

Jesus and the Pharisees: (part ten of a twelve part series)

The confrontation of John 8 ends with Jesus declaring His Deity and the Jews picking up stones to throw at Him (John 8:58-59). The drama doesn't end there as our Lord comes across a man born blind and heals him. Instead of accepting this miracle at face value, the neighbors of the man bring in the Pharisees in order to validate what took place (John 9:13-14); and since the healing occurs on the Sabbath, this especially arouses their Pharisaical ire. The interaction which follows is both revealing and instructive in regard to the true character of these religious leaders; which we as Christians cannot allow to develop in us.

First, they approach the man who has received his sight with an attitude of unbelief (John 9:18); rooted in the false premise of man-made traditions regarding the observance of the Sabbath (John 9:16). When the Word of God ceases to be our sole guide for truth, it can have a devastating effect on our faith. We cannot conflate human traditions with Divine truth.

Second, adhering to human traditions can promote self-righteous pride. The condescending manner in which the Pharisees interrogate the man healed of his blindness, reveals their sense of superiority. They express doubt about what has taken place and when the man insists that he has been the recipient of a miracle at the hands of Jesus, on the Sabbath, the response of the Pharisees in John 9:34 speaks for itself –

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

Third, when we follow our Savior by means of a simple and sincere faith, in humble obedience to the Word of God, we will face persecution from self-righteous, narrow-minded legalists. The punishment which the Pharisees used as leverage against anyone who disagreed with them, consisted of being put out of the synagogue (John 9:22). Even though the parents of the man born blind were able to cleverly avoid this stigma (John 9:23); the man himself did not (John 9:34b). So who was better off? The answer is given in the passage which concludes this remarkable chapter in John's gospel. Jesus looks for the man, finds him, brings him into a saving relationship of faith (John 9:35-38), and confirms who was better off in John 9:39 –

“And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.’”