



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

John 9:13-23: The Reaction of the Pharisees to the Healing of the Blind Man

"They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."

Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Background Notes

The healing of the blind man in John 9 is the sixth "sign miracle" in the Gospel of John. In John 20:30-31 we read, *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* The healing of the blind man is one of the seven sign miracles in the Gospel of John. These miracles were specifically selected to point up the deity of Christ, so that believing that Jesus is truly the Son of God, you may have life in His name. Certainly the healing of a blind man from birth would back up the Lord's claim that He was the Messiah – the Son of God.

When the healed man was brought before the Pharisees and they were told about the miracle, they had different reactions. (Remember, the Pharisees were a self-righteous, rigidly religious group within Judaism at that time.) Some of these religious leaders found fault with Jesus for breaking the Sabbath! The fact that the Lord took some clay, made it into mud and put it on the man's eyes – they claimed that Jesus had broken the laws about not working on the Sabbath, because they considered that making clay and healing was "work"! It seems that the Lord, by the way, **purposely** healed on the Sabbath a number of times – in order to force this issue, to show the true meaning of the Sabbath. The Mosaic Law didn't say that healing a person was breaking the law about resting on the Sabbath – that idea was all man-made.

Other Pharisees denied the miracle and wanted further proof. Look at verse 18: *"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight."* However, some of the Pharisees had a different opinion. *"Therefore some of the Pharisees said, 'This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them"(v16).*

Nicodemus may have been one of the Pharisees in that latter category in verse 16. (And maybe Joseph of Arimathea as well – like Nicodemus, he was a Jewish leader -- the rich man in whose tomb the Lord was buried.) Do you remember what Nicodemus said when he came at night to visit Jesus? John 3:2: *"Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."* Note, by the way, the plural "signs." In John 3 Nicodemus said "these signs," and the plural word is used again here in verse 16: *"Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?'"* The Pharisees were aware of the many miracles that Jesus was doing. It could not be denied that the Lord had supernatural power. This division within the Pharisees leads us to our first doctrinal point from this section of John 9.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. People are divided when confronted with the miracles of Christ.

Once again, verse 16: *"Therefore some of the Pharisees said, 'This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?' And there was a division among them."* The Pharisees were divided because of the miracles of Christ. Some denied them -- no matter how much evidence was presented, they wouldn't believe. Others admitted the miracles, and some of them, like Nicodemus, became believers.

The same is true today; people are divided when confronted with the miracles of Christ. A few years ago I was involved in a religious discussion with a number of university students who were not Christians. They were all more or less united in their opinion that Jesus was a "good man," but when the subject of His miracles came up, the group was instantly divided. Some were closed-minded -- they refused to believe the miracles of Christ, no matter what was presented as evidence. Others were more open to the possibility that Jesus did miracles. Those students were the ones with whom I was able to talk further about the claims of Christ.

People are divided when they are confronted with the miracles of Christ because the miracles focus attention on the claim of the Lord Jesus to be God -- His claim to deity! Jesus **had** to be **more** than just a good man if He did the miracles. So if you're in a conversation with unbelievers and you want to steer the conversation around to the question of Christ's deity, mention His miracles. You will find widely differing opinions, reflecting different levels of openness to the truth of the deity of Christ. People are divided when confronted with the miracles of Christ.

2. Religious threats carry enormous power.

When the Pharisees asked the parents of the healed man to explain what had happened, they said, *"We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is*

of age; ask him. He will speak for himself”(v20-21). So the parents “bounced the ball back into their son’s court.” Why did they do that? Verse 22 explains it: “His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue.”

His parents said these things because they feared the Jewish leaders. They had already agreed that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, that person would be put out of the synagogue. Why did the man’s parents fear the Jews? They didn’t want to be excommunicated from the synagogue! They were being threatened to **not** tell the truth, but to say what the Pharisees wanted to hear, or else be kicked out or excommunicated from the synagogue. The parents didn’t want to risk this because being put out of the synagogue would affect their social status, their reputations, and it would even affect their livelihood. Religious threats carry enormous power.

The same situation occurs today. For example, if an Orthodox Jew becomes a Christian today, he or she is cut off from family, from friends, and from social and religious circles. One of my students, a Jewish girl who had become a Christian, told me that when she was considering becoming a Christian, her father threatened her with being put out of the house – he said he would disown her if she became a Christian! For her, becoming a Christian was not an easy decision -- but she did become a Christian, and sadly, her father did disown her. Religious threats carry enormous power.

Practical Applications

1. You don’t have to understand the mechanics of your salvation to be saved.

In the miracle of the healing of the blind man we have a spiritual picture of salvation. Before we receive Christ, we are spiritually blind, and we were born that way! When we become Christians, a miracle takes place -- we have spiritual sight! There is a change! We are born again! We have new life! We were blind but now we see. 1 Peter 2:9 - *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*

Question: Do you have to understand all the theological “mechanics” of your salvation to be saved? **Answer:** No! Look at verse 15 once again: *“Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”* In other words, he said “I don’t know how it worked, but here’s what happened: he put clay on my eyes, I washed, and now I can see.” He didn’t know the mechanics of what was involved in getting his sight again, but he didn’t have to know in order to see!

I think there is the spiritual lesson here: we don’t have to understand the mechanics of our salvation to be saved. All we have to know is that we are sinners who need salvation, and that Christ is the Savior of sinners. All we have to do is exercise faith in Christ as our personal Savior, and that brings salvation. It’s a miracle – we have new life – and we don’t have to understand **how** it happens!

To illustrate -- you don’t have to understand electricity for it to work for you. You flip a switch and the light goes on. In the same way, you don’t have to understand the all the theological details of your salvation to be saved. Some of you may have been worried about whether you are saved or not because you don’t understand how exactly how it all

works. Well, remember -- you don't have to understand all the "mechanics" of your salvation to be saved!

2. Let's not measure spirituality by man-made standards.

The Pharisees were convinced that Jesus Christ was not from God because he "broke the Sabbath" -- that is, He broke the Sabbath law as far as **their man-made rules** for the Sabbath were concerned. The Bible didn't say that making mud and healing a person on the Sabbath was sin. The Bible never said that -- these religious leaders were applying their **incorrect man-made standards**.

There are modern-day Pharisees in our churches -- self-righteous people who measure a person's spirituality by **their own** man-made standards. For them, the translation of the Bible you read becomes a measure of your spirituality. The kind of clothes you wear becomes a measure of your spirituality. The kind of Christian music you enjoy becomes a measure of your spirituality. Whether or not you use "thees" and "thous" in your prayers becomes a measure of your spirituality. Even the way you pronounce certain biblical words may be a measure of your spirituality!

Let's be very careful to measure spirituality by God's standards, **not** by man-made standards!