

# John 9.24-34: The Dilemma of “Unteachable” Blindness

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- ❖ Act 4: The Second Interrogation of the Pharisees
  - ▶ Main characters:
    - ▶ The “Learned Ones”
    - ▶ The unschooled healed man
  - ▶ Theme: Blindness resulting from an unteachable spirit

## Can't anyone see the work of God?

*“...this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent me.”*

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- ❖ The disciples, blind by their own unscriptural beliefs, cannot see the missions opportunity.
- ❖ The neighbors encounter something that has never happened before, in their community to one of their own, but they are trying to figure out other details and no one recognizes or celebrates the work of God in their midst.
- ❖ Some of the Pharisees are so legalistic that they can't see anything God does—only what someone else does wrong!
- ❖ Other Pharisees see a glimmer of light, but none move toward it to “come into the light” (3.21).
- ❖ The healed man's parents are too concerned about their own welfare to celebrate the extraordinary miracle that has occurred in the life of their son.
- ❖ The tragedy: every one of these were “believers”—yet blind themselves.

## The “Sure-They-Are-Right” Learned Ones

*A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. “Give glory to God by telling the truth,” they said. “We know this man is a sinner.”*

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- ❖ “*Give glory to God by telling the truth.*”
  - ▶ This was a command to confess sin—in this case, to confess that he lied about his blindness and admit that Jesus is a sinner (and not a prophet as he had previously stated).
- ❖ “We know this man is a sinner.”
  - ▶ This was a determination that they had already made about Jesus. <sup>(1)</sup> He had to be a sinner because he repeatedly violated their Sabbath rules (e.g. 9.16); <sup>(2)</sup> he had proved himself to be (in their estimation) a blasphemer because he forgave sins and called God his Father (e.g. 5.18), <sup>(3)</sup> and he had no credibility with them because his truth did not agree with their determination of truth (e.g. 8.52-53).
- ❖ Here is evidence of an **unteachable spirit**: *I* know; *you* don’t. You are only right if you agree with my position.

**Missions truth:** One who is right in his own eyes or one who's attention is always drawn to the wrong in what someone else says or does (quick to take offense), lacks the love of God, a sense of grace, and the humility needed to reconcile others to God.

*With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.*

—James 3.9-12

*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?*

*There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

—Proverbs 26.12

## The “What-I-Do-Know” Unlearned One

*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!”*

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- ❖ Despite their certainty that they knew the truth, it was the man who had the facts. He was not drawn into their argument; he simply declared the reality of what happened to him.
- ❖ This man born blind has never seen Jesus; he doesn’t know anything about the life or character of Jesus. All he knows is what he has experienced and that is all he declares—the reality of which is stupendous: “who has ever heard of a man born blind that was healed and given his sight for the very first time”—and yet, the Pharisees can’t see the proof of God’s glory before them.
- ❖ The Apostle Paul counseled Timothy regarding those with a contentious spirit:

*Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.*

*And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

## The “We-Don’t-Sincerely-Want-to-Know” Pharisees

*Then they asked him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” 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?”*

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- ❖ Unable to get the healed man to change his story to fit their viewpoint, the Pharisees demand a retelling of Jesus’ actions.
- ❖ The insincerity of the Pharisees is obvious—even to this man who has never seen a Pharisee until this day. The intent of their badgering is also obvious to him—it is Jesus they are trying to discredit and, unlike his parents, he will not be drawn in to their agenda.

*Answer a fool according to his folly,  
or he will be wise in his own eyes.*

*—Proverbs 26.5*

- ❖ Although he has never seen Jesus, he has already demonstrated a commitment to Jesus; now he takes another step in publicly identifying with him: “Do you want to become his disciples *too?*”

## The “Not-So-Smart” Learned Ones React

*Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don’t even know where he comes from.”*

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- ❖ The Pharisees, who were trying to get the healed man to contradict his testimony, contradict themselves: *“But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”* (7.27)
- ❖ While declaring that they are disciples of Moses, in reality they have, with their own traditions and interpretations, strayed so far from Moses that they are blind to the prophecy of Moses regarding a future prophet whose words would be weightier than those of Moses (Deuteronomy 18.15-19).
- ❖ This declaration of the Pharisees about Jesus reveals the depth of their blindness—one that not even Jesus has been able to heal, as over and over he has declared that he has come from the Father and that his works testify to his legitimacy. To know who Jesus is, you must believe what he says—especially from where and from Whom he has come. The Pharisees can’t see, can’t hear, and can’t be taught.

# The Unlearned One Keeps on Learning

*“Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does His will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”*

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❖ Directly and by inference, this unlearned man in his reply to the Pharisees, presented an extraordinary summary of the theology that Jesus had presented about himself in the previous chapters—

- ▶ “He opened my eyes.”
- ▶ “He is doing God’s will.”
- ▶ “He can only be from God.”

*For the works that the Father has given me to finish,—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me.*

*—John 5.36*

*(see also 6.35-40; 7.16-18; 8.28-29)*

*I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in Him.*

*—1 John 2.26-27*

# The Unteachable Heart of the Learned Ones

*To this they replied, “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!” And they threw him out.*

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- ❖ In this vicious response to the work and glory of God, the Pharisees prove once more that their hearts are utterly impenetrable, and thus they also validate the prophecy of Isaiah (which Jesus applied to them in his Parable of the Seed & Soil) and the judgment that Jesus will pronounce shortly on them.

*“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’”*

—Matthew 13.14-15

- ❖ They will throw him out; Jesus will come and find him. Once again the heart of God, revealed in Jesus, stands in contrast with the spirit of darkness, manifested in the Pharisees.

# Do I have a teachable or an unteachable spirit?

- ❖ *Hearing* sermons and Bible studies is not equivalent to doing the will of God.
- ❖ *Knowing* Biblical truth is not equivalent to growing in faith and Christlikeness.
- ❖ What am I **doing** with what I've *heard*—a Sunday sermon or a Wednesday Bible study?

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

—James 1.22-25

- ❖ What am I **specifically doing** to **measurably grow** in faith and Christlikeness?

*Through [His glory and goodness] He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith . . .*

—2 Peter 1.4-5

❖ Do I present myself to be taught?

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

—Acts 2.42

(Wisdom, personified in Christ is speaking)

*"Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it.*

*Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway."*

—Proverbs 8.33-34

❖ Do I experience conviction by the Holy Spirit for thoughts, words, or actions—no matter how trivial such things may seem to me? Do I accept rebuke? Am I defensive and self-justifying?

*God designed us to feel remorse over sin in order to produce repentance that leads to victory. This leaves us with no regrets. But the sorrow of the world works death. Can't you see the good fruit that has come, as God intended, because of your remorse over sin? Now you are eager to do what is right! Look at the indignation you experienced over what happened and how alarmed you became. What holy longing it awakened, what passion for God . . .*

—2 Corinthians 7.10-11 PASSION TRANSLATION

*A rebuke impresses a discerning person more than a hundred lashes a fool.*

—Proverbs 17.8