“Victorious Faith in Christ”
August 10, 2014
Text: John 9:24-34

Skeptics who appear intellectually erudite can sometimes overwhelm believers, because of their knowledge.

Our text today will show us how to handle that problem, as a humble man’s faith in Christ emerges victorious over the theological/intellectual elite of Judaism.

* He will tell them, “One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

* We can say w/ confidence, that we know we were once blind spiritually, but Jesus has healed our blindness too.

The blind man proved that you can meet skeptics head on with knowledge that is superior to theirs;

Not attempting to counter them on their own ground.

Rather, saying to them, I know you’re better-educated in your own field of expertise than I am, but the Bible has taught me something that can answer all your arguments.

Then describe the change the gospel has made in you=>

* Once you considered the Bible a dry/dull book;

Now you find your greatest joy/peace in its truths.

* Once prayer was a tedious business for you.
Now, in both good times & in bad, prayer is as natural/satisfying for you as breathing.

* Once you ignored God—even sought to avoid Him.

Now you seek Him, & ever greater closeness to Him.

* Once you despised the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now it has come to mean everything to you.

If your “one thing” is the same as that of the man Jesus healed of blindness, it can make you victorious over all the world’s wisdom, no matter how erudite/impressive it may seem.

In today’s text we find 3 activities of the blind man’s faith that made him victorious over his Jewish opponents=>

* His faith witnessed to what Christ had done for him
* His faith confronted rejection of Christ
* His faith vindicated Christ

We will find that these 3 activities all apply to us as well…

* Faith Witnesses to What Christ Has Done for Us

[John 9:24]=> “So a second time they [the Pharisees] called the man who had been blind, and said to him, ‘Give glory to God; we know that this man [Jesus] is a sinner.’”

The Jewish leaders who are speaking here had tried in every way they knew, to prove that Jesus couldn’t have healed this man of blindness—because Jesus they considered Him a sinner.

They assumed that, because He ignored their rabbinic non-biblical regulations regarding the Sabbath;
And they weren’t about to give up their theory,
which viewed Him as a sinner.
They also assumed that either the man wasn’t really born blind,
or that this was an imposter, not the original blind man.
But the man’s parents had shot down both those theories.
And the blind man himself had testified that he believed
Jesus to be a prophet.
They desperately wanted him to stop telling people that.
Instead, they wanted him to say only that God had healed
him—leaving Jesus out of it altogether.
The Jewish leaders’ command, “Give glory to God,” takes us
back to the story of Achan, in the book of Joshua.
Achan had defied God’s command not to take any of the loot
from Jericho, after Israel destroyed that city in battle.
When Joshua discovered that Achan had taken some things, he
said=> “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD,
the God of Israel, & give praise to Him; & tell me now
what you have done. Do not hide it from me” (Josh 7:19).
I.e., glorify God by acknowledging your sin/guilt and
confessing what you did that was wrong.
In the case of the Jewish leaders in our text, they were telling the
man Jesus had healed, to glorify God by admitting he was
wrong=> that Jesus hadn’t really healed him, that Jesus was
not really a prophet, but that He was, in fact, actually a
sinner.
The leaders believed these things about Jesus, and they wanted to coerce the healed blind man into saying them, joining them in their unbelief.

Q: How did they expect the man to go along w/ all this?

By his simple trust in their “We know”—we the religious experts, the guardians of Scripture, & the interpreters of God’s Law/will.

“We know!”

We have absolute/self-evident knowledge, so you should subjugate your own beliefs/opinions to ours.

Little did they understand the depth/strength of this man’s mind/character.

He had no doubt at all, about what Jesus had done for him.

[Verse 25] => “He then answered, ‘Whether He is a sinner, I do not know [i.e., you’re the religious experts—I’ll leave that for you experts to decide]; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’”

The healed blind-man’s saying, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know,” implied he wasn’t willing to simply accept carte-blanche the Pharisees’ opinion that Jesus was a sinner.

In fact, he was putting his own judgment on a par w/ theirs, and saying, in essence, “I haven’t yet made up my own mind on that issue.”

But the one thing he was absolutely sure of, was that he had once been blind, but now he could see.
Or, more literally, as he said it, “Being blind, I now see.”

**On a spiritual level, believers can/should say the same thing.**

We actually do so, every time we sing John Newton’s beloved hymn, *Amazing Grace*:

> “I once was lost, but now am found,
> Was blind, but now I see.”

**This is an argument our critics cannot defeat/refute—**

**because**:

* **It is so personal.**
  * Suppose you met someone who didn’t believe in electricity.
  * Suppose he brought out an armful of books by ancient scholars who all agreed that electricity was a myth.
  * Suppose he said he could prove mathematically there’s really no such thing as electricity.
  * Then suppose you said to him, “I can’t refute your mathematical proof, or your ancient experts. “But I have experienced an electric shock, and believe me, it’s no myth!”

By the same token, if you have sensed the H.S. working in your life, opening your eyes to Scripture, convicting your heart of sin, guiding your life & your paths, then you too can say, “One thing I know: Once I was spiritually blind, but now I see.”

What could your critics say to that? **No, you haven’t!**

What do they know?
They can’t invalidate your personal experience!

* It is backed up with objective evidence.

There were people in Jerusalem who had seen the blank look in the blind man’s eyes, & who had seen him groping about hesitantly, prob. even stumbling. They had undoubtedly felt sorry for him, maybe even embarrassed for him at times.

When they spoke w/ him, it was obvious that he was incapable of making direct eye contact.

But now, he walked w/ confidence, and when they spoke to him, his eyes followed their eyes.

This was outward/objective evidence of his healing.

In the same way, when a person is born again, the gospel changes the way he lives—he lives a holy life.

Lives like that are the best argument against critics.

Either they aren’t what they used to be, or they aren’t what they would have been, apart from Christ.

* They once lived immoral lives; now their lives are virtuous.

* They may have been involved in substance abuse. Now they’re clean/free.

* Their character, maybe even their personality, has changed.

* They may have been promiscuous, but now the Spirit of God has cleansed their hearts/lives.
They were once w/o meaningful direction, but now they live for something far greater than themselves—their Savior/Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the gospel made no difference in people’s lives, it would be no better than any other religion.

But when people become truly born again, they change for the better, proving their faith is living faith, not dead faith.

That is unarguable proof that it’s for real.

Faith witnesses to what Christ has done for us—making it/us victorious.

* **Faith Confronts Rejection of Christ**

It exposes the fact that Christ’s enemies don’t reject/oppose Him for any solid/logical reason.

If the Jews were honest w/ themselves, they’d have said they actually hated Jesus for reasons they themselves didn’t understand.

In reality, they opposed Him because they were caught up in a spiritual war between Christ/Satan, & they didn’t even realize it.

[Verse 26]=> “So they said to him, ‘What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?’”
Once again, the Jewish Pharisees were trying to appear very calm, reasonable & open to the truth—though they really weren’t any of those things.

They may have returned to their original question because they hoped to wear the healed-man down; or cause him to make a mistake that they could then use against Jesus. Or maybe it was because they suspected there was something in his testimony they had overlooked; Some clue to the subterfuge/trickery that they were sure lay hidden behind his story about Jesus’ healing him.

This was the 3rd time the man had been asked to describe his healing, and by this time he was getting a bit tired of it. Esp. in view of the fact that the Jews showed no inclination at all to believe anything he had said.

So now he sarcastically confronted their stubborn rejection of Jesus.

[Verse 27]=> “He answered them, ‘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?’”

This was the impatient answer of a weary man, who wasn’t intimidated by these leaders, & who was getting irritated by their close-mindedness & endless questions.

He had now seen through their pretence of impartiality.

So he played their pretense-game himself, asking w/ tongue in cheek if they wanted to become Jesus’ disciples “too.”
This man was bolder & far more sharp-tongued, than either
they/we might have realized at first, and now he was,
in fact, mocking them, baiting them, taunting them.

Don’t overlook that one little word “too” => “become His
disciples too”.

It may suggest that the man himself had begun to believe in
Jesus and was moving towards discipleship.

The Jewish leaders picked up on this, a/w/a the fact that the
beggar was toying with them, & defying their authority.

So at this point, the gloves came off, and they set aside any
pretense of civility, directly/cruelly attacking him
because of what they viewed as his insolence.

[Verse 28]=> “They reviled him and said, ‘You are His
[a term of disrespect—lit. “that guy’s”] disciple, but
we are disciples of Moses.”

These Jewish leaders claimed to be Moses’ disciples, who
believed in Moses’ authority.

They were implying, that if the healed blind man sided w/ Jesus
against them, he was Jesus’ disciple, & opposed to Moses.

They deceived themselves about being disciples of Moses, just as
some other Jewish leaders had, prior to this, whom Jesus
had told that they were actually opposing Moses, by
opposing Him.

In Jn 5, Christ had said that Moses would even accuse them
before God the Father of doing so, & He explained
why=> “For if you believed Moses, you would
believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (5:46).

The Jewish leaders now went on to question Jesus’ origins, using the little word “from” to do so.

[Verse 29]⇒ “We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.”

“Where He is from” referred to Jesus’ authority/commission.

E.g. you see that in Jesus’ question to the chief priests⇒

“The baptism of John was from what source [where was it from], from heaven or from men?” (Mt 21:25).

The Jewish leaders considered Jesus to be self-appointed, and His authority to be from no one but Himself.

They should have known intuitively (as the blind man did) that Jesus was from heaven.

He’d told them⇒ “You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself” (Jn 7:28).

If the Jews had understood Moses’ writings correctly, they’d have seen in Jesus the great Moses-like great Prophet of Deut 18—from heaven.

But they held onto the notion He was just an uneducated (Jn 7:15) and insignificant Galilean, who was prob. demonized (Jn 8:48), & had delusions of grandeur, since He made Himself out to be the Son of Man (Messiah) and the Son of God (Jn 19:7).

Jesus had repeatedly indicated, in various ways, that His authority and commission had come from God Himself in heaven.
That was also true of Moses’ authority/commission.

God had spoken from heaven w/ Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend (Ex 33:11).

But Jesus Himself had come down from heaven, as God’s Son, & the exact representation of God’s nature (Heb 1:3).

* Moses had given Israel the Law, which revealed the character of God.

* But Jesus was the full revelation of God Himself, in grace/truth (1:17).

The Jews had only believed selectively in Moses/his-writings, but they’d totally refused to believe in Jesus at all.

They were unbelievers by nature, deceiving themselves into thinking they were obedient to God, while their whole way of life was (and had always been) one of disobedience, unbelief, & rebellion against God.

The man Christ healed confronted them w/ their rebellion/unbelief.

In his own sarcastic (even sardonic) way, he pointed out the absurdity that they, the supposed spiritual leaders of Israel, had failed to recognize One who had come from heaven.

He confronted their rejection of Christ.

[Verse 30]⇒ “The man answered and said to them, ‘Well, here is an amazing thing, that you [emphasized] do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.’”
It was shocking that they, who claimed to know so much (including the fact that Jesus was a sinner), did not know where a Healer like Him had come from.

Of all the religious matters they liked to boast they understood, this issue of preparedness to recognize/identify their own Messiah when He came from heaven, should have topped the list.

But here they pled ignorance, unable to even determine the source of His miracles, when it led to the inconvenient truth that Jesus was God’s Son, come down from heaven.

They should have been the first ones to figure it all out.

But they weren’t the first, nor even the last.

They never understood/believed who Jesus really was.

Such is the folly of stubborn unbelief that rejects God.

And that is what we who believe in Christ today must still confront.

* Faith Vindicates Christ

Now the blind beggar Jesus had healed proceeded to set out a series of self-evident truths that all pointed to Jesus as the sinless Son of God, sent/empowered by God.

He demolished the Jewish leaders’ arguments, and lectured them like little children in the most rudimentary religious principles.
In the process, he completely vindicated Jesus of sin, & became convinced himself that Jesus was actually the Messiah who could save him from his own sin, if he believed in Him.

[Verse 31] (Blind man) => “‘We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.’”

The man had reasoned-through the issues of Jesus’ character, nature, and identity, like this=>

* Principle #1—God only listens-to/answers the prayers of the righteous.
  This was a basic principle believed by all Pharisees.
* Principle #2—The blind-man himself had become healed because God had listened/responded to Jesus’ prayer.
* Conclusion—Therefore, Jesus could not be a sinner, & He must do God’s will, or else Christ’s prayer would never have resulted in his own healing.

Q: Is it true that God hears the prayers of the righteous, but not those of sinners? Yes, & no.

Generally yes, but there are exceptions.

Truth #1—Yes, in the sense this man meant it—that He answers only the prayers of the righteous.
This healing was the ultimate vindication of Jesus’ claim to perfect righteousness, & the healed blind man believed that.
God won’t set His seal of approval on sinners w/ answers to their prayers.
David was right (Psa 66:18)=> “If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear.”

Truth #2—Actually, none of us is righteous enough to merit or warrant God’s answers to our prayers, but we have a Mediator who is—Jesus Christ.

If guilty sinners were to come into God’s direct presence, His holiness would burst forth & destroy them.

But Jesus, the one perfect Mediator between God/man (1 Tim 2:5), takes our prayers, cleanses them w/ His blood, & presents both them/us before His own Father.

His righteousness has been imputed to believers.

So when God looks at us, He sees His own divine righteousness, receives our prayers through our Mediator, and answers them.

Truth #3—God does not hear/answer the prayers of the godless.

Job said correctly=> “What is the hope of the godless when he is cut off, When God requires his life? / Will God hear his cry When distress comes upon him?” (27:8).

In context, the question itself implies that the answer is=>

“No.”

Truth #4—Nor will God hear the prayers of those who continue in sin.

Lots of people want to go to heaven, but they also want to take their sins along w/ them most of the way, only dropping them, just outside heaven’s gate.
If we come before God w/ our sinful desires/passions in hand, He will drive us from His presence. Many people constantly indulge themselves in sinful thoughts/habits, & wonder why God doesn’t hear/answer their prayers. He never will, till they stop dabbling in their pet sins.

Jesus said=> “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell” (Mt 5:29).

I.e., it’s questionable in this case whether such a person is even saved.

Christ saves us from sin—not w/ our sins intact, being carried along like a backpack.

Truth #5—Nor does God hear thoughtless prayers—unless your heart is in your prayer, it’s a sinful/insulting prayer & God won’t answer it.

Nor does He answer our prayers for things we don’t really want.

E.g., if we pray “Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil,” w/ regard to some sin we love & have no intention of repenting from, He won’t answer that hypocritical prayer.

Finally, Truth #6, God doesn’t answer the prayers of unforgiving believers.

In the Lord’s own prayer, we say, “Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12).

We are specifically asking God not to answer our request for forgiveness in some sense until we have forgiven others.

On the other hand, there is a sense in which God does hear the prayers of sinners.

If He didn’t, He’d never hear anyone’s pray, because we all sin. Not one of us is righteous in/of ourselves, even among Christians.

When we approach the holy throne of God in prayer, we sense this keenly, feeling unworthy even to pray, “Hallowed be Your name” until we’ve first prayed “Forgive us our debts.”

It’s hypocrisy for us to pray for God’s name to be hallowed, when our own sin dishonors His name.

But even when we have strayed from our Good Shepherd, God hears us, when we sincerely repent/return, praying w/ David,

“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. / Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin” (Psa 51:1-2).

The blind-man’s conclusion devastated the Jews’ arguments.

[Verses 32-33] (the blind man)=> “‘Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a
person born blind. / If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.’’”

That is the blind man’s vindication of Jesus. Nowhere in the OT is a man born blind ever healed of blindness; So Jesus’ doing so, was proof positive that, not only had God heard His prayer, but also that He was from God.

Now we see the Jewish leaders’ reaction—they misused their authority, venting their frustration on this poor beggar who had been blind.

[Verse 34]⇒ “They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?’ So they put him out.”

The Pharisees had been defeated, & they felt outraged. They were not used to being treated like this, esp. by someone they considered ignorant/insolent. Having lost the argument to him, they resorted to cruel/inhuman abuse.

They implied that the man’s blindness had been a judgment from God, because of his wickedness even before his birth. That’s what they mean by “You were born in sins.” It was a cheap shot that implied he’d been punished for sins, in which, & w/ which, he had been born.

The Jewish leaders also had willfully ignored the fact that OT Scripture prophesied that healing of blind eyes would someday be proof that Messiah had arrived on earth.
E.g. Isa 29:18=> “On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.”

This is in a chapter about the coming of Messiah to set up the messianic Kingdom.

This ignorance reflected the Jews’ own spiritual blindness, as Jesus will point out in verse 39, next time.

Then they topped off their cruelty by putting the man out of the synagogue—a penalty that his parents had dreaded.

But, though excluded from fellowship w/ his own people, he gained the fellowship of God’s Son, who had healed him. Jesus will come to him (as we’ll see next time), & lead him to saving faith in Himself, the greatest fellowship, & the greatest comfort, anyone could ever enjoy.
Text: John 9:24-34

1. Skeptics who appear intellectually erudite can sometimes overwhelm believers because of their knowledge; our text today will show us how to handle that problem.

In today’s text we find three activities of the blind man’s faith that made him victorious over his Jewish opponents; these apply to us as well…

* Faith Witnesses to What Christ Has Done for Us

[John 9:24]

2. The Jewish leaders here had tried in every way they knew to prove that Jesus could not have healed this man of blindness.

Josh 7:19

[Verse 25]

3. The healed blind man was absolutely sure that he had once been blind, but now he could see; on a spiritual level believers can and should say the same thing.

4. When a person is born again, the gospel changes the way he lives—he lives a holy life.

5. Faith witnesses to what Christ has done for us, making it victorious.

* Faith Confronts Rejection of Christ

[Verse 26]

[Verse 27]

6. This was the impatient answer of a weary man who wasn’t intimidated by these leaders, and who was getting irritated by their close mindedness and endless questions.

Jn 5:46

[Verse 28]

[Verse 29]
7. “Where He is from” referred to Jesus’ authority and commission; the Jewish leaders considered Jesus to be [10 self] appointed.

Mt 21:25; Jn 7:28; 7:15; 8:48; 19:7; Ex 33:11; Heb 1:3; 1:17

8. The man Christ healed confronted them with that rebellion and unbelief; he pointed out the absurdity that they, the spiritual leaders, had failed to [20 recognize] One who had come from heaven.

[Verse 30]

* Faith Vindicates Christ

[Verse 31]

Psa 66:18; I Tim 2:5

9. God does not hear and answer the prayers of the godless; nor will God hear the prayers of those who continue in [8 sin].

Job 27:8; Mt 5:29; 6:13; 6:12

10. On the other hand, there is a sense in which God does hear the prayers of sinners; if He didn’t, He would never hear anyone’s pray, because we [8 all] sin.

Psa 51:1-2

[Verses 32-33]

[Verse 34]

Isa 29:18

11. Though excluded from fellowship with his own people, the man born blind gained the fellowship of God’s [8 Son], who had healed him.