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A Solid Defense

John 9:8-33

Intro: We're dealing with John's account of Jesus healing the man who was born blind. There is no record of any similar healing in the OT but there are passages that equate the giving of sight to the blind as the direct work of God and the anticipated activity of the Messiah who was to come. We have discussed the significance of the miracle, of Jesus who performed it, the means by which He accomplished it and the one who received the benefit of it. This time we are going to cover a lot of ground and focus on the affect the miracle had on those the healed man came into contact with. Let's read through the text, discuss the play-by-play and make some applications as we proceed.

6-12- Jesus had rubbed clay (made from dirt and His own saliva) into the blind man's eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Now, why did He do that? On the one hand, it's impossible to know but, on the other, it's quite possible that man was completely comfortable with his lot in life. It wasn't the best scenario but it was what it was and he did have dibs on one of the best begging spots in the whole city. Why would he want to mess that up? If Jesus had just said, "Hey man, go wash in Siloam" he might have been hesitant to obey but now that he had mud in his eyes, going to the pool seemed like a pretty good idea. Why? Mud in the eyes causes a great deal of irritation.

We don't often see it but there are many times that God allows things into our lives that also cause us a great deal of irritation. Of course, we cry and moan and complain and belly-ache about it, which does nothing to remedy the situation. Then we get the bright idea to maybe pray about it. It is here, as we begin to focus our hearts on God and His purposes, that we realize that God has allowed this irritation into our lives in order to move us out of our comfort zone and into the direction of His will. And just like the blind man with mud in his eyes, it's for our ultimate benefit!

So, he went, he washed and came back seeing. The implication is that he went back home. Strangely enough, after all those years, the man finally receives his sight and all of a sudden, it's his neighbors who are now blind!

It seems ludicrous but put yourself in their shoes – this had never happened before in the entire history of the world! It seemed too amazing to believe but the man was able to convince them that he had been healed from congenital blindness. Imagine that, the transformation in his life was so significant that those who knew him best found it hard to believe that he was the same man. Of course, they all wanted to know “how” this could happen but the healed man had no clue as to the how, just the Who.

a man- At this point, the man knew very little about Jesus. He didn't know Jesus was from Nazareth, was the Messiah, claimed to be God or the Light of the world. He didn't know any of that; he also didn't know where Jesus was or what He even looked like. Jesus wasn't around when he received his sight. He didn't know anything about Jesus except His name and that Jesus was the Man who healed him. As the chapter progresses, we'll see how his awareness of Jesus grows. But for now, he only knows Him as a man and that's not a bad place to start.

13-17-This miracle was so amazing that the people felt compelled to bring it before the religious authorities. Who wouldn't want to hear about this? Sadly, this miracle no more than any other miracle Jesus performed failed to produce any kind of faith in these religious figures. Instead, it pushes them into a more vigorous opposition of Jesus and His ministry. But for now, it's the healed man who gets the brunt of their displeasure through this interrogation.

They asked him the same question as his neighbors: how? His answer is short and sweet. Right away, there is a division amongst the interrogators. The dilemma was caused by the recognition of an obvious, unheard of miracle and the breaking of the Sabbath law. One side determined that if a man didn't keep the Sabbath according to their understanding of Sabbath keeping, he couldn't possibly be from God. The other side stood on a simple principle: how could anyone who was a sinner perform this kind of miracle. One group starts with the Sabbath infraction; the other group starts with the miracle. So there is a division but that's to be expected when Jesus confronts rebellion.

In **Mt 10:34** Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.” Jesus did in fact bring a message of peace into this world but it is that very message of peace that brings

division between those who will accept it and those who reject it. The group that started with the miracle must have been in the minority because we never hear from them again in this chapter. The hardliners carry the day but they don't really win. They only succeed in bring down greater condemnation upon themselves because they had seen plenty of evidence for the claims of Jesus but they refused to accept Him as the Messiah of Israel and their own Savior.

Was Jesus a Sabbath breaker? Jesus was only guilty of breaking Sabbath laws constructed by the rabbis. But these were man-made regulations; and Jesus, who understood God's law perfectly, knew it, and simply disregarded them. Worse, these laws were actually harmful. They allowed people who were incapable of keeping God's law to convince themselves that they were doing all right as religious people, that they were going to earn heaven. If that's true then they didn't need God's grace. If they were doing all right, they didn't need a Savior. They didn't need Jesus. Besides, in their manufactured religious system, they could do almost anything they wanted, as long as they didn't violate the Sabbath laws. That's why they were ready to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, but they weren't ready to let Him heal on it. Later they'd be ready to crucify Him, so long as it happened before sundown on Friday evening.

It was a horrible system. Religious formalism is always horrible. Everything must bend to it, even logic and rationale. Here, it left it's proponents impaled on the horns of a terrible dilemma. The Pharisees were divided in their opinions and perplexed as to what to do. They were so confused amongst themselves that they actually asked the poor beggar's opinion of Jesus. Normally, they would have never dreamed o putting a question on a religious issue to such a man but he was the only one there that wasn't one of them and he did have first-hand knowledge, after all.

A prophet- He didn't say that Jesus must be a prophet; He was definite: "He is a prophet." Sure, Jesus is more than that but this man had no way of knowing that since his contact with Jesus had been fairly brief. This may have been the highest place he could assign to a man of God. Thus, he put Jesus in the highest place he knew. He progressed from thinking of Jesus as merely a man to considering him as a prophet. How did he get to that place? Could it be that the conflict he was enduring caused him to grow in his understanding of who Jesus really is?

Note, when the Pharisees began questioning him, his answer was short and to the point. I'm sure the first time he told this story to his neighbors; there was a lot more details, probably some pointless details. But now, standing in front of this august group of pious gasbags, he's beginning to realize there's something rotten in Denmark. I mean, for the first time in his life – he can't believe what he's seeing! "I was blind, now I'm not – what's the big problem?"

His terse answer in [vs15](#) shows that his testimony of Jesus was sharpening. Standing before the Pharisees, the man doesn't ramble: he gets right to the point. There's a lot that the Pharisees could question. There's a lot he didn't know. But this much was at least clear: Jesus had put clay on his eyes; he washed and came away seeing.

This is what opposition should do to your testimony. It should sharpen it up. When you are among friends, no one minds if you give your testimony with a lot of details. That's OK in that context. But when there's opposition, something different is called for. Your words must count. You must stress basics. What has Jesus done?—that is the important thing. And—equally important—what happened when you obeyed him? If you're giving that kind of witness, then your words will be effective. Could it be possible that God allows opposition in our lives for the express purpose of developing such an effective testimony?

In fact, it was because of this opposition that the man also grew in his perspective of Jesus. The healed man listened to the arguments between the Pharisees and instantly realized what most of them could not see. A mere man could not do what Jesus had done so Jesus must be more than just a man. Opposition led him to a higher understanding of Jesus and opposition will have the same effect on any believer who is faithful to give their testimony. If a Christian is faithful to speak according to the light he has, more light will be given to him ([Lk 8:18](#)). If you want to grow in your knowledge of Jesus, tell others what you already know and don't fear opposition.

For Christians, conflicts will come. We won't have them all the time but we will have them, the Scriptures promise this ([II Tim 3:12](#); [Phil 1:29](#)). But, even though conflict will come, just remember: God will not abandon you in the conflict. In his hour of need, divine grace didn't fail the healed man; it

enabled him to give an effective testimony. Opposition will sharpen your testimony and lead you into a deeper understanding of the gospel that you faithfully declare.

The healed man's answer in vs 17 did not convince them; it only served to deepen their dilemma. So, they had to discredit the miracle. In their minds: Jesus didn't come from God so He couldn't have done the miracle – thus, this miracle never happened. "How can we prove that this man was not born blind? Let's ask his parents!"

18-23-These parents were of a different temper than their son. They don't seem to have the desire to stand up to the harsh treatment of the Pharisees. They answer the questions about their son condition at birth but when it comes to explaining his new ability to see; they throw him under the bus: "Ask him and leave us out of this." John tells us they did this for fear of being excommunicated. In our modern world, the idea of excommunication means little to nothing. If a person gets kicked out of 1 church, they can just go to another and pretend nothing happened. What's more common today is self-excommunication: believers separate themselves from church worship and life for no good reason. That's the sad reality of our time and although the social implications are negligible, the spiritual implications are devastating.

24-34- If you've noticed, there are 3 different groups present in 18-34 and each group claims to know certain things and not know certain things. The first group is the man's parents. Their appearance was an obvious attempt by the Pharisees to discredit the man's testimony. This backfires because the parents end up affirming 2 irrefutable facts: 1) this was their son and 2) he was most definitely born blind. What they claimed to not know was how he came to see and who was responsible for it. of course, how could they not know. Surely, their son had relayed the whole story to them. But, they played dumb out of fear of the reaction of the religious leaders. They just didn't want to be involved.

The Pharisees also claim to know and not know certain things. Since they couldn't get any damaging testimony from the parents, they call the healed man back in for another grilling. They attempt to finesse a damaging admission out of him by pretending they had learned the true story from his parents. "Give glory to God" = "time to come clean." They claim to know that 1) Jesus is a sinner and 2) that God had spoken through Moses (29a). They

then claim to not know the origins of Jesus. Strangely enough, what they claimed to know and what they denied knowing actually contradicted each other. For one thing, claiming to not know Jesus' origins directly contradicted what they declared in [7:27](#), "We know where this Man is from..." Besides this, if they truly didn't know Jesus' origins, how could they possibly know that He was a sinner?

What can we say about these men? They weren't scared to speak the truth like the parents so what is their problem? These men thought they knew the truth but were actually completely ignorant of it. They wanted to know. They wanted to be seen as those who knew. But, as far as Jesus was concerned – they knew nothing about Him.

Then there's the healed man. What was his testimony? He was quick to point out that there was a lot about Jesus that he didn't know but there was also 1 thing that he definitely did know: he was blind but now he can see ([25](#))! He couldn't tell them everything about Jesus. He wasn't able to discuss the person of Jesus at all. But one thing he did know and that was that Jesus had changed him; and because he knew it and really knew it, no one was going to shake him from his position. That's the irony of this passage, those who considered themselves to be enlightened are trying to badger the formerly blind man into denying his certainty that he now could see. He wasn't budging!

This healed man serves as a type of the genuine Christian. They don't know everything—the finite cannot exhaust the infinite—but what they do know they know truly. And they know it because they have met Jesus personally. This man was able to stand toe-to-toe with the powers that be and give as good as he got. He's not intimidated by them in the least. He also feels no peer pressure – all his friends are beggars! He's not scared his friends are going to call him a Jesus freak or make fun of him – they are all glad that he has been healed.

How does this man find the courage and the wisdom to out smart the brightest religious minds of the country? He starts with his own limitations. Since he was willing to recognize his own lack of knowledge, he was better prepared to recognize the lack of knowledge in the Pharisees. They didn't know even the most basic things about Jesus, and this healed man saw it at once—because he had recognized his own limitations. Once he had

eliminated what was not known, he then took his stand on what was certain: that he had been healed by Jesus! The man's argument was rational, logical, intelligent and...absolutely wasted on the Pharisees who were apparently not any of those things.

What are your certainties? Do you have any? You do, if you have been touched by Jesus. If you're uncertain about spiritual things, then you need to get your eyes off yourself and others and onto Jesus. What has He done? What has He said? What has He revealed about God? What has He made known to you? Spiritual knowledge is based upon the intervention of God in history and the personal revelation of God by the Holy Spirit to the human soul.

The conclusions this man comes to see are remarkable. The Pharisees argued Jesus was a sinner, and he declared himself unable to argue that point. He only knew that Christ had healed him. But, as he thought about it, he realized he could say more. 1st, he knew God doesn't hear sinners (sinners have no claim on Him). 2nd, he declared that God does hear those who do His will (those who are in a right relationship to Him). Finally, he argued that since God had heard Jesus in the matter of his own healing, Jesus must be in God's will in a special way and must therefore be "of God." In other words, Jesus becomes the Savior of man because of who He is and of His origins.

This is true for all believers as they grow in knowledge. They do not know exhaustively, but they do know truly because they know on the basis of God's written and incarnate revelation—and they grow in knowledge. 😊