

# God's Hardening: Mark 4:10-13

Sunday, May 5, 2024  
Covenant Church  
Pastor Zack Phillips

## Mark 4:10-13

**<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; <sup>12</sup> in order that**

**'they may indeed look, but not perceive,  
and may indeed listen, but not understand;  
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'** "

**<sup>13</sup> And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables?"**

## Introduction

At stake is God's *fairness*

Broader phenomenon of God "hardening" in the Bible: see, e.g., Pharoah (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10); Israel (Rom 9-11); and Judg 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14; 18:10; 19:9; 2 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 12:15.

We are in good company wrestling with this passage:

Hebrew Isa 6:9-10 <sup>1</sup>	Septuagint Isa 6:9-10	Mark 4:12	Matt 13:13-15	Luke 8:10b
"Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand."	"You will listen by listening, but you will not understand, and looking you will look, but you will not perceive."	in order that  "they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand;  so that they may not  turn again and be forgiven."	is that  "seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand."  See Matt 13:14-15	so that  "looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand."
Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed."	Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imperative: command</li> <li>• Sarcasm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicative: predictive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose clause: "so that"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change purpose clause to descriptive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove the non-repentance clause</li> </ul>

## Various Interpretations

1. Translation issue or biblical idiom?
2. God's sovereignty?
3. Explanation for Jesus' being rejected?

<sup>1</sup> NRSV translations of the Hebrew or Greek; NETS translation of the Septuagint.

4. The evil are “hardened” by mercy
5. Hardening does not lead to judgment but is itself judgment

## Some Observations

- A. Things are more complicated than the generalization suggests

**Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

- B. Those whom God hardens may well already be hardened

Pharaoh hardens his own heart (e.g., Exod 8:15, 32; 9:34)

- C. In Mark’s gospel, the disciples are also hardened

**Mark 6:51-52** Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

**Mark 8:17** And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?”

- D. This “hardening” seems to be time-limited

**Isa 31:6** Turn back to him whom you have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel.

**Isa 40:1-2** Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her

that she has served her term,

that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD’s hand

double for all her sins.

**Rom 11:11-12, 25b-26a** So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their stumbling salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their stumbling means riches for the world, and if their defeat means riches for Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!... I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...

- E. Hardening allows God to achieve His good purposes

## III. What, Then, Shall We Say?

*Question: What is one thing that God may have said to you through this sermon?*