

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Blind Man's Healing Investigated John 9:13-18

If you are actively sharing your faith you, will be continually coming across people who are unbelieving. Sometimes, after we have shared with such an individual, we might categorize that encounter as positive, and at other times we might characterize that encounter as negative.

Those encounters that we would categorize as positive will invariably be with unbelievers who are open to the truth. Those encounters that we would categorize as negative will invariably be with unbelievers whose hearts are not open to the truth, or in other words, with those who are willfully unbelieving.

This weekend we will see a former blind man encountering this latter group. This weekend we will see a former blind man encountering a group of Pharisees whose hearts are not open to the truth, whose hearts are willfully unbelieving. And in examining this particular encounter we will be able to see some of the specific ploys that this group of Pharisees used in order to protect their hardened hearts from the truth, ploys that people are still using today.

This brings us back to our study of **John 9**. Hopefully you remember where we left off. Jesus had left the temple under duress on the last day of the Feast of Booths. And while He was on a road near the temple, He chose to miraculously heal a man who had been begging for alms. Over the last two weeks we have highlighted four different aspects of that healing.

The first aspect of the healing was the problem (John 9:1). Let me read for you **John 9:1**. “**And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.**” What was the man's problem? The man, who Jesus miraculously healed after leaving the temple area, had been born blind. This was the problem. What was the second aspect of the healing?

The second aspect of the healing was the purpose (John 9:2-5). Let me read **John 9:2-5**. “**And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ (3) Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.’**” Why had this man been born blind? He had been born blind so that the work of God might be displayed in him. Then what did Christ say? Christ then talked with His disciples about the urgency of God's work being put on display.

Let me read for you **John 9:4-5**. “**We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work. (5) While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**” Do we have a limited amount of time to put God's work on display? Absolutely. So, what was the third aspect of the healing we considered?

The third aspect of the healing was the power (John 9:6-7), or in other words, we were given a description of the actual healing. Let me now read for you **John 9:6-7**. “**When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, (7) and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing.**”

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This was a spectacular demonstration of the power of God. Hopefully you remember that nowhere in the Old Testament had a blind person been healed. And in the New Testament nowhere do we find a disciple of Christ healing a blind person. Was this significant? Absolutely! Based on the teaching of the Old Testament, it pointed to Jesus as the Messiah.

The first aspect of the healing was the problem. The second aspect of the healing was the purpose. The third aspect of the healing was the power. And then last week we considered the fourth aspect. The fourth aspect of the healing was the perplexity (John 9:8-12).

Let me read for you **John 9:8-12**. “**The neighbors therefore, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, ‘Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?’ (9) Others were saying, ‘This is he,’ still others were saying, ‘No, but he is like him.’ He kept saying, ‘I am the one.’ (10) Therefore they were saying to him, ‘How then were your eyes opened?’ (11) He answered, ‘The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, “Go to Siloam, and wash”; so I went away and washed, and I received my sight.’ (12) And they said to him, ‘Where is He?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’”** Were the people that had known the blind man impacted? Absolutely. They were impacted. Anytime the work of God is put on display, that work will not go unnoticed. Hopefully you have been seeking to do that this past week.

These four aspects of this healing did not end the story of this blind man in **John 9**. The story continues on. It continues on as this blind man is brought to a certain group of Pharisees and is questioned by them. How many verses does the Apostle John devote to this interaction? It starts in **John 9:13** and goes all the way down to **John 9:34**. This is a very long portion of Scripture to be devoted to this single encounter. Why would so many verses be devoted to such an encounter? I believe this large number of verses was devoted to such an encounter to show the characteristics of willful unbelief.

My hope for this message and our consideration of these characteristics of willful unbelief is that we would not become discouraged when we encounter them in our times of sharing but would understand that this is just a part of the territory. If we are going to share Christ, there will be people who will be willfully unbelieving, and those times will not be encouraging. But if we don’t become discouraged, and continue to share our faith, we will be rewarded for that perseverance. So, what is the first characteristic of willful unbelief?

The first characteristic of willful unbelief is that it sets *false* standards (John 9:13-16). We will see this particular characteristic unfolding before us in **John 9:13-16**.

Let us begin by reading **verse 13**. “**They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind.**” As we look at this verse, there are a number of questions that we need to ask.

Who brought this man, who was formerly blind, to the Pharisees? It would seem that it would have been his neighbors and those who had known him, since those are the ones who were interacting with him in **John 9:8-12**.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

This is obvious, but then we come to a more difficult question. Why did they bring this former blind man to the Pharisees? I believe that the neighbors and acquaintances of this former blind man brought him to the Pharisees because the Pharisees asked them to bring him. I believe this best fits with what we have learned about these people who knew the former blind man in **John 9:8-12** and what we will learn about these Pharisees in **John 9:13-34**.

What have we learned about the neighbors and acquaintances of this former blind in **John 9:8-12**? The neighbors and acquaintances of this former blind man apparently were concerned only about the issue of his identify and not about any other underlying theological issues. Therefore, once they became united in their belief that this sighted man now standing before them was, in fact, the same man they once knew as a blind beggar, there would have been no reason for them to take this man to the Pharisees, based on what we have learned in **John 9:8-12**.

But even though they would have had no reason to take him to the Pharisees, there was a very good reason why the Pharisees would have wanted this blind man brought to them.

The Pharisees, having heard about the healing of the blind man by Christ on the Sabbath day, would have wanted to interrogate the blind man in order to confirm the healing (John 9:14).

We see the Pharisees actually doing this in the next verse. Let me read for you **John 9:15**. **“Again, therefore, the Pharisees also were asking him how he received his sight.”** And how did the blind man answer their question? Let us continue to read the verse, **“And he said to them, ‘He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’”** This former blind man by the repetition of this very simple and basic testimony, I believe, confirmed what the Pharisees had already heard about this particular healing. And how did the Pharisees respond to this confirmation?

The confirmation by the former blind man produced a *divided* response among the Pharisees (John 9:16). Let me read for you **John 9:16**. **“Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, ‘This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.’ But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And there was a division among them.”** Let us now take a closer look at this division.

The division among the Pharisees could be represented as a battle between competing *sylogisms* in John 9:16.

What is a syllogism? A syllogism is an argument based on simple logic containing two premises and a conclusion. If the premises are correct, then the conclusion will be correct. If I tell you that all living humans breathe, and then I tell you that John is a living human, what is the conclusion? John is breathing. Would that be a correct conclusion? Absolutely. It is a perfect demonstration of simple logic. But in order to get a correct conclusion from a particular syllogism, the premises upon which that conclusion is based must be true.

So now let us look at these competing syllogisms that divided the Pharisees. The first syllogism in **John 9:16** is found in the first part of the verse. **“This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”**

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So, what was the major premise? The major premise was that people, who are from God, keep the Sabbath. And what was the minor premise? The minor premise was that this man, Jesus, does not keep the Sabbath. Therefore, they concluded that Jesus was not from God because He did not keep the Sabbath. Was this conclusion correct? No, it was not correct. There obviously was a problem with their logic. There obviously was a problem with their syllogism. What was the problem? The problem with the syllogism was that either one or both of the premises were not correct. So, let us look at the premises again.

What was the major premise? The major premise was that people, who are from God, keep the Sabbath. Would that have been a correct premise for that time and place since the nation of Israel was still being governed by the Law of Moses? And I believe the answer to that question would have to be yes. But let us now take a look at the minor premise. What was the minor premise? The minor premise was that Jesus did not keep the Sabbath. Was this premise correct? And the answer is no! Jesus did keep the Sabbath. He just did not keep the Sabbath in the way the Pharisees thought He should keep the Sabbath.

The Pharisees believed that keeping the Sabbath would have precluded any person from performing a healing on that particular day. Were they right? No! They were wrong. So, how does this impact the conclusion of this first syllogism?

The first syllogism concluded that Jesus was not from God. This was an incorrect conclusion because the minor premise embraced a *false* standard of what constituted keeping the Sabbath.

Now isn't this a tragic scene. Here is Jesus, God incarnate, the giver of the Law, being accused by these certain Pharisees of breaking that Law, based on their own false standard of what constituted keeping the Sabbath.

Willful unbelief is like that. It not only sets false standards, but also stubbornly holds onto those standards in spite of the evidence. For instance, willful unbelief will say Jesus cannot be God the Son, the Savior of the world, because God would never have become flesh. Willful unbelief will say Jesus cannot be God the Savior of the world, because God would never have allowed Himself to be crucified. Willful unbelief will say Jesus cannot be God the Savior of the world, because God would never have died on the cross for our sins. Willful unbelief will set up false standards and then stubbornly hold on to those standards in spite of the evidence.

Those who judge Christ and His claims, based on their own misguided false standards, will ultimately suffer for such stubborn and arrogant actions. We don't judge Christ, and we don't judge God; they judge us. So, when God speaks, when Christ speaks, we had better listen.

Unfortunately, this was not happening here in **John 9** with the first group of Pharisees. Jesus was making it very clear to the Jewish people who He was. He was making it very clear to them that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, who came into this world to save people from their sins, and He was confirming that message by performing these incredible miracles that were uniquely associated with the coming of the Messiah; but these Pharisees in **John 9**, because of their willful unbelief, continued to stubbornly hold their false standard of what it meant to keep the Sabbath and therefore rejected Christ and His claims in spite of the evidence.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

But there was another group of Pharisees who responded differently to the testimony of the man who had been healed. Let us continue to read **John 9:16**. “**But others were saying, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’**” This statement, expressed in the form of a question, gives us a second syllogism, which comes to a much different conclusion.

Let us look at this syllogism. What was the major premise? Only people who are not sinners can open the eyes of those born blind. And what was the minor premise? Jesus has opened the eyes of this man who had been born blind. And what would be their conclusion if both of these premises were correct? The conclusion would have been that Jesus was not a sinner, or in other words, Jesus was not a Sabbath breaker but must rather be a man sent from God. So, now we know what their conclusion would have been if their premises were correct. But were their premises actually correct?

Since we know that the minor premise is correct, that Jesus had opened the eyes of the one born blind, the only question that we need to concern ourselves with is whether or not the major premise is correct. Was it true what these particular Pharisees were saying, that only people who are from God could open the eyes of those who are born blind?

I believe that the answer is yes! It was true that Satan very well might have been permitted to perform certain miracles to counterfeit the works of God during the time of Christ, but his miraculous activity appears to have been definitely limited to that future period of time known as the Great Tribulation when God will allow Satan to express his supernatural powers in a much greater way.

Because Satan appears to have been operating on a short leash during the time of Christ, compared to the longer leash that he will be permitted to operate on in the time of the great tribulation, I believe that their major premise put forward in **John 9:16**, based on their own personal experience, is most likely correct; which means that the conclusion that Jesus was not a sinner but rather most likely a man sent from God would have also been correct.

Unfortunately, this second syllogism put forward by the second group of Pharisees was rather timid compared to the syllogism put forward by the first group of Pharisees. Notice how the first group put their syllogism forward. They stated it forcefully. The second group of Pharisees presented their syllogism timidly by putting it in the form of question. Though the premises contained in the second syllogism were correct, and the conclusion obvious, this second group of Pharisees failed to state their syllogism *strongly*.

So, how did the Pharisees respond to the testimony of the man, who had been healed, after he confirmed the story that they had heard? It led to a division between the Pharisees represented by competing syllogisms. The first group of Pharisees, who had chosen to focus on their on false standard of what it meant to keep the Sabbath, rejected the claims of Christ strongly. The second group of Pharisees, who had chosen to focus on the miracle that Christ had performed, timidly entertained the claims of Christ. This leads us to the second characteristic of willful unbelief.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The second characteristic of willful unbelief is that it continually seeks *more* evidence (John 9:17). We will see this in **John 9:17-18**.

Let us, first of all, read **John 9:17**. “**They said therefore to the blind man again, ‘What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?’ And He said, ‘He is a prophet.’**” I believe the Pharisees asking this question were most likely the Pharisees who had been focusing on Christ’s miracle rather than those Pharisees who had been focusing on the Sabbath. Or in other words, I believe the Pharisees asking this question were most likely the Pharisees who had put forward the second syllogism rather than the first syllogism. Does it have to be this way? No, it just seems most likely to me that this is the way it was. And if it was, I could easily imagine that the first group of Pharisees would have found this question not only unnecessary but also perhaps irritating.

Regardless of whoever asked this question, what a wonderful opportunity was afforded this blind man. How did he respond? He responded that Jesus was a prophet. When this blind man identified Jesus as a prophet, he was communicating that he believed that Jesus was a man through whom *God* was working.

At this point in time, I would hope that we would begin to admire this former blind man. He had throughout his life been a person of very little earthly consequence, most likely going unnoticed by the world except for the occasional person who would stop and give him alms. I would doubt if any person of note had ever engaged him in any conversation of importance, but here he is standing before these Pharisees, very important people in the Jewish community, proclaiming without hesitation Christ to be a prophet. And he was willing to do this even though he knew, based on what he had already heard, that what he was proclaiming would not be very well received by many, if not most, of those Pharisees.

How did the Pharisees respond to this pronouncement? It appears that those Pharisees who had been focusing on Christ’s violation of the Sabbath, and who had totally discounted the miracle of Christ, went on the offensive and sought to break down the logic of those Pharisees who had put forward the second syllogism.

How did they do this? They did this by unsuccessfully attacking their minor premise by trying to get the parents of this blind man to contradict the testimony of their son. Let us continue to read **John 9:18**. “**The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight.**”

People who continually are seeking more and more evidence, while discounting the evidence they *already* have, are the people most likely guilty of being willfully unbelieving.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

CONCLUSION

We have been called by Christ to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. This, of course, will mean that we will be talking to unbelieving people about Christ. Some of the people, at the point in time we are talking to them, will honestly be searching for the truth, and those encounters will be very positive as they incrementally and methodically will move that much closer to receiving Christ as their Lord and Savior.

But there will probably be many more people, who we will be talking with, that will be willfully unbelieving. They will raise false standards by which to judge the message we are sharing with them and then may proceed to ask us to supply even more evidence that will again be judged by other false standards. If these encounters happen often enough, it could be very discouraging. But it is a good work that Christ has given us to do, and hopefully, we will continue on doing it no matter how difficult the work might be. Why? Let me read for you **Galatians 6:9**.

“And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall *reap* if we do not grow weary” (Galatians 6:9).