

**Why Parables?**  
**Matthew 12-13**  
**ABC 2/16/20**

Last week we began a series on the parables & looked at what parables are, how to interpret them, & Jesus' purpose in using them. Today we'll look at the setting of when Jesus began to teach in parables &, once again, His reason for doing so. Open your Bibles to Mt 13 which begins with the words, **that day**. This is an important day, one in which a dramatic change takes place in the teaching of Jesus. It's a turning point in His ministry. From this day on when He taught in public, He spoke in parables. Up until this time, He's basically been a theological teacher but now, all of a sudden, He becomes a story-teller. Why? That's what we'll see this morning. On **that day**, a Sabbath day, Jesus had an encounter with the Pharisees & the whole style of His teaching changed. **That day** refers to the day on which Jesus' mother & brothers came looking for Him (12:46-47), probably to persuade Him to stop the preaching & teaching they knew could cost Him His life. On **that day** He'd healed many people, explained the character of the promised Messiah, healed & cleansed the blind & dumb demoniac, charged the unbelieving Pharisees of committing the unpardonable sin by accusing Him of casting out demons by Satan's power, declared that unbelieving Jews would be condemned by believing Gentiles on the day of judgment, & warned against the deceptive danger of moral reform without spiritual rebirth (12:15-45). It was after all this that came this change in Jesus' teaching style. Obviously, it was a dramatic day in His ministry. Why does He now speak in parables? Was it because He wasn't getting through & things weren't clear? Did He just now figure out a new way of teaching that was more effective? Does He now think He's got to make these hard truths clear & simple? Is that what's going on? I don't think so! PRAY

**1. Why Parables?** Look at Mt 13:10 & we find the disciples ask, **10** Listen to His answer, **vs 11**.

What's He saying? He's speaking in parables so some won't understand. It's as if He says, *If I keep speaking clear truth, they'll understand. If I speak parables, they won't.* Jesus taught in parables because it was a judgment on the willful, hard-hearted unbelief of the religious, self-righteous elite.

**12-13**

That's the judgment. Yes, parables teach truth, especially when they're explained by the Giver of the parable. But in a sense, they were a judgment. They hide truth in stories. This is a judgment on unbelief. This is why Jesus taught in parables. It was judgment on those who rejected His clear teaching. There's also a mercy element in this judgment because if He keeps speaking to the crowds in clear, unmistakable terms & keeps explaining Scripture & proclaiming spiritual truth, their guilt increases. His parables are the same today. For believers, they illustrate the truth because we understand them. How do we understand them? Because many are explained for us. Beyond that, because we know the story of Scripture, the gospel, because we understand salvation, we understand the parables. Even when we don't have a recorded explanation, we understand them, not because we've been given some mystical insight but because all parables are about the gospel, about God's kingdom, about salvation. In a very real way, the more you understand the fullness & richness of salvation, the more you'll understand the parables. So what brought Jesus to this point of hiding the truth from some & revealing truth to others?

**2. The Sabbath** Matthew introduces the turning point in Jesus' public ministry by giving us a series of conflicts between the Jewish religious leaders & Jesus. Their main problem with Him had to do with observing the Sabbath, which had become a symbol of their legalistic system. The Pharisees saw themselves as Sabbath soldiers when it came to keeping the Sabbath. They had added to the OT Sabbath laws with a long list of legalistic restrictions. They were militant in imposing & enforcing their brand of Sabbath keeping on everyone else. They had turned the Sabbath into an oppressive inconvenience. They couldn't just leave it as a simple day to worship & delight in God & to take a day off & not work. Instead they created a massive & complex set of Sabbath laws. By Jesus' day, most Jews had no idea of the original purpose of the Sabbath or of how God intended it to be kept. The Pharisees had taken it to ungodly levels. One section of the Talmud, the gathering of Jewish traditions, has 24 chapters listing the Sabbath laws. It's got all kinds of ridiculous burdens added to it & was frustrating & burdensome. The day of rest became one of the most burdensome ordeals in a long list of **heavy burdens** the Pharisees forced on other people's shoulders (Mt 23:4). The Sabbath in the OT wasn't to be burdensome. It was meant to be **a delight** (Is 58:13) & a relief for

weary people. The biblical commandments regarding the Sabbath were clearly defined. The 7<sup>th</sup> day was set aside as a gracious reminder that mankind has a standing invitation to enter the Lord's rest (Heb 4:4–11). Scripture introduces this at the very beginning with God at creation.

**The heavens & the earth were completed, & all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, & He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day & sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created & made** (Gen 2:1–3).

When God finished His creative **work**, He **rested**, not because He needed relief or recovery, but because His work was finished (Ps 121:4; Is 40:28). He then declared the Sabbath day as **holy & sanctified** as a favor to mankind. Work is a drudgery which is a result of the curse sin brought (Gen 3:17–19). The Sabbath is a celebration of God's finished work & all humanity is urged to enter into His rest. This truth was pictured in God's resting on the last day of that 1<sup>st</sup> week. But the full glory of the Sabbath was unveiled in the finished work of Christ (Jn 19:30). That explains why Col 2:16 includes the formal Sabbath observance in a list of OT ceremonies that are not binding on Christians. Such things were **a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ** (17). Everything the Sabbath signified has been fulfilled in the finished work of Christ. That's why Paul suggests it's OK to esteem every day alike (Rom 14:5). For the Christian, every day is a celebration of the Sabbath principle. We have entered into the spiritual rest provided for us by the finished work of Jesus (Heb 4:10–11). In other words, when Jesus declared, **I will give you rest** (Mt 11:28) & **The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath** (Mt 12:8), He not only denied the Pharisees' self-appointed authority over the Sabbath & declared His own deity, He also signified the ultimate fulfillment of everything the Sabbath offered is found in the rest of the soul who trusts in His finished work. The Sabbath was to be a reminder of the grace of God, which always stands in contrast to human work. A number of rules about the Sabbath were included in Moses' law. But the primary command to remember & sanctify the Sabbath is the 4<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments. This commandment is the longest of the 10. But, despite its length, the Sabbath law isn't complex. It simply says,

**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor & do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with**

you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens & the earth, the sea & all that is in them, & rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day & made it holy (Ex 20:8–11).

The length of this command is because it prohibits landowners & heads of households from the loophole of making others do the work for them. It gives the biblical & doctrinal basis for the commandment, stressing how the Sabbath pictures entering into God's rest. Aside from that, it's pretty simple. What was forbidden on the Sabbath? Work, the toil of everyday life. All labor was to be stopped, even beasts of burden were exempt from work on this day. The Sabbath was a gift & a blessing from God to His people to keep earthly life from seeming like one long, unbroken grind. Did Israel historically keep the Sabbath? No. As a nation, they sinned repeatedly by ignoring the Sabbaths & permitting business as usual on it. This was motivated either by a desire for financial gain, indifference about spiritual things, apostasy, idolatry, or some combination of them. Both Nehemiah (13:15–22) & Jeremiah (17:21-27) struggled & pleaded to get the people of their day to observe the Sabbath. By Jesus' time, the pendulum had swung to the opposite extreme due to the Pharisees. The people of Israel had to observe the Sabbath by the strictest interpretation possible. The Sabbath became a cumbersome ritual rather than a true day of rest. People lived in fear if they accidentally violated or neglected some trivial Sabbath rule. If they did, the Pharisees would call them on the carpet & threaten them with excommunication or even death.

**3. The Conflict** Mt 12 begins with a major confrontation brought on by the Sabbath police. The disciples were hungry & had picked grain to eat while walking on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were upset because of what Jesus' disciples had done (Mt 12:1–2). Jesus & His disciples walking through the grain field on the Sabbath was a violation of Jewish tradition, not of Scripture. The disciples weren't reaping on the Sabbath, which was forbidden by Mosaic law (Ex 34:21) but simply satisfying their hunger according the provision of Dt 23:24-25. Rabbinic tradition, however, had ridiculously interpreted the rubbing of grain together in the hands (cf Lk 6:1) as a form of threshing. They regarded blowing away the chaff as a form of winnowing. The Talmud said, *If a person rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is sifting. If he rubs the heads of wheat, it is threshing. If he cleans off the side adherences, it is sifting. If he bruises the ears, it is grinding. & if he throws it up in his*

*hand, it is winnowing.*<sup>1</sup> When they **became hungry & began to pick the heads of grain & eat**, they were perfectly within their scriptural & social rights. Jesus did nothing to discourage the disciples & probably joined them in eating the grain. But according to the Pharisees, even plucking a handful of grain was a form of gleaning, & therefore work. The Pharisees turned even the bare necessities of life into hundreds of *Thou shall nots*. Jesus replied by showing the foolishness of a rule that forbids an act of necessity on a day set aside for the benefit of mankind. Jesus responds to the Pharisees by telling them about when David & his men were hungry & ate the show bread out of the temple to show how ridiculous their Sabbath rules were. Hunger was a greater priority than man-made rules. Then to add to it in vs 8, He says something that just distresses them to the max. *Don't tell Me what to do on the Sabbath. I'll decide what to do on the Sabbath. I'm it's Lord.* He rebuked the Pharisees for condemning the guiltless & said, **The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath** (Mt 12:8). The Pharisees were enraged. But they weren't through challenging Jesus about the Sabbath. Lk 6:6 says, **On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue & was teaching; & there was a man there whose right hand was withered.** The Pharisees were there & they were prepared to accelerate the struggle over the Sabbath. Pointing to the man with the **withered** hand, they dared Jesus to break their rules in the presence of a synagogue full of witnesses. & **they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" – so that they might accuse Him** (Mt 12:10). They'd seen Jesus do miracles many times & knew He had the power to heal any & every kind of affliction. They'd also seen ample proof that He was their promised Messiah. But He wasn't the kind of Messiah they wanted. He didn't kowtow to their man-made religious rules. He challenged their authority & claimed authority for Himself. They knew if He took His rightful place on the throne as Israel's Messiah, their status & influence would be gone. In a secret meeting, discussing what to do with Jesus, they admitted what the issue was. They were concerned about losing their own power & status. **If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, & the Romans will come & take away both our place & our nation** (Jn 11:48). They were worried. It's no wonder because **the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him** (Mk 12:37). The religious leaders' hatred was such that they

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume 2, p 56

didn't care whether His messianic credentials were legitimate or not. They were determined to prevent people from following Him no matter what it took. So when Jesus responded to their challenge by instantly healing the man with the disfigured hand, the Pharisees stormed out & had a private huddle, consulting with one another about what they could do with Him. Their ultimate goal was already very clear: **The Pharisees went out & conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him** (Mt 12:14). Their hatred had reached a murderous level & Jesus knew their intentions. Therefore, because His hour had not yet come, He became more discreet in His movements & more guarded in His public ministry. Matthew says, **Jesus, aware of this**, their intent to destroy Him, **withdrew from there. Many followed Him, & He healed them all, & warned them not to tell who He was** (Mt 12:15–16). Matthew follows his account of this with a quotation from Is 42. **17-21**

Matthew's point (& Isaiah's) is that contrary to all expectations, Israel's Messiah wouldn't arrive on the scene as a military hero or powerful political figure, but with a gentle, quiet approach. This is one of the most beautiful descriptions of Jesus in Scripture. Here we see that Jesus was commended by the Father & commissioned by the Holy Spirit, that He communicated His Father's message, that He was committed to meekness & to comforting the weak, & that He would complete the victory over sin & Satan. The **battered reed** & **smoldering wick** are symbolic of broken & dysfunctional people. Instead of rejecting & discarding the outcasts, Israel's Messiah would embrace, teach, heal, & minister to them. Even the Gentiles would learn to trust in Him. That prophecy from Isaiah is the bridge between Matthew's recounting of these 2 Sabbath controversies & the conflict that dominates the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Mt 12.

It's important to note that the writers of all 4 gospels sometimes arrange events from Jesus' earthly ministry in topical, rather than chronological, order. Whenever time clues are given, they are important, but sometimes the chronological relationship between one incident & the next isn't crucial & therefore isn't recorded in the text. That appears to be the case between the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> halves of Mt 12. The plucking of the grain, followed by the healing of the man with the withered hand are told as if they occurred in quick succession. The 2 incidents are told in close sequence not only in Mt 12 but also in Mk 2 (23–3:5) & Lk 6 (1–11). But Luke makes it clear the 2 incidents

happened on separate Sabbaths. Mark & Luke immediately follow their account of those incidents with the record of Jesus calling the Twelve, so the 2 Sabbath conflicts seem to have occurred early in Jesus' Galilean ministry. Matthew is more concerned with the topic than the timing & his point here is to show how the Sabbath controversies provoked hostility against Jesus from the Jewish leaders. The contempt they had for Him culminated in a decision to destroy Him which they sealed with a blasphemy. Mt 12:22–37 gives their blasphemy & Jesus' response to it. This incident became the final straw that provoked Jesus to change His teaching style. Piecing together the chronology from all the gospel accounts, we know that this happened several months after the 2 Sabbath disputes. The word **then** at the start of vs 22 moves us from the Isaiah prophecy to a new day near the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry. This was a pivotal day in more ways than one. In fact, this is one of the most documented days of Jesus' Galilean ministry.

**4. The Busy Day** The day started ominously when Jesus was presented with a desperately needy man. This was a vastly more difficult case (humanly speaking) than the man with a withered hand. This poor man wasn't only in desperate need of physical healing, he was also in bondage to some evil spirit. He was precisely the kind of **battered reed & smoldering wick** pictured in Isaiah's prophecy. Matthew says, **a demon-possessed man who was blind & mute was brought to Jesus (12:22)**. The man was unable to see, unable to communicate, & cruelly trapped in slavery to a demon. What could be more hopeless? Scripture, rather understatedly says, Jesus **healed him, so that the mute man spoke & saw (12:22)**. This was a complete & instantaneous deliverance. It was undeniably an act of God, one of the glorious examples of Jesus' power both to heal & cast out demons. Nevertheless, Matthew gives little detail of the miracle itself. Why? Because what's most remarkable is the resulting mess. Jesus had already done countless miracles of healing & deliverance all over Galilee (Mk 3:10–11). Multitudes had already seen Jesus heal & deliver people. There was no question about the source of His power. Even the demons who were cast out gave testimony that Jesus was the Son of God. In Matthew's words, Jesus had traveled...

**throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues & proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, & healing every kind of disease & every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; & they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases &**

pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; & He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from Galilee & the Decapolis & Jerusalem & Judea & from beyond the Jordan (Mt 4:23–25).

Those miracles became the main reason so many people wanted to be in Jesus' presence (Jn 6:2). They weren't done out of sight or only rarely. There was no shortage of eyewitnesses to the power of Jesus. However, the most notable feature of this healing was the response of the religious rulers. Mark indicates that among them were scribes who came from Jerusalem (Mk 3:22). These were the chief religious scholars in all Israel. They had made the journey, it seems, to try to find some fault with Jesus. Remember, according to Mt 12:14, they were already secretly scheming to destroy Him. This was the initial phase of the conspiracy that eventually resulted in His death. The healing of this demon-possessed man in front of a crowd of eyewitnesses was clearly a problem to the Pharisees' plan. People were already responding with wonder & amazement, saying aloud, **This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?** (Mt 12:23). The crowd seemed on the verge of trying to make Him their king (Jn 6:15). The Pharisees quickly responded, **This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons** (24). This seems to be the exact time when everything changed. What immediately follows in Mt 12 is a short speech that climaxes with this warning about the unpardonable sin: 32

**5. The Unpardonable Sin** Jesus' words, as always, must be read closely. He wasn't saying that any & every blasphemy invoking the Holy Spirit's name is unpardonable. He wasn't announcing that there's some broad, undefined category of unpardonable sins we need to live in fear of. In fact, Jesus specifically said, **any sin & blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven** (Mt 12:31). His warning about this one act of unforgivable blasphemy was purposely introduced by a statement declaring every other kind of **sin & blasphemy** is forgivable. But note also that Jesus wasn't saying that everyone's sin is forgiven automatically without regard to whether the person repents & believes or not. Every sin is deserving of eternal death as long as the sinner remains unrepentant & unbelieving. As John writes, **he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God** (3:18). But even the vilest sin is forgivable & complete forgiveness is guaranteed to every sinner who renounces his love of sin & turns to Christ as Savior (1 Jn 1:9). When we agree with God



concerning our own guilt, the atoning blood of Christ cleanses us from every kind of sin. Jesus Himself made this promise: **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, & believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, & does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life** (Jn 5:24). But one very specific sin is permanently damnable. Every detail of Jesus' statement about the unpardonable sin makes it quite clear that He was talking about a malicious, deliberately evil act of **blasphemy against the Spirit** (Mt 12:31). There's a clear & significant contrast between every other **sin & blasphemy** versus this one sin that **shall not be forgiven ... either in this age or in the age to come** (32). The context clearly indicates what Jesus was referring to. It was the blasphemy this arrogant group of religious hypocrites had just uttered. The Pharisees themselves did not, they could not, believe their own lie. They were standing in the very presence of Christ when He put His power & glory on display. Nowhere do they deny His miracles. & here they were up-close eyewitnesses to another undeniable wonder. They knew the full truth about Jesus, but they not only rejected Him anyway but actively tried to turn others away from Him as well. Still worse, they tried to discredit Him with a blatant blasphemy, claiming His miracles were being accomplished with Satan's power. The intentionality of the Pharisees' sin is the main factor that made it unpardonable. Why would they credit Satan with what Jesus had done through the power of the Holy Spirit? They had just watched Him vanquish demons. They knew who Jesus was & with what authority He spoke & acted (Lk 6:10–11; Jn 11:47–48; 12:9; Acts 4:16) & yet they hated Him anyway. Jesus was speaking directly to them when He said, **brood of vipers ... by your words you will be condemned** (Mt 12:34, 37). That was His final, breathtaking reply to these lying, blaspheming religious phonies. Their sin was so wicked & hateful that Jesus damned them on the spot. In essence, He gave the entire multitude a preview of His accusers' final judgment. The One to whom all judgment has been committed (Jn 5:22) pronounced them guilty. His verdict against them was given publicly & with finality. They were doomed in the darkness & hardness of heart they had chosen for themselves.

Why was their statement such a grievous offense against the Holy Spirit? For one thing, the demoniac's healing was as much a work of the Holy Spirit as it was a work of Jesus. All His miracles

were done according to the will of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:14; Jn 5:19, 30; 8:28; Acts 10:38). To attribute His miracles to Satan was to credit Satan with the Holy Spirit's work. Because they knew better, the Pharisees' insult was a direct, deliberate, blasphemy against the Spirit of God. Besides that, the Holy Spirit is the One who confirms the testimony of Christ & makes His truth known (Jn 15:26; 16:14–15). **It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth** (1 Jn 5:6). For those with ears to hear, the Holy Spirit's testimony about Christ was thunderously & definitively the exact opposite of what these Pharisees claimed. Again, the Pharisees knew it. The signs & wonders they'd seen were real & undeniable. They uttered their blasphemy with full awareness they were opposing God, lying about His anointed Servant, & blaspheming His Holy Spirit. So there was now no hope for them, **either in this age or in the age to come** (Mt 12:32). They'd deliberately shut their eyes & plugged their ears to the truth for too long. Rejecting the most powerful possible testimony to the truth, they chose a lie instead. After this, Jesus would conceal the truth from them by the use of parables in His public teaching.

The day wasn't over yet. One commentator calls this *the busy day, not because it was the only one, but simply that so much is told of this day that it serves as a specimen of many others filled to the full with stress & strain.*<sup>2</sup> Mk 4:35, speaking of this same 24-hour period, says, **On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side."** That was the evening when Jesus stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Later yet, when **they came to the other side of the sea** (5:1), He delivered 2 demoniacs who were living among the tombs there, sending the demons into a herd of pigs who promptly committed suicide by running into the sea & drowning themselves (Mt 8:28–34).<sup>3</sup> But the heart of that day was given to teaching the multitudes & it was on that very day that Jesus began to speak to the crowds in parables. Mt 13:3 marks the point in that gospel where Jesus began teaching in parables. The 1<sup>st</sup> parable Matthew records is the parable of the soils, followed by Jesus' private explanation of the parable. Mt 13 goes on to record more parables

<sup>2</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*, 1:100

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur writes, "*Matthew's account is not given to us in strict chronological order, but the statement in Mark 4:35 makes clear that the stilling of the storm occurred "On the same day, when evening had come." Then the sequence in both Mark 4–5 & Matthew 8 indicates that the deliverance of the two demoniacs likewise happened immediately after the storm had been stilled & the disciples' boat reached its destination.*" *Parables*, p 14

about the kingdom of heaven. Then (in a close parallel to Mk 4:33–34) Mt 13:34–35 says, **All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, & He did not speak to them without a parable. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”** By deliberately rejecting the truth, the enemies of Jesus had lost the privilege of hearing any more plain truth from Him. That’s precisely what Jesus meant when He said, **whoever has, to him more shall be given; & whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him** (Lk 8:18). The shift in Jesus’ teaching style was immediate & dramatic. Everything He taught in public from that day forward would be concealed from everyone except those with willing ears to hear. So, as we’ve seen, there’s within the speaking of parables, both a curse & a mercy. Concealing truth is a judgment tempered with mercy so that He doesn’t add guilt upon guilt. But for those who had ears to hear, He explained the parables. But even the disciples wouldn’t know what they meant if Jesus didn’t explain them. How could they? For the hard-hearted Pharisees, parables were a divine judgment.

The conclusion I want to leave you with is the fact that we are so blessed. The world has no idea how much we know. They have no idea that we know the mysteries of the universe. Listen to 1 Cor 2:7-8, **we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** They didn’t understand it because they couldn’t understand it. God willed that they crucify His Son for our redemption. **Just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen & ear has not heard, & which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who what? who love Him.’** We love Him & He opens His truth to us. This is such a great reality that Lk 10:23 repeats what’s in Matthew. **Turning to the disciples, He said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see.’** Do you understand that? Do you understand that this world doesn’t comprehend these glorious, divine realities, but you do? **Not many mighty, not many noble** (1 Cor 1:26), right? The lowly, the nobodies have been blessed. I say to you I say to you that many prophets & righteous men desired to see what you see,

**& did not see it, & to hear what you hear, & did not hear it** (Mt 13:17. Because of God's grace in drawing us to Himself, we are the most blessed people on the planet because in us is the knowledge of the truth. Because of this, we must be grateful. But for the grace of God we'd be like the Pharisees damned to eternal death. But because God in His grace has called us & revealed to us the truth of the gospel we not only understand His words, but we have life both now & forever. Therefore, we must be people who are willing to submit to His truth. Are we inclined to trust Him or trust ourselves? Do we believe Him or believe the world around us? In other words, are we open to God's work in us, through His Word, however He sees fit?