

John 9:25-34 “How to Get Thrown out of Synagogue”

JOH 9:24-34 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" 28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Our text has taken us from discovering a blind beggar on the streets of Jerusalem, totally dependent on the mercy of men to support him, to being given his sight back by Jesus Christ, to now having to answer for his new found condition before the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

It is this last group of people who are skeptical of his new found sight and condemning of the one they suspect who may have been involved. And so, to bring disrepute to Jesus Christ they try and intimidate this former blind beggar into agreeing with their charges that Jesus is a sinner who could not possibly be used by God, let alone be sent by God to save Israel, which is where we left off last week.

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."

Whatever they felt about Jesus Christ, and with whatever tactic they use to try and intimidate this man born blind, it seems apparent that this former beggar has been transformed in such a way that he is not willing to compromise his benefactor whom these leaders accuse of being a sinner.

JOH 9:25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

At first glance it appears that maybe he is confused as to what Jesus might be, a sinner or not. But as we look at the context it becomes apparent that his answer is one which really confronts the conclusion these religious leaders arrive at, because he takes them back to the truth of what has happened, which in his mind could not have happened at the hands of a sinner.

And so, what he is essentially saying in this verse is, I don't know how you arrive at your conclusion that this Jesus is a sinner, the real issue is I once was blind, but now I can see. Whether you think He's a sinner or not doesn't change my condition. And with that logic they have to agree.

JOH 9:26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

Now we might think that they've reached the point where they really want to know how all of this transpired so as to give credit where credit is due. But remember that this is the same group of Pharisees who on an earlier occasion condemned Jesus for healing a lame man on the Sabbath.

And so, we need to understand that their questioning is being done to support their hate for Jesus not for verifying this former blind man's contention that Jesus is a prophet. And the man they're questioning understands this tactic. He knows they have a different agenda. And quite honestly he's becoming a little agitated that they're not willing to believe his story the first time he told it.

JOH 9:27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

Now, don't think for a moment that these Pharisees want to become disciples, or followers of Jesus Christ, and this man knows it. In fact, he makes the point that they weren't even listening to his story. And so, what he has done is to rebuke them for being disingenuous.

Well, these Pharisees aren't going to be spoken to like this, especially from a man who is considered the lowest form of scum in Israel. Their pride would never allow him to get away with that remark in light of them accusing Jesus of being an immoral heretic. "Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

Here an unlearned man who has no place in Israel practices a form of wisdom these Pharisees don't know how to respond to as he puts Proverbs 26:5 into action.

PRO 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

What this means is to point out to the one who is not thinking clearly the utter absurdity of their reasoning. It doesn't mean to denigrate someone in the process, though your answer will likely be taken that way by the one who is being confronted.

By the way, if you were to go to Proverbs 26:5 and back up one verse you would find the exact opposite advice in verse 4.

PRO 26:4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

There are those who would look at this and say, see, the bible contradicts itself. In one verse it clearly states not to answer a fool according to his folly, and the very next verse says to answer a fool according to his folly.

Well, unless Solomon, who wrote those words, was having a schizophrenic moment he obviously knew what he was doing. A.W. Pink, in his commentary on John, suggests that verse 4 of Proverbs 26 is saying don't answer a fool in a foolish way or you will become like him.

But verse 5 would suggest to answer a fool in a way that allows him to see the deficiency in his argument. One answer makes two fools, while the other answer reveals only the one. This former blind beggar turns out to be no fool and the Pharisees reveal what they are.

JOH 9:28 Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!"

Instead of dealing with the man's accusation they revert back to what we discussed a couple of weeks ago, and that is ad hominem. If you don't have an answer for your opponent call him names and accuse him of everything in the book, or just change the subject.

By the way, you'll notice that the words that follow the statement, "they hurled insults at him," are not the insults, but a statement of who belongs to whom. I find it fascinating that religious and pious looking people, on the one hand can appear holy, and yet when

they open their mouths in anger they can speak trash with the best of them.

The word insults in the Greek is a word which is very strong and implies that they hurled all sorts of anathemas and abusive language at this man. And as Pink says, "whenever you find men calling their opponents hard names, it is a sure sign that their own cause has been defeated."

But what follows their abusive responses is a premise that is also partly false. "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!

The true part of that statement is that this man was in fact demonstrating, through his apparent allegiance to Jesus, that he was a disciple or follower, although prior to his sight being restored he was not.

Only now, even though he was not literally following after the Lord, he was revealing a side of him which was just as committed as Peter, John and the rest of the disciples who did in fact follow the Lord.

And so, part of the common denominator of being a disciple of Christ is one who trusts Jesus, first and foremost, as did this former blind man who had now received his sight at the hands of Christ.

After trust comes the willingness to truly follow, not before. And at this point in this beggar's life he is willing to show his allegiance to Christ with a testimony of truth without compromise. Yes, these Pharisees were right that he was this fellow's disciple.

But they were wrong when they align themselves with being a disciple of Moses. If they were truly disciples of Moses they would have believed Moses when he spoke of the Christ. This is exactly what our Lord pointed out to the leaders earlier in this gospel.

JOH 5:45-47 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

Well, someone might say, when in the world did Moses write about Christ? How about the book of Genesis when Moses recorded these words given to Him by the Holy Spirit who promised a Savior.

GEN 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

What about the book of Deuteronomy where Moses wrote this.

DEU 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

The entire word of God speaks of Jesus Christ and His mission to bring sinful men back into a right relationship with Himself as He, the eternal Son of God, would come into this world as a man and take the penalty of our sin as He paid it in full, once and for all time, as He died on that cross and rose from the dead. It is finished.

Jesus made the issue of Moses and the prophets speaking about the Christ abundantly clear after He rose from the dead when He confronted some of His followers on the road to Emmaus who were distraught because their Master had died. When the risen Christ approaches them He asks them why they're so depressed.

LUK 24:24-27 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." 25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 ***And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.***

And of course the Scriptures He used to explain Himself had to be all of the Old Testament Scriptures, since at the time of His resurrection no New Testament book was written.

But the issue for these Pharisees is not that Moses didn't speak of the Christ, but that they weren't willing to listen since they didn't have ears to hear. They had already made up their minds and thus they were not the disciples of Moses they thought they were. They were deceived, and no amount of retort from this former blind man was going to change that, despite the living miracle standing before them.

In fact, even if this former blind man had died and Jesus brought him back from the dead they still would not have believed. This is precisely what Jesus taught the Jews about the rich man and Lazarus.

When both of them died the rich man went to hell while poor Lazarus went to heaven where Abraham was. The rich man asked Abraham to warn his relatives not to take the same path of unbelief, and Abraham responded this way.

LUK 16:29-31 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, ***'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'***"

This was the mode these Pharisees were in. They would not have believed on Christ if He sent them someone back from the dead, and so they certainly were not going to believe on Him and be one of His disciples as the Lord sends them a messenger, who only hours before was on the streets, blind and begging for his next meal.

And so, it shouldn't surprise us today when people reject the truth of who Christ is even when we give them such a convincing argument that Jesus must be the only Savior of the world, according to the word of God.

The problem is not in the argument, the problem is with the sinful condition of man's heart who, despite being given the truth of Christ, will not see because they love the darkness rather than the light.

Does this mean we should not give people the truth and the light of God's word? Of course we should, but we should also pray that the Holy Spirit does a work in their hearts so they will have eyes to see and ears to hear and they embrace the truth and be saved from the penalty of their sins.

And yet, despite the Pharisees' insistence that they are followers of Moses, who agree that God spoke to Moses, they won't agree that God spoke to Moses about Jesus Christ. They deny Him.

In fact, they conclude, despite all of the evidence that Jesus is sent from the Father, that they don't know where He is from.

JOH 9:29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

Well, they do know. They know that He comes from the region of Galilee where He spent a great deal of His life. They know He

came to Jerusalem from this region because they had planned to kill Him once He arrived from Galilee.

When Jesus and His brothers were going to go from Galilee to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles His brothers encouraged Him to enter Jerusalem with great fanfare. But Jesus declines and tells them to go on ahead.

JOH 7:8-11, 25 You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." 9 Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. 10 However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. 11 Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?" 25 At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?"

The Pharisees knew a great deal about Jesus. Their question is not really concerned with His geographic origins, but where His authority comes from. And so, when they say, "we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from," they mean to say that we know that Moses was sent from God, but we're not convinced this Jesus is sent from God.

We didn't ordain Him a prophet. We don't know where He came from with this supposed authority, despite the fact that all along Jesus has been saying to them that He came from the Father.

And yet the irony in all of this is that despite them saying they believe what Moses wrote, they continue to deny that He wrote of Jesus. They don't believe that He has been called by God to a prophetic office of declaring God's truth to men, like this former blind beggar believes.

In other words, they continue to show their disdain for Jesus despite how all of the facts point to Jesus as being the One Moses wrote about as our Lord proves for them that He is sent from God; the beggar being that proof.

And of course this beggar can't help but point out once again the folly of their reasoning since, as they question the authority of Christ's power, they in turn question the veracity of this man's testimony. And in that they continue to call this man a liar, as one who is deceived.

JOH 9:30-33 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We

know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

When this man says that it is remarkable that they don't know where Jesus is from, since He opened my eyes, he is stating unequivocally that if you guys don't know where He is from then how will anyone in Israel who depends on your wisdom and knowledge on such matters, ever know who this Jesus is?

He is placing the responsibility of being spiritual leaders back in their laps and not having to depend on a former blind beggar to give them a clue. This is a rebuke from a "nobody", in their eyes.

And yet, it is poetic justice in God's economy as out of the mouth of a babe comes a truth from God, as the Lord uses this man to accuse them of being derelict in their duties to teach the nation of Israel, according to the word of God, concerning the things of the Messiah.

And they can hear that rebuke clearly though they don't accept it as coming from God, but from a bum in the streets who's got more chutzpa than they can handle.

Notice what he says. "You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes."

How many people in Israel were opening the eyes of the blind during those days? I think it would be fair to say no one, with the exception of Jesus. Well, if only one person in all of Israel were doing these things why is it that these Pharisees were not doing a fair examination of who this Jesus might be according to the claims of Jesus Himself?

That's the argument this man starts with, which is brilliant. And by the way, before we heap too much credit on the shoulders on this former blind man we must go back to what we discussed last week when we showed how when God calls a sinner to Himself and opens his eyes and gives him life it is God who bestows the kind of wisdom to defend the truth.

It's not as though this former blind man had taken a quickie course on apologetics to be able to go toe to toe with these Pharisees. He was only being a witness as the Lord gave him utterance, which by the way is the exact same thing Jesus told His other disciples.

MAT 10:18-20 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

That is what is taking place here with this man before the Sanhedrin. The Lord is speaking through him to testify that Jesus Christ is God and Savior. He goes on to rebuke these Pharisees regarding what they are trying to attribute to Jesus, whom they claim is a sinner.

JOH 9:31-33 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

He confronts their argument that Jesus is a sinner by reminding them that God does not work through such people, but rather works through the godly man who does His will.

By the way, verse 31 is not to be taken out of its context. The context has the Pharisees saying that Jesus cannot do the works of God because He is a sinner. The former blind man says that if they follow that argument then how do they explain the obvious which is that Jesus did in fact heal him?

And the reason I bring this is up is because God most certainly listens to certain sinners. What were we when we cried out to Christ for forgiveness? We were sinners in need of a Savior.

We could say the same thing of people like Ishmael who we know was not the chosen seed of Abraham through whom the nation of Israel would come. In fact, when the Scriptures speak of those who are called by the Lord, and those who aren't, Ishmael's name comes up as one who is not on God's side.

The present day Arabs who fight against Israel are associated with Ishmael. And yet, when both Hagar and Ishmael were banished from Abraham's camp, as Sarah demanded they be, God heard the cries of Hagar and the child Ishmael.

Balaam was serving the Moabites who fought against Israel and yet the Lord spoke to him and used him to protect Israel. When Balaam prayed to God for guidance the Lord answered his prayers

and yet we are told that Balaam was a sinner who conspired against Israel.

Jesus, speaking to the church at Pergamum in the book of Revelation, says this about Balaam.

REV 2:14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.

Now granted, the normal course of action from God is to work exclusively through His people who believe on Him, as they are used to carry out His will in this world, as they go forward for Jesus Christ.

But it doesn't mean that God has not in the past, nor even in the present, can't listen to and answer anyone who calls on Him, but the former blind man was pointing out that in the mistaken theology of these Pharisees Jesus should never have been able to heal him, if He was the sinner these Pharisees made him out to be.

JOH 9:31-33 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

This man points out that God has set a precedent through Jesus Christ. Up to this point in redemptive history, going all the way back to the beginning of Genesis, no place in the Scriptures is someone healed of congenital blindness.

This is a first. But that's not really the point. The point is that God is revealing to these Pharisees that Jesus is the legitimate Son of God sent from the Father who promised that His Messiah would fulfill such things both physically and spiritually.

ISA 29:18-19 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. 19 Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

ISA 42:6-8 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the

dungeon those who sit in darkness. 8 "I am the LORD; that is my name!

When John the Baptist was taken captive by Herod he questioned whether or not Jesus was the promised one. John's disciples brought that concern to Jesus.

MAT 11:4-6 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 6 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

Our Lord was saying, what the Scriptures foretold of the works of the Messiah, Jesus was fulfilling and these Pharisees needed to be reminded of these things by a beggar, who has found the bread of life; the Savior called Jesus. And yet they reject Him outright. Oh, the hardness of men's hearts.

But in rejecting this man's testimony these Pharisees did him the greatest favor.

JOH 9:34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Next week we'll see how this was the best thing that could ever happen to this man.