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A Progression of Faith

JOHN 9:8-41

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I. The Curiosity of the Neighbors (vv. 8-12)

A. "IS NOT THIS THE ONE WHO USED TO SIT AND BEG" (v. 8)

1. When the man who had been blind came back seeing, his neighbors began to question if he were the same person who "used to sit and beg."
2. Some confirmed it, "This is he" (v. 9).
3. Others, however, said, "No, but he is like him" (v. 9).
4. The man, himself, kept saying, "I am the one" (v. 9b).

B. "HOW THEN WERE YOUR EYES OPENED?" (v. 10)

1. His affirmation prompted them to ask, "Then how were your eyes opened?" (v. 10).

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2. He answered them, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight." (v. 11, HCSB).
 - a. He had apparently learned Jesus' name from hearing others talk around him prior to receiving his sight.
 - b. The fact that he spoke of Jesus as a "man" shows that, at this point, he had little understanding of who Jesus was.

3. When asked by his neighbors where Jesus might be, he had to tell them, “I do not know” (v. 12).

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II. The Pharisees Are Brought In To The Discussion (vv. 13-17)

A. DIVISION AMONG THE PHARISEES

1. As we follow this interaction between the man who was formerly blind and the Pharisees, we find their opposition toward Jesus only increases.
2. The neighbors brought the man to the Pharisees, most likely because they wanted these local religious leaders input on the situation.
3. For the first time John mentions that the healing had taken place on the Sabbath — this fact will influence much of the discussion that follows.
4. As the neighbors had done previously, the Pharisees ask him again how he had received his sight.
5. He responded as he had before, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see” (v. 15, ESV).

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6. The Pharisees were divided in their assessment of Jesus:
 - a. One side saw only a breach of the Sabbath law.
 - 1) By making clay he had been guilty of working on the Sabbath.
 - 2) It was forbidden to heal on the Sabbath, except for cases where life was in danger.
 - 3) In their minds, a man who did not keep the Sabbath according to their understanding could not possibly be from God.
 - b. The other side started with the miracle.
 - 1) They reasoned that only the power of God could heal a man born blind.
 - 2) If Jesus performed a miracle, it must be the power of God at work.

7. The second group's argument was not necessarily correct:

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- a. Both O.T. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5) as well as the N.T. (e.g., Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:9) insist that miracles cannot be an infallible guide to spiritual authority.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:21–23, NASB95)

“. . . the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,” (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

- b. There are sometimes other spiritual powers besides God at work (e.g., Egyptian magicians).

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B. A STEP OF FAITH

1. Finally the Pharisees turn to the man and ask him, “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?” (v. 17).
2. He answered, “He is a prophet.”
 - a. Previously, this had been the verdict of the woman at the well in Sychar, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet” (John 4:19).
 - b. Following the feeding of the 5,000, the people who saw the sign which Jesus had performed, and said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14).

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III. The Pharisees Seek Answers From His Parents (vv. 18-23)

A. PHARISEES' REFUSAL TO BELIEVE

1. The Pharisees did not believe that the man standing before them had once been blind but had now miraculously received his sight.
2. They sought confirmation from his parents:
 - a. Neighbors might be mistaken, but the man's parents cannot be fooled.
 - b. Could they testify that he was blind before the miracle?
 - c. Could they testify that he was born blind?
3. If the parents were sure that this was their son and that he was born blind, how do they explain the fact that he now sees?

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B. HIS PARENTS' RELUCTANCE TO GET INVOLVED

1. The parents readily admit that the man is their son and that he was born blind.
2. But as to how he was now able to see or who made that possible, they do not know.
3. They then told the Pharisees, "Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself" (v. 21).
4. His parents were determined not to get mixed up in the affair.

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5. John tells us why in verse 22, "they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him [Jesus] to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue."
6. To be "put out of the synagogue" was to be "expelled from the synagogue, excommunicated"
 - a. It could be temporary, lasting for 30 days,
 - b. Or, permanent banishment

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IV. A Second Engagement With The Man By The Pharisees (vv. 24-34)

A. "THIS MAN IS A SINNER"

1. “So” (v. 24) — the Pharisees realized that any further interrogation of the parents would prove fruitless.
2. For this reason, they decide to re-examine the son.
3. Their statement, “Give glory to God”. . .
 - a. Does not mean something like “Praise God for what he has done in your life.”
 - b. It is more along the order of “Before God, own up and admit the truth,” similar to Joshua’s statement to Achan in Joshua 7:19

“My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.” (Joshua 7:19, NASB95)
4. The Pharisees also said, “we know that this man is a sinner.”
 - a. They expected others to follow their lead and acknowledge the same.
 - b. The healed man, however, professed no competence in judging whether or not Jesus was a sinner — “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know” — He left that question to the theological experts.
 - c. What he does know is based upon his own personal experience — “One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!”
5. The Pharisees wanted to maintain their view that Jesus was a sinner, so they ask the same questions again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” (v. 26).

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6. The man responded, “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?” (v. 27).
7. He now counts himself among Jesus’ disciples — the Pharisees follow up on that and begin to attack him: “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from” (v. 29).

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1. The healed man is blessed with an uncommon gift, common sense.
2. What he finds “amazing, marvelous, remarkable” is the unbelief of these officials.
3. Jesus has performed an astonishing miracle and they cannot decide where He comes from.
4. The only instance of blindness being corrected in the O.T. involves the army of Syria which went to capture Elisha (2 Kings 6:8-23).
5. Nowhere in the O.T. is there the report of a man being healed who was born blind.
6. At this point, the healed man presented the Pharisees with an argument which they could not answer — it revolves around God’s answering of prayer.

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- a. “We know that God does not hear sinners” (v. 31a).
 - 1) Job speaks of God’s response toward the hypocrite (godless) — “Will God hear his cry when distress comes upon him?” (Job 27:8–9, NASB95)
 - 2) The psalmist said, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear;” (Psalm 66:18, NASB95)
 - 3) God spoke to the Israelites who were persistent in their sin, “So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.” (**Isaiah 1:15, NASB95**)
 - 4) Through Ezekiel, God spoke of His response to the disobedient — “though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them.”” (Ezekiel 8:18, NASB95)

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- b. “. . . if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him” (v. 31b).
 - 1) “The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears are open to their cry.” (Psalm 34:15, NASB95)
 - 2) “He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear

their cry and will save them.” (Psalm 145:19, NASB95)

- 3) “The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.” (Proverbs 15:29, NASB95)

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7. The man who was formerly blind concludes his argument with these words, “If this man were not from God, He could do nothing” (v. 33).
8. His faith has progressed from the point where Jesus is a man, to Jesus is a prophet, to Jesus is from God.
9. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are incensed at the man:
 - a. Already they have reviled or insulted him, in their minds, calling him a disciple of Jesus.
 - b. Now they hurl further abuse, tell him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” (v. 34a) — they accuse him of prenatal sin.
 - c. As one final insult, they “put him out” of the synagogue.
10. Early in His ministry, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said, “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).

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V. A Second Encounter With Jesus (vv. 35-41)

A. “DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?” (v. 35)

1. Upon hearing that the healed man had been put out of the synagogue, Jesus went looking for him.
2. When He found him He asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (v. 35).
3. Not having physically seen Jesus prior to his healing, the man asked, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” (v. 36).
4. Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you” (v. 37).

5. He responded, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped Him (v. 38).
6. Though the Jews had cast him out of the synagogue, Jesus does not cast out the one who comes to Him (John 6:37).

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” (John 6:37, NASB95)

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7. Jesus told the man, “For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind” (v. 39).
 - a. “Those who do not see”
 - 1) Those who are in spiritual darkness and are therefore lost and know it.
 - 2) Jesus came to open their eyes, giving them “a light of revelation” (Luke 2:32) and enabling them to see.
 - b. “Those who see” (‘those who think they see’)
 - 1) Like the Pharisees of this chapter, such people make so many confident assertions, but are wrong.
 - 2) The inevitably reject the true light when it comes.

B. “WE ARE NOT BLIND TOO, ARE WE?” (v. 40)

1. Apparently Jesus conversation with this man occurred in a public place and was overheard by some of the Pharisees.
2. They did not fully understand what Jesus had said to the healed man, but wanted to know if what He had said applied to them — “Are we also blind?” (v. 40, ESV).
3. Jesus responded, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.” (v. 41).
 - a. “If you were blind”
 - 1) blindness as a lost condition that cries out for illumination.
 - 2) In essence, Jesus is saying to them, “If you knew that you were lost and were crying out for illumination.”

- b. "You would have no sin"
 - 1) the sin of unbelief that rejects the Son.
 - 2) Again, we might understand Jesus as saying, "You would not be guilty of the unbelief that rejects the Son."
- c. "Since you say, 'We see,'"
 - 1) You are satisfied with the light of the law as you interpret it through your received traditions.
 - 2) Thus you reject the true light which shines upon you.

"Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Proverbs 26:12)
- d. "Therefore, your sin remains"
 - 1) You are in the same category as those who are to be punished because they:
 - a) blaspheme against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29)
 - b) seek repentance after crucifying afresh the Son of God (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31)
 - c) commit sin unto death (1 John 5:16-17)

Conclusion

1. In this account, we see the responses of two kinds of people toward Jesus.
2. One, a man born blind, knew nothing of Him, but his personal experience and his continued reflection upon Jesus only caused his faith to grow.
3. The other, a group of men, typically known for their knowledge of the Law, could see nothing but a lawbreaker and a sinner.
 - a. If they had any faith, it soon diminished.
 - b. Their anger toward Jesus resulted in derogatory words and an abuse of their authority.

4. The question for each of us is how we will respond to Jesus.

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5. In 1922, a woman named Helen Lemmel wrote these words to a hymn which we know as "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus."
6. In it, she tells us where to look for light.

**O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free**

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace**