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The Blind Man's Healing Investigated John 9:19-34

Those who have embraced Jesus as their Lord and Savior have become new creatures in Christ. They are no longer pigs having to root around in the mud hole of this world, but they are more like eagles able to soar above the trivial in order to embrace the eternal.

As long as true believers choose to focus on this transformation and are enjoying the benefits of that transformation they will not be able to keep themselves from displaying this work that God has done in them, and they will not be able to keep themselves from sharing that work even with those who are willfully unbelieving.

We have begun to see an example of this kind of bold witness in **John 9** as a former blind man interacts with a group of willfully unbelieving Pharisees. In breaking down this interaction between this former blind man and these particular Pharisees, we have begun to isolate various characteristics of willful unbelief.

The first characteristic of willful unbelief is that it sets false standards (John 9:13-16).

Let me read for you **John 9:13-16**. **“They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind. (14) Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. (15) Again, therefore, the Pharisees also were asking him how he received his sight. And he said to them, 'He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.' (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.”**

In these verses the willfully unbelieving Pharisees rejected the possibility that Jesus could have come from God based on a false standard, or in other words, they rejected the possibility that Jesus could have come from God because they mistakenly believed He had broken the Law when He allegedly healed this blind man on the Sabbath. This may have ended the interaction at this point between the blind man and the Pharisees if it were not for the division that broke out between this group of willfully unbelieving Pharisees and another most likely smaller group of Pharisees who disagreed with them. This led to a further interaction between the blind man and the Pharisees, and this led to a second characteristic of willful unbelief. What was the second characteristic?

The second characteristic of willful unbelief is that it insincerely seeks more evidence (John 9:17-18).

Let me read for you **John 9:17-18**. **“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.' (18) The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received his sight.”**

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It would appear that after the division between the Pharisees that they were moved as a group to once again ask the blind man more questions. But even though they sought more evidence, those Pharisees who were willfully unbelieving were only going through the motions and were once again very quick to reject what the blind man was saying, even being led to conclude that the man had never been blind. They may have been seeking more evidence but they were seeking more evidence insincerely. This is where we left off last week.

This weekend we will consider three more characteristics of willful unbelief in the passage that we are examining. My hope for this message, as we consider these final characteristics, is that we would not be discouraged nor intimidated by those who are willfully unbelieving, but rather, we would find ourselves, like this former blind man, so excited about God's work in us that we would find ourselves wanting to putting it on display no matter what the difficulties.

This brings us back to our passage and our examination of the characteristics of the willfully unbelieving. We will now consider the third characteristic. So what is the third characteristic?

The third characteristic of willful unbelief is that it does *biased* research (John 9:19-24). In other words, the research that is done by those who are willfully unbelieving is so prejudiced by a particular viewpoint that they are incapable of seeing the truth.

The man who had been born blind was telling people how Jesus had applied clay to his eyes. He was telling people how he had washed that clay from His eyes per the instructions of Christ at the Pool of Siloam and how this resulted in him being miraculously healed.

This was quite an extraordinary story. And it should have been very easy for these Pharisees researching this story not only to verify the truth of this miracle but also to give the credit for that healing to Jesus. But it was not easy for these Pharisees. Why? It was not easy because their research was biased.

Let us begin by looking at **John 9:19-21**. John 9:19-21 describes for us the Pharisees' interrogation of the blind man's *parents*. Why were they interviewing the parents? They were interviewing the parents because the willfully unbelieving Pharisees were not even willing to accept the fact that this man had been blind.

Let us begin by looking at **John 9:19**. This verse records for us two specific questions that the Pharisees asked the parents as they sought to gather more evidence concerning the alleged miracle.

Let us look at these two questions. The first question was, **“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?”** And the second question was, **“Then how does he now see?”**

So, how did the parents answer the first question? How did they answer the question, **“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?”** Let us look at **John 9:20**. **“His parents answered them and said, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind.'”** This was their answer. This answer by the parents apparently confirmed for the Pharisees that a genuine healing had taken place. But this does not mean that the willfully unbelieving Pharisees were any more inclined to give any credit to Jesus?

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This led the Pharisees to ask the second question, “**Then how does he now see?**” We see their response in **John 9:21**. “**But how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself.**” Why did they answer this way? Did they really not know, or was there a different reason? There was a different reason.

Let us go on to read **John 9:22-23**. “**His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him [Jesus] to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. (23) For this reason his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'**”

Why hadn't these parents chosen to share with these Jews what they knew about the healing of their son? The parents were afraid of sharing what they knew about the healing of their son because they believed that they might be put out of the synagogue (John 9:22-23).

What specifically did it mean to be put out? Being “put out” apparently meant that the person who had been disciplined would be cut off from the social and religious life of the synagogue. Can we be more specific than this? Not really. Extra-biblical materials addressing this particular action, at the time of Christ, do not exist.

But even though we cannot be specific about the particulars of what it meant to be cut off from the synagogue during the time of Christ, the passage makes it very clear that the parents of this former blind man were very fearful of such a thing being initiated against them. Perhaps not only believing that such an action would negatively impact their social and religious life, but also perhaps even believing that such an action might negatively impact their future hope of participating in the resurrection.

So what was the result of their fear? The parents' fear of being put out of the synagogue if they honestly answered the questions of the Pharisees led the parents to suggest that the Pharisees talk to their son (John 9:23). This obviously was not a very considerate or loving thing for them to do. They were, in effect, exposing their son to the same risk that they had chosen, out of fear, to avoid.

So what will happen next? Let us read **John 9:24**. “**So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, 'Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.'**”

The Pharisees, in John 9:24, in talking with the blind man, are not in any mood to ask him any more questions. Rather, they came to him in order to tell him what to do. And what did they tell him to do? They told him to give “**glory to God.**”

When the Pharisees told the man in John 9:24 to give glory to God, it inferred that he should not give glory to Jesus. Why would they want to make sure that the blind man did not give any glory to Jesus? They would have wanted to make sure that the blind man did not give any glory to Jesus because they knew that Jesus was a sinner.

The Pharisees believed that the blind man should give glory to God and not to Jesus, because Jesus, in healing the blind man, violated the Sabbath and was therefore a sinner.

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What an amazing statement for them to make. It was pure nonsense. How could they, on the one hand, declare Christ to be a sinner because He had healed this blind man on the Sabbath, and then, on the other hand, infer that He should get no credit for this miracle?

Accusing Jesus, after their research, of being a sinner but not giving him the credit for the healing was unreasonable, but this conclusion was inevitable because of their bias against Jesus. There was no way that the Pharisees were going to give Christ credit for anything. They were willfully unbelieving, and one of the characteristics of the willful unbelief was biased research and they were clearly biased against Christ.

The first characteristic of willful unbelief is that it sets false standards. The second characteristic of willful unbelief is that it seeks more evidence without honestly dealing with the evidence that has already been presented. And the third characteristic of willful unbelief is that it does biased research. So what is the fourth characteristic?

The fourth characteristic of willful unbelief is that it *rejects* the facts (John 9:25-33).

The Pharisees had come to this blind man and had made a statement to this blind man that, I believe, he would have found ridiculous. Not that they asked him to give glory to God, but, rather, that they called Jesus a sinner. It would have sounded ridiculous to him that the Pharisees would have concluded that Jesus was a sinner. To this blind man, as we shall see, that would have been ridiculous. So how will the blind man respond?

Let us now read **John 9:25**. “**He therefore answered, 'Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.'**” The Jews obviously wanted their conversation with the blind man to focus on how Jesus had broken the Sabbath, but obviously, the blind man had no appetite for this kind of discussion. All that he wanted to do was to once again focus on his healing and, by inference, on the person who had healed him.

So, was this blind man successful at getting them to once again focus on the miracle and, by inference, the person who had healed him? The answer is yes!

Let us now read **John 9:26**. “**They said therefore to him, 'What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?'**”

When the Pharisees called him to come before them for a second time, I don't believe that it was their intent at all to again ask him this question. But the blind man had been successful at redirecting their focus from their misguided theological assertion back to the question that they had originally asked in **John 9:15**. And as soon as they did it, this blind man, without any hesitancy or thought for himself, went on the offensive.

Let us read **John 9:27**. “**He answered them, 'I told you already, and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?'**”

I believe that at this point in time this blind man, who had been healed by Christ, had no reason to believe that these Jews were entertaining the thought of becoming Christ's disciples.

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When we read John 9:27, we should view this statement as sarcasm. This former blind man, in the use of *sarcasm* in John 9:27, appears to be rebuking the Pharisees for their willful unbelief while bearing witness to his own allegiance to Jesus as a prophet of God.

Was this blind man a chip off the old block? Was this blind man so paralyzed with fear, as his parents had been, that he was unwilling to bear witness to what he knew and what he believed? Absolutely not! This man who had just a few days earlier had gone unnoticed by most of the world as he begged alms on the side of the road was forcefully and effectively bearing witness to the work of God that had been displayed in Him through Christ, and he was not backing down. He, in the face of this willful unbelief, was not in the least bit fearful.

Are you there this weekend? Are you so convinced of God's miraculous work in you that you are determined to put that work on display with the same determination as this former blind man? Or has the memory of your spiritual healing so faded from your memory that you are no longer bold in the face of willful unbelief but timid and fearful? Who are you most like? Are you most like the former blind man or the parents of this former blind man?

So, how will these willfully unbelieving Pharisees respond to this rebuke by this former blind man? How will they respond to the former blind man's sarcasm after he asked them if they wanted to become His disciples too?

Let us read **John 9:28-29**. “**And they reviled him, and said, 'You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. (29) We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.'**”

Their response to his sarcasm was to revile him. Their eyes were pinpoints. Their faces were flushed and their teeth set. They wanted him to bow to their assessment of Christ and he was not bowing, so with a self-satisfied arrogance, they refer to themselves as disciples of Moses, derogatorily referring to him as a disciple of Christ.

The Pharisees, in reviling the former blind man as a disciple of Christ but not, like themselves, a disciple of Moses, had made a serious error in judgment. If the Pharisees, as they claimed, were the disciples of *Moses*, then they, like the blind man, would have become disciples of Christ (John 5:46-47).

Let me read **John 5:46-47**. Christ is speaking, and this is what He said to the Jews. “**For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. (47) But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words.**”

The Pharisees certainly were not the disciples of Christ, but neither were they the disciples of Moses. What a tragic picture they are.

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They thought of themselves as spiritually knowledgeable. They thought of themselves as spiritually mature. And certainly, for the most part, this is how the Jewish people viewed them in general. But they were about to be dressed down by this lowly former beggar.

Let us now read **John 9:30-33**. “**The man answered and said to them, 'Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. (31) We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him. (32) Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. (33) If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.'**”

The Pharisees were attempting in John 9:28-29 to make the blind man look foolish, but instead they made themselves look foolish to the *blind* man (John 9:30).

The blind man found their statement, about them not knowing where Jesus was from, incredulous. How could those who represented themselves as the disciple of Moses and the spiritual guides of Israel not know the answer to this question in view of the fact that Jesus had opened his eyes? Since the Pharisees were so ignorant of something that was so obvious, the blind man chose to *instruct* the Pharisees by using a syllogism in verses 30-33.

What was major premise? The major premise was God does not hear sinners. And what was the minor premise? The minor premise was God heard Christ. So what was the conclusion of the blind man based on his major and minor premise in **John 9:33**? “**If this man [Jesus] were not from God; He could do nothing.**”

The conclusion of the blind man's syllogism, based on facts that these willfully unbelieving Pharisees had rejected, was that Jesus was from God (John 9:33), or in other words, if Jesus had not been sent from God, then God would not have heard him.

The Pharisees told the blind man that they did not know where Jesus was from. The blind man had no such problem answering that question for them. The parents of this blind man were fearful. But this former blind man is absolutely fearless when it comes making sure that God's work in him through Christ is put on display. But his persistent attempts to do this will only lead to more trouble for himself.

The Pharisees' pride had now been severely wounded by the blind man's attempt to instruct them concerning the origin of Christ, and this wounding of their pride leads us to the fifth and final characteristic of willful unbelief that we find in this passage.

The fifth characteristic of willful unbelief is that it is *egocentric* (John 9:34). Let us now read **John 9:34**. “**You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us? And they put him out.**” The blind man was right in what he said, but these Pharisees were unable to receive it because of their own pride and arrogance. They could not bring themselves to think that someone so lowly as this former blind beggar could teach them anything. How lowly was he? He had been born entirely in his sins.

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What do the Pharisees mean when they say to the blind man he was born entirely in his sins? When the Pharisees told the man that he had been born entirely in sins, they were communicating their belief that his former blindness was the result of his, or his parents' sin.

When these Pharisees looked at this former blind man, they probably could not have imagined a lowlier individual, and yet this person had the audacity to instruct them. This was the last straw for these egocentric Pharisees. And it tells us that they put him out, or in other words, they cut him off from the social and religious life of the synagogue.

CONCLUSION

The blind man was faithful in bearing witness to the work of God on his behalf in spite of how the willfully unbelieving Pharisees responded. He was faithful even when their false standards, their insincere pursuit of more evidence, their biased research, their rejection of the facts, and finally their egocentric approach to life led the Pharisees to put him out of the synagogue.

He was able to do this because he was focusing on his miraculous transformation rather than on the stuff of this world. May God give us the same grace to focus on our transformation rather than the stuff of this world! But even more than this, may God give us the grace to be as faithful in bearing witness to the work of God in us as this blind man, no matter how the willfully unbelieving might respond.