is up on the top of the screen there in Antioch.

Some of you are thinking Antioch, didn't they start off from Antioch? Yes, they did. There were actually several cities named Antioch. You have to keep them straight. This is Antioch, Pisidia.

And again, this is in modern day Turkey, but it says here in the middle of verse 14, and on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. Again, this was the way Paul did things when he came into a new area. After the reading of the law and the prophets, which is what they called what you and I refer to as the Old Testament, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them saying, brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it. In other words, Paul got an invitation to speak. Now remember, he's a former Pharisee.

So he was a very, you know, he was like a very respected individual. Paul had been educated under the very famous Rabbi Gamaliel who was known far and wide. And so he would have been an honored speaker probably in any synagogue. So they invite him to come and speak. And it says in verse 16 that Paul stood up and motioning with his hand, he said, men of Israel and you who fear God.

And that's speaking of Gentiles who had converted to Judaism. He says, listen, the God of this people, Israel, chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt. And with uplifted arm, he led them out of it. And for about 40 years, he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance.

All this took about 450 years. And after that, he gave them judges until Samuel, the prophet who was essentially the last judge. Then they asked for a king and God gave them Saul, the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin for 40 years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king of whom he testified and said, I have found in David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart who will do all my will. You know why Paul was talking about David?

Because he's gonna use the prophetic statements of David that are recorded in the Psalms in just a moment to argue for the Messiah being Jesus. And he'll do that in just a moment. But he goes on to say, of this man's offspring, in other words, of David's offspring, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, as he promised. Now remember, Jesus is that same Hebrew name is Joshua, Yeshua. So he says, God has brought forth the savior from the lineage of David.

His name is Yeshua. And just as he promised, he brought him. And that is Paul's first point. Now he goes on. Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

And as John was finishing his course, he said, what do you suppose that I am? I am not he, in other words, I'm not the Messiah. No, but behold, after me, one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie. So Paul shares the testimony of John the Baptist of the coming of Messiah. He says, brothers, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.

For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have him executed. And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead. And for many days, he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

And now here's where Paul begins to quote David and the prophecies that he gave in Psalms. Verse 32, and we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus as also it is written in the second Psalm. You are my son, today I have begotten

you. And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. Therefore, he also says, or he says rather also in another Psalm, you will not let your holy one see corruption.

They use the word corruption to describe the physical decay of a dead body. You know that, right? When bodies die, they decay. Well, the Bible, the biblical word is corruption. So the body sees corruption.

So he's reminding them that God made, or God made a statement through David saying, you will not let your holy ones see corruption. Well, the Jews weren't sure who that referred to. They just knew that God spoke through David and said somebody would not, their body would not decay, right? Well, he goes on to say in verse 36, he's telling them it obviously can't be about David. He says, for David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, he fell asleep, which is a euphemism for death.

He died and was laid with his fathers, and look at this, and saw corruption. In other words, his body decayed. So obviously this promise wasn't for David. It had to be for someone else. What is he gonna go on and say?

Verse 37, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption, did not see the decay of the body. Why? Because Jesus rose from the grave. So he says in verse 38, let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man, Jesus, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. And by him, everyone who believes is freed, your Bible may say is justified, from everything from which you could not be freed or justified by the law of Moses.

Let's stop there for just a moment. Let me explain what he's saying. This would not have been a tremendously popular message for Jews, because they wanted to believe that the law of Moses was everything they needed. But Paul is telling them here that through Jesus, God has finally made available to them something that the law could not do. And that is bring justification, right?

Forgiveness. And if you wanna think of a good term for justification, it means just as if you've never sinned. And that's really the idea of forgiveness. You see, the law can't do that, because all the law can do is tell you that you're a sinner. In other words, all the law can do is condemn you.

That's all it can do. It can't even show you the way to not be condemned. It just, all the law does in our lives, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not, over and over, here's the law. All it can do is remind you, oh yeah, I've done that. Yeah, and I've done that.

that one too. Yeah, I've done all those. Yeah, that's all it can do. You're condemned. Isn't that good news?

Let's close in prayer. Wouldn't that be a horrible way to end? You're condemned. Well, you see, but the Jews, they were putting their hope in the law, believing that somehow they could be good enough. They could possibly keep the law and be justified before God, righteous in his sight.

But Paul's saying the law could never do that. Never, never. But Jesus can. Here's how. God sent his son to live a sinless life.

And because he was sinless, when they put him on a cross, he was willing then to take the penalty or the punishment or the curse, if you will, that was on you and on me and take it upon himself and bear it on the cross for us, which means he bore our punishment, our judgment. Okay? He bore our judgment. And now that your judgment has been borne by Jesus, you can now be justified with God. And that was something the law could never do.

You with me? That's what he's saying to the Jews. All right? But he's going to add a warning here. And I want you to really take note of this warning in verse 40.

Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about. And he's going to cite an Old Testament prophecy through Habakkuk here. Look, you scoffers. You know who he's talking to. Scoffers.

Be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you. So here's what Paul is saying. He's saying, all right, guys, here's the deal. Jesus came and he died on the cross for your sins. You need to receive him as your Savior.

Because through him, God can accomplish in your life what the law could never accomplish, and that is forgiveness of sins. He can literally take away your judgment. Right? But be warned. Be warned.

Lest you harden your heart and become a scoffer and say, well, I don't believe that. Which, by the way, is a choice. People make a choice to say that. I'm not going to believe. It's not that they can't.

They choose not to. That's why he refers to these people as scoffers. Right? He says, you beware. Beware.

Because the hardening of your heart will make you blind. So blind that when God begins to do a new work, a powerful work, and somebody comes along and tells you about it, you're going to go, I don't believe it. You see? Hardness of heart makes us blind. And that's what he's warning them about.

So in verse 42, it says, as they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. Sounds like they want the same sermon the next Sabbath. So it says, after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you, to the Jews. Since you thrust it aside, notice that, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. And what Paul is doing here is he's quoting a prophecy from the book of Isaiah that is actually speaking of Messiah. Let me show you this on the screen.

Isaiah chapter 49, it says, he says, this is God speaking, it's too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up, and I'm going to insert the word only, the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. God is telling Messiah, this is literally in the Old Testament, 700 years before the birth of Christ, God the Father is speaking to God the Son, and he's saying, it's not enough for you just to reach the Jews. I'm going to make you a light to the nations as well, and you're going to reach the whole world. Now notice, Paul quotes this verse that is spoken to Messiah, and he says, this is our calling.

This is our calling. How can Paul do that? How can Paul take a prophecy that is given about Messiah, the Savior, and say, this is my calling, this is a word to me? Because isn't that what he says? Basically there, look at verse 47 again.

For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, go do this. Well, the reason he can do that is because we are the body of Christ. People, you got to start taking that literally. We are the body of Christ. If a word's been given to Jesus, it's been given to us.

He's the head, we're the body. We're the hands, feet, mouth, eyes, legs, you know. We are the body. If God tells the head, go reach the whole world. You think the body's not going to come along on that particular calling?

Of course we are. So you see, this is why Paul was like, this is our calling, to reach the whole world. So this is a very important sort of a thing, and it says in verse 48, and when the Gentiles heard this, they

began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed, and the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. Happy days, but, but, and there you go, the Jews incited the devout women of high standing, and the leading men of the city stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium, we'll read about what happened there next week, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Now here's what I want to close with, okay, just a few thoughts as we close. You'll notice that this chapter ends by saying that the disciples were filled with joy, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Praise God, good thing, nice way to close. We like that.

But you, I'm sure you saw as we studied through this chapter, there was a whole lot of unbelief going on here in this chapter too. Yeah, sure, faith, joy, wonderful. But all this unbelief, all this determination to refuse to believe, you know? I mean, you know, we saw the example of Elimus, the sorcerer, who actively tried to get the procouncil not to listen to Paul and Barnabas. Then in Antioch, Pisidia, you know, some of the Jews got jealous when they saw the huge crowds that were gathering to hear Paul and Barnabas.

So what did they do? They stirred up trouble, stirred up persecution, and here's the interesting thing, it worked. They drove them out of town. This is not going to be the first time for Paul, or the last. This is going to be, in fact, what happens pretty much everywhere he goes.

But you know, this is what they did, and the reason they did it is because they were responding to the gospel message with a determination to refuse to accept it. Again, it's not that they couldn't accept it, they chose not to. They said, no, I'm not going to believe that. I don't care what you say, you know, I'm not going to believe that, and I'm willing to believe that some of you have run into people who had the same attitude. Now, what did the apostles do?

In verse 51, it says, they shook the dust from their feet against them, and they did that because that's what Jesus told them to do. Let me show you this from Matthew chapter 10 up on the screen. It says, if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town, and that's just what Paul and Barnabas were doing, but they were doing it because the people had stubbornly chosen not to believe. Listen, you don't shake the dust off your feet when somebody's just struggling to believe, or if they've got questions and they keep asking questions, and they're like, I'm not really so sure about this. Those aren't the people you shake the dust off your feet with, right?

They're just taking a while to get at it. No, the reason they shook the dust off their feet was that there was no turning back. These people had made a determined choice of the will to say, I will not believe what you are saying. Because you see, unbelief at its root is defiance. Right?

It's defiance. Have you ever had a strong-willed child in your home? Maybe you were a strong-willed child. You're lucky to be alive. But, you know, if you've ever looked in the eyes of a strong-willed child, you tell them to do something, they look at you and they give you a little grin and they're like, yeah, oh yeah, make me.

Right? Yeah. It's just flat out defiance. I'm not going to do that. Whatever you tell me, I'm not going to do.

Right? Well, that's what we're talking about, people, when the Bible refers to unbelief. Right? This isn't just people struggling. They're not struggling at all.

They got their mind made up. I'm not going to believe this. Right? And, you know, here's the point. Not everybody who asks questions about God or the Bible or heaven wants an answer.

Okay? Let me say that again. Not everybody who asks questions about God wants an answer. Sometimes people ask questions in an effort to make you look foolish. They don't care about your answer.

They're not listening to your answer, as good as your answer may be. And they're just going to go keep on asking questions until they can reach their goal of making you look stupid. And, you know, if you need proof that there are people that ask questions without really wanting an answer, just look in the scriptures where people were talking to Jesus, like Pontius Pilate. Remember when Jesus appeared before Pontius Pilate after he was arrested? Jesus and Pontius Pilate got into a conversation about truth, you'll remember.

And Jesus said something. He said, whoever is on the side of truth hears me. And Pontius Pilate looked him in the eyes and he said this, what is truth? Here's the point. Jesus is the truth.

He said that, in fact, I am the way and the truth and the light. He is the personification of truth. And so here's Pontius Pilate, who is looking the personification, the embodiment of truth in the eyes. And he has the gall to say, what is truth anyway? Which tells you he's not interested in the answer.

And you'll notice that Jesus didn't respond by going, you're looking at him, pal. He could have, but he didn't answer. You know why? Pilate wasn't listening. And then there was the situation with Herod.

You'll remember that Pilate, you know, after he was done with him, he handed him off to Herod to kind of be interrogated or whatever. Check this out on Luke 23. It says, when Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad for he had long desired to see him because he had heard about him and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but Jesus made no answer. Isn't that interesting?

Herod peppered Jesus with questions and Jesus didn't answer him. Why? Herod wasn't listening. Okay? Very important thing, you know, I get a lot of questions from people who write to me and they'll say, I've been talking with this guy that I work with, you know, and he just, he just refuses to believe.

So tell me what I can say to him that's going to make a difference. I'm like, are you kidding me? And I think some people are really genuinely shocked when I write them back and I tell them, I don't talk to people who aren't listening. You know, because there was something very important that Jesus said during his earthly ministry that we need to understand. It's recorded in Matthew 11 up on the screen.

Look at this. He would say, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Right? He who has ears to hear. You see, that statement implies that there are people who don't have ears to hear.

And why don't they have ears to hear? Because they've shut their ears. They've closed them off. They've made a determination. I'm not listening.

I don't care about what you say. I've got my mind made up. Right? So how did Jesus respond to those people? He didn't respond at all to those people, you know, like Herod.

You know, years ago, many years ago, in fact, back in the 80s, some of you weren't alive yet. I remember listening to the original Bible Answer Man on the radio, Dr. Walter Martin. How many of you listened to Dr. Walter Martin on the radio?

Yeah, there's a few of you here and you all have gray hair. All right. So Dr. Walter Martin was amazing. He had a live call-in talk show where people would call in and ask Bible questions.

In fact, I listened to him. I actually called in once and got to ask him a question. As I recall, it was kind of a dumb question, but you know, I was kind of dumb back then. It was a long time ago. Anyway, you would, you know, when you listen to, by the way, the program was called the Bible Answer Man.

And when you heard his radio show, you would hear that there were a lot of people that called in just to argue. They didn't call to get an answer. They would ask a question, but they didn't want an answer. They believed they knew the answer already, and they were calling to test him and to argue with him. And Walter Martin got to know those kinds of people, you know.

And so I remember hearing him say one time, this just blew me away as a young man. He said, after somebody asked a question that he knew they weren't looking for an answer for, he said, if I can show you in the Bible where you're wrong, will you believe it? And I remember hearing that and thinking, that is so wise. Because what he was doing was he was gauging their readiness or their openness to hear the truth. If I can show you in the Bible where this is the case, will you believe it?

Even if it's contrary to the position you hold right now, you see, that's a great question. So, you know, there are questions that you can learn to ask to help when you're talking to people that will help gauge for you their openness and their readiness to really truly hear, you know, is this person that I'm talking to really wanting to hear the truth? Or are they just wanting to make me look foolish or argue with me or make themselves look smart? One of the three or whatever. But let me just tell you, the best way, the absolute best way to know if someone's ready to hear the gospel is to hear from the Holy Spirit himself.

Now, that takes harder work. And that takes your ability to hear from him, which is a learned experience. But he's never going to steer you wrong. And I think it's important just to just shoot up a quick prayer while you're talking to somebody, you know, you start getting into a conversation with somebody at work, it's like, Lord, show me, show me if this person really wants to know, or if they're just arguing for the sake of arguing, because I'm not interested in just filling the room full of hot air. I want to do something genuine here.

So Lord, show me and trust that the Lord's going to do that. You know, let him who has ears to hear, hear. Amen? Amen. Let's stand together.

We're going to close in prayer. We're going to have some folks up here to pray with you after we dismiss. So if you need prayer today, don't walk out the door feeling burdened, okay? If you need prayer, you're praying for someone else, and it's just really weighing heavy on your heart. We'll have folks right up here just to do nothing but to agree with you in prayer, to bring that to the Lord.

So consider doing that before you take off. So let's pray. Father, we love you. And we thank you so much for your word that just nourishes our souls. We thank you, Father, that your word is so full of wisdom and so full of insight, so full of understanding.

Lord, that we grow, we literally mature as we hear your word and as we embrace it. Now, Father, help us to put it into practice, to walk it out, to live it out. Thank you, Father, for... the richness of your love. Thank you, Lord, most of all, for sending your Son to bear our penalty on the cross that our sins might be forgiven and washed clean.

We thank you. We praise you. In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and all God's people said, Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.