

JOH 9:16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided. 17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." 18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. 19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" 20 "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. 21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." 24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

As we have seen over the last couple of weeks our text has been dealing with a man born blind and Jesus has chosen to give the man his sight back which, as He says, is done “so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

To have congenital blindness and in a moment to be able to see perfectly is nothing short of a miracle. And this miracle is to bring glory to the One who performed it, who is none other than God.

And this is really the issue with the Jews who question this; is God in their midst?, which is what we saw last week in verse sixteen.

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These people needed to come to grips with who this Jesus is and what authority He possesses, because if He is an impostor, as the one group believes, then the best thing the leaders in Israel can do is to make sure He doesn't lead the nation astray.

However, if He is who He claims to be, the Messiah of Israel, then the best thing they can do is to embrace Him by faith and promote Him throughout the nation of Israel. But because there does not

seem to be an overwhelming consensus among these particular Pharisees they seek a third opinion. They turn to the man who was healed.

JOH 9:17 Finally they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet."

Keep in mind the setting of this encounter at this point. All of Jerusalem is a buzz regarding this miracle. Since Jesus apparently cannot be found to verify what has happened they turn to the one who is the recipient of this miracle.

The Pharisees are told that Jesus is the one who was responsible and that He did it on a Sabbath. Since this is exactly what the Pharisees condemned Jesus for in the past this only adds to their hatred of Him.

But this interrogation of the blind man by the Pharisees was not convened to get information so as to become sympathetic to Jesus' ministry. They were looking for anything that would further condemn Him so as to justify any action they could take to get rid of Him.

And so, when they turn to the blind man and ask the question, "What have you to say about him?" This question is designed to intimidate this beggar into acquiescing to their preconceived idea of who Jesus is; a sinner who will not keep the law.

Now, if anybody is going to be intimidated it would be a person who is on the lowest rung of the ladder in Israel who is looking up to a group of people who are on the highest rung. It would be a person who is considered as one deserving his blindness because of some sin in his life, or the life of his parents.

But when asked the question, "what have you to say about him,?" the last thing they expected this nobody to say was, "He is a prophet."

And yet that is exactly what he says. This is the same man who only a short time before, when his neighbors asked the same question, replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes."

He didn't know who this miracle worker was. He didn't even know his name. But in the span of only a short time he has gone from grasping for his name to declaring that this man they call Jesus is

none other than a prophet. And he is making this declaration in front of the most powerful religious leaders in Israel, who are looking for a different answer.

What makes a person testify like this? Well, it should be the same reason you or I would make such a testimony. We, like this former blind man, have had a personal encounter with the living God found in Christ Jesus.

For this man to make such a statement under the circumstances proves that he has a conviction which not even these leaders can shake. He boldly declares, he is a prophet.

To make such a statement is to declare that this man Jesus is the mouthpiece for God. And if He is the mouthpiece for God it places the Pharisees in a very precarious position since they have already accused Jesus of being a sinner, which by the way means more than one who can sin, but rather one who is immoral.

This former blind man is making the same statement about Jesus that the Samaritan woman at the well made, and the same statement the crowds made when Jesus fed the thousands.

JOH 6:14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

But the problem with most of these Pharisees is that they could not believe that Jesus was a representative for God because He did not fit their preconceived idea of what a prophet of God was. They had already made up their minds that this Jesus was a sinner because he didn't bow to the Pharisees.

What Jesus taught and what Jesus did was 180 degrees out of sync with what these Pharisees were doing, which was simply pursuing and then maintaining what power they had for their own purposes.

They were not shepherds of Israel. They were wolves in sheep's clothing. And though these religious giants would not see, a poor blind beggar has his eyes opened both physically and spiritually and is therefore towering over these religious leaders in the sense that he acknowledges that this Jesus is God's man.

But of course their pride will not allow them to concede to this man's appraisal of who Jesus is and they do this by questioning the man's veracity or truthfulness.

JOH 9:18 The Jews still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

This is the last line of defense for the Pharisees. If they are going to discredit the testimony of this vagrant beggar then what better way of doing it than by calling in the parents who can testify that this man who now sees is not really their son, or that he was never really blind.

JOH 9:19 "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

Notice how they try and intimidate the parents by suggesting that they are the one's who are claiming that his son was born blind and that now he can see. The Pharisees use this tactic to place the parents on trial in one sense, with the express purpose of forcing them to bear false testimony about their son, or at least to raise a question about their son's testimony.

This is all a power play on the part of the Pharisees. They are trying to sway the testimony in their favor, knowing that the parents may be more susceptible to such intimidation since it didn't work on the son.

The Pharisees ask the parents of this beggar three questions:

"Is this your son?"

"Is this the one you say was born blind?"

"How is it that now he can see?"

To the first two questions the parents acknowledge in verse twenty that, "yes, this is our son, and yes, he was born blind."

This immediately takes the teeth out of the accusations the Pharisees lay at the feet of this former blind man since they can no longer use this against him. The Mosaic Law says that two witnesses are needed in such matters to accuse a person. Now we've got two witnesses who concede that what the man said was true.

What this means, and what this forced the Pharisees to come to grips with, is that this former blind man was obviously healed miraculously. They could no longer deny this in a legal setting, which is what this inquiry is all about. This is a formal investigation. And the facts are not supporting their case against the one born blind.

But despite how they must concede that he was healed miraculously, they are not ready to concede that Jesus was the one sent from God to accomplish such things. They could conceivably make the case that God did do a miracle in this blind man's life, but He may have done it despite Jesus' apparent involvement, which is what precipitates the third question.

"How is it that now he can see?" This is a question which the parents can't honestly answer since they weren't there when Jesus put the mud on their son's eyes and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam.

And by the way, this was a question which was designed to condemn Jesus no matter how the parents answered. For example, if the parents answered that Jesus did in fact put the mud on their son's eyes and told him to go and wash, the Pharisees would simply point back to the law which says you cannot do such work on the Sabbath.

And so, the issue of the miracle is taken out of the equation because it reverts back to their original premise that Jesus is a sinner since He will not obey the law.

But the parents are not stupid and the last thing they want to do is to get in the middle of this dispute and in the process jeopardize their standing in the community of the Jews.

JOH 9:21 But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."

They don't want to get involved despite the fact that this is their son who can now see for the first time in his life. But this shows the difference in testimony from one who has personally met the Savior and one who only knows about the Savior.

The one whom Christ touched boldly speaks of the man he now calls prophet despite the fact that he knew the Pharisees were looking for a different answer. But the parents, knowing that the Pharisees want a different answer, simply avoid the whole issue by turning the problem back over to their son.

They are willing to feed their son to the lions than to acknowledge the obvious; that Jesus is God's man and can heal the blind.

This, by the way, is the grace of God in action in the life of this former blind man. God has given him eyes to see in a way that his parents and these Pharisees could not see. And the Lord has given

him a conviction and a boldness which only the Spirit of God could accomplish in a person's life.

This is why Peter could pray the way he did when he and John were persecuted by these same Pharisees after Christ rose from the dead.

ACT 4:29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

The parents of this man were more concerned with men than for the God who gave their son his sight back. This is what we read in the next verse.

JOH 9:22-23 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for already the Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. 23 That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

And so, what we see is that the parents of this man chose to secure their religious status in Jerusalem rather than their status before God. And this is what we see in the world today. There are lots of religious people. In fact, there are lots of religious people in the church world-wide, but when it comes to pleasing God, or pleasing men they will often gravitate towards men.

Why? Because it's hard to please someone you don't know.

ROM 8:8-9 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

In other words, if you have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ you are not sealed by the Spirit for the day of redemption and you are not a child of God. If you have believed on Christ you are indwelt by the Spirit and sealed for the day of redemption. You belong to the Lord.

But this doesn't mean that a true believer is not prone to want to please men rather than God at any given time in their lives.

And this attitude is usually the result of a Christian choosing the path of least resistance. In this world whenever we choose to follow Christ and be His servant there will always be resistance; either from people in this world, the enemy or even our own flesh.

To follow Christ faithfully will always entail some sort of resistance, and will always tempt us to compromise our faith as we go forward in the truth. This is why Paul told the Galatians that he would never be willing to compromise the gospel of Christ no matter who came against him. And he put it in the context of pleasing men or God.

GAL 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

In that little statement, “If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ,” Paul makes it abundantly clear that serving Christ takes a commitment in a world where few are willing to take a stand if that means opposition, or inconvenience.

I wish I could tell you that once we come to faith in Christ that all of a sudden the world becomes a better place. I wish I could tell you that once we trust in Christ that people will come out the woodwork to congratulate us and ask how they too can have this wonderful life.

This doesn't mean that the life we have in Christ isn't wonderful and can give us a joy beyond anything in this world, but it's a life which understands that once we make the choice to go God's way, there will be the reality of entering into a spiritual war.

And the word war is not an understatement, nor is it given to us by God by mistake. It's true that we have a peace in Christ that passes understanding, but it's a peace in the midst of war.

Since nobody likes war we may find ourselves wanting to make peace at any cost. And sometimes that peace comes from trying to make peace with the world, and that's where we have a tendency to be men pleasers instead of God pleasers.

Only warriors are willing to go into the battle. Only soldiers of Christ will fight the good fight. Only servants will follow their master in spite of the world telling us that it's okay to be religious, just don't be a Jesus freak sold out to God.

And why do they say that? Because they're not willing to be sold out to Christ and you know how misery loves company.

This brand new baby servant of Christ, found in our text, who once was blind but now can see, will not compromise for the Pharisees,

despite how his parents would, because he can't deny what has happened to him and he can't deny who did it.

And so, he can join with another servant of Christ, the apostle Paul, who told the Thessalonians: "We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts." (1TH 2:4)

If we have a heart for God then when the tests come we will be found faithful. And even if we fail the test God's grace and strength will still be available for us to seek after. We just need to be willing to seek Him diligently.

Well, the parents turn out not to be very useful to the Pharisees since they won't give them the answer they're looking for, and so they call the son back in for further interrogation.

JOH 9:24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

You talk about stacking the deck. This would be like a judge in a murder case asking us to falsely testify about someone we knew was innocent. Can you imagine the bailiff saying, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God? And then adding for the whole court to hear, 'but keep in mind that if your testimony is not aligned with our verdict you will be held in contempt of court.'

This is exactly what these Pharisees are saying to this man.

"Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

The statement, give glory to God was a colloquial way of saying, now tell us the truth in light of what we know about this man, or suffer God's judgment.

But they weren't looking for the truth. They had already made up their minds. And so, they were asking this man to follow in the steps of his parents and submit to their pressure, by telling them what they wanted to hear.

But this man cannot tell them what they want to hear without denying God. And so, he has chosen to be a God-pleaser, rather than a man-pleaser, in light of the fact that what his parents feared, in terms of being put out of the Synagogue, might come true in his case.

But he chooses light and life over the religious institution which continues to promote a form of godliness, but is not the real thing.

And unfortunately, this can be said of certain portions of the church today. These types of churches may promote very noble and needed services to the community. They may have bake sales to help the youth go to camp. They may even talk about Jesus on Sunday mornings.

But when it comes to standing on the truth, more times than not, many of these churches who name the name of Christ decide it's easier to deal with the niceties of life rather than stand on the rock which might demand a decision to stand for God.

And so, when the politically correct crowd says you can't teach on certain issues of sin, like homosexuality, without being accused of a hate crime, many churches just decide that they won't raise the issue.

So what if their youth leader might be a homosexual. Until he commits a crime it's no business of ours to make him or any one feel uncomfortable. It's like the no ask, no tell policy of the military.

And besides, if we make an accusation, even if it's true, we can't afford the law suit which will surely ensue, and which this person will certainly win.

Now, I'm not suggesting that any church make false accusations, or that we should target only one type of sin in light of what the Scriptures teach. But if the word of God is clear on any issue, be it the lost condition of men outside of Christ, or adultery, we need to be willing to lovingly tell people the truth for the sake of reconciling them to the Father through faith in Christ.

There are churches today in this country who aren't even willing to do that. To bring up the issue of sin for some of these churches is to defeat the purpose of making people feel good about themselves. And so, they replace the gospel of Jesus Christ with a gospel of self-esteem.

And if you think this is not the case just listen to the words of Robert Schuller as taken from the web site called Apologetics Index.

Robert Schuller was addressing a group of Unity ministers and ministers in training, at the Unity School of Christianity (a Mind-science cult).

"Schuller was asked, 'Dr. Schuller, we hear a lot of talk these days about the New Age, the Age of Aquarius, the type of New Age thinking that we are involved in with Holistic healing and various other things that are part of what is called the New Age. Will you describe the role of what you might consider the New Age minister in the '80s and beyond?'"

"Schuller replied, 'Well, I think it depends upon where you're working. I believe that the responsibility in this Age is to 'positivize' religion. Now this probably doesn't have much bearing to you people, being Unity people, you're positive. But I talk a great deal to groups that are not positive... even to what we would call Fundamentalists who deal constantly with words like sin, salvation, repentance, guilt, that sort of thing.'"

"So when I'm dealing with these people... what we have to do is positivize the words that have classically only had a negative interpretation." "The classical interpretation of this teaching of Christ on 'bearing our cross' desperately needs reformation...."

"The cross Christ calls us to bear will be offered as a dream... an inspiring idea that would incarnate itself in a form of ministry that helps the self-esteem-impoverished persons to discover their self-worth through salvation and subsequent social service in our Savior's name..."

"So the proclamation of possibility thinking is the positive proclamation of the cross!..."

"Christ was the world's greatest possibility thinker. Do we dare follow him?" "Self-Esteem," pp. 22, 117-19

If this isn't a man-pleasers approach to the gospel of Jesus Christ I don't know what is. And if teaching the truth about sin and salvation in Christ alone keeps us from having our own crystal cathedral, then I'll take the media room in Port Charlotte Middle School any day.

"Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

This is the height of hypocrisy. These Pharisees were charged by God to give Him glory as they taught the truth of the Scriptures regarding the Messiah. Instead they push people away from Him

and accuse the very God, who came into this world as He took on flesh, of being a sinner.

Who would make such a statement? Someone who is blind and lost. And the irony here is that the one who was blind is trying to bring light to these Pharisees who will not see.

That's the problem with all people outside of Christ. And though the world accuses us of being out of touch with reality we need to continue to love them with the truth, because if the truth be known we were all in the dark at one time until the Lord opened our eyes.

Paul put it this way.

2CO 4:4-6 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

EPH 5:8-10 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light. 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord.