

I mentioned last week this chapter could be divided into three main divisions—Jesus and the blind beggar (vv1-12), the Pharisees and the blind beggar (vv13-34), and Jesus' second encounter with the blind beggar (vv35-41)...

Fundamentally, there are three major people within this account—there's the blind beggar, the gracious Savior, and the unbelieving Pharisees—thus far we've seen the first two, now we are about to consider the third, the unbelieving Pharisees...

I want to suggest that largely speaking, in one sense, these three represent the entire world—there are those who become Christians (like this blind beggar), there of course is the gracious Savior (as He continues to be the Light of the world in and through His church), and then there's the unbelieving Pharisees (these represent the sceptics)...

Thus—I want to examine the Pharisees this morning, as examples of unbelief, and there are three primary reasons or goals of this examination...

[1] To better understand and engage the world we live in—this world is increasingly a world of unbelief—and it would be well for every Christian to have a better grasp on the common thinking of unbelievers, and I suggest we find that graphically portrayed in these Pharisees...

[2] To better appreciate the condition we were saved from—we must remember, we are all by nature unbelievers, everything we're going to learn about these Pharisees was true of us all, to varying degrees, by nature...

[3] To better contrast unbelief with true and saving faith—now I must remind you that in this passage the formally blind beggar is not yet converted—but, it's evident that he has a measure of faith, that resulted from being physically healed, and as the passage progresses, so does his faith, until it ends in his sound conversion (v38)...

I. A Description of Unbelief

II. Some Practical Lessons

I. A Description of Unbelief

A. Its hypocritical—v13-16

1. By this I mean—in verses 13-16, the Pharisees focus on the supposed sins of Christ, while ignoring their own...
2. V13—"They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. he said to them, He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Therefore some of the Pharisees said, This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? And there was a division among them..."
3. The Jews had written commentators on the OT Scriptures and especially the TC, wherein specific applications were given...
4. For the Pharisees these man-made traditions, were viewed as the law of God—as equal to God's holy word...
5. Now—these man-made traditions, were nowhere more numerous and trivial, then with reference to the Sabbath...
6. The Pharisees had developed 39 categories pr work, forbidden by the law, each with numerous specific examples...

7. For example, because plowing a field on the sabbath was forbidden, they viewed covering spittle with dust as plowing...
8. Furthermore, these traditions also forbade kneading dough to make bread, thus making clay was also forbidden...
9. William Hendriksen—"To make mud on the sabbath and on that day to cover a person's eyes with this mud was a violation of the regulations. Also, on the sabbath it was not permissible to practice the art of healing, except in cases of extreme emergency..."
10. Thus, for all of these reasons (and more) they declared Jesus a sinner, a law breaker, and thus NOT from God...
11. V16—"Therefore some of the Pharisees said, This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath..."
12. Now again—our Savior did keep the Sabbath, but He refused to keep their man-made traditions and regulations...
13. Furthermore, as we've seen earlier in John's gospel, our Savior seemingly favored healing people on the Sabbath...
14. WHY—let me briefly suggest two reasons—[a] to show His disdain of the legalistic rules of the Jewish leaders...
15. Richard Phillips—"Why would Jesus violate such clearly defined rules? The first reason is that Jesus did not accept the authority of human traditions, especially when the rabbis' rules were in conflict with the intention of God's law..."
16. On another occasion, when our Savior allowed His disciples to "pluck the heads of grain" on the Sabbath, the Pharisees attempted to call Him on it...
17. He responded, Mk.2:27-28—"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath..."
18. [b] To illustrate the glorious benefits of the Sabbath—the Christian Sabbath is the best day of the entire week...
19. It's the only Holy Day for NC believers—it's the only day that's promised the unique and powerful presence of Christ...
20. Dear brethren, surely we agree there had to be a reason why Christ favored healing sinners on the Sabbath...
21. It's because the Sabbath was always intended to be a specific day of receiving spiritual blessings from God...
22. O brethren, what better day to perform miracles on but the Sabbath—a day that illustrates our rest in Jesus Christ...
23. My friends, I trust you do know, more sinners have been saved on the Sabbath, than on any other single day...
24. Now, obviously this doesn't mean sinners aren't saved on other days—for example, I myself was saved on a week day...
25. But I know more sinners have been saved on the Sabbath, because it's through the preached word God ordinary saves...
26. [1] Unbelievers are hypocritical because they condemn in others what they themselves do—they are quick to point out the sins of others, while slow in noticing their own...
27. And this is exactly what the Pharisees did, they focused on Jesus' supposed sins, while neglecting their own...
28. Matt23:23-24—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel..."
29. My friends, because I am the only Christian in my extended family, I see this all too often—they love to point out the sins of saints...
30. This is basically their philosophy—only hypocrites go to church, the sincere Christians just stay home and live it...
31. Perhaps you've this way of thinking expressed like this—I'm not like those who talk about it, I seek to live it...

32. [2] Unbelievers are hypocritical because they fail to receive the truth at the hands of those who have been great sinners...
33. V34—"They answered and said to him, You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us"—you are you to teach us...
34. My brethren, unfortunately, this is something that I've personally experienced, esp from those who've known me before I was converted...
35. How can you say I'm a sinner in need of salvation, when I've never lived an openly and wicked life like you...
36. Now—I could understand their reluctance if the truth was presented to them in a haughty or self-righteous way...
37. But—when I've shared the gospel with such people, I've stressed over and over again, that I was a greater sinner than them...
38. But—the bottom-line is, unbelievers are NOT able to grasp the reality of forgiveness and a change of nature...
39. Regardless how much you've changed, and how long ago your old life was—some people will always bring it up...

B. Its obstinate—vv17-24

1. In this section, the Pharisees want further proof that the man was in fact born blind—thus they ask his parents...
2. It seems evident that his parents were not truly pious people, for two reasons—[a] they failed to assist their blind son...
3. What pious parent, would leave their poor blind son to sit at the temple gate regularly, to beg for his livelihood...
4. [b] They feared the Jews—they refused to answer their questions, for fear of being put out of the synagogue...
5. Thus—I suggest we learn two things about the obstinacy (stubbornness) of unbelievers (illustrated in the Pharisees)...
6. [1] They refuse to believe the evidence—the neighbors had already testified that this man had been born blind...
7. Lk.16:31—"But he said to him, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead..."
8. This is the final verse of our Savior's parable of the rich and the poor beggar named Lazarus—the rich man was in hell and Lazarus was in heaven...
9. The rich man, being in agony, asks Abraham, that he would Lazarus back from the dead to warn his five brothers...
10. Father Abraham says—"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them"—that is, hear the OT Scriptures...
11. The rich man responds—"No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent" (v30)...
12. Abraham's response is shocking—"If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead..."
13. In other words—the problem wasn't with the evidence—there was sufficient evidence in the OT Scriptures...
14. Furthermore, even if someone was raised from the dead, that further evidence would not convince a blind sinner...
15. My friends, the problem is NOT lack of evidence—these Pharisees had all the evidence they needed—they problem is believing the evidence...
16. And so it is with man in general—he doesn't need more evidence that God exists or that he's a sinner in need of salvation...
17. He sees all the evidence he needs around him in creation, and his own conscience tells him he needs salvation...

18. Furthermore—most (not all) people at least in this country, have the addition testimony of special revelation...
19. In addition to this—many unbelievers have seen family members, who have been raised from the spiritual grave...
20. For example, my own family witnessed the change and transformation that took place in my own heart and life...
21. They in essence, saw a man raised from the dead, and yet, for all that, they refused to believe the evidence...
22. You know—I've often wondered that the Egyptian army pursued the Hebrews nation through the parted Red Sea...
23. You would think, after they witnessed the 10 plagues, and the parting of the Red Sea—they would believe...
24. [2] They have a preconceived bias against believing—the Pharisees had already resolved NOT to believe the testimony about Christ...
25. V22b—"for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue..."
26. These blind Pharisees had already determined that, regardless of evidence they would not believe in Christ...
27. My dear friends, there is nothing more dangerous, then to purposefully close your eyes and ears to the truth...
28. A. W. Pink—"They were determined not to believe. They had made up their minds that no evidence should change their opinions, that no testimony should have any weight with them. It reminds us very much of what we read of in Acts 7. At the close Stephen's address we read that his enemies 'stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord' (v57). This is just what these Pharisees did, and it is what many are doing today. And this is the most dangerous attitude a sinner can assume. So long as a man is honest and open-minded, there is hope for him, no matter how ignorant or vicious he may be. But when a man has deliberately turned his back upon the truth, and refused to be influenced by any evidence, it is very rare indeed that such an one is ever brought into the light..."

C. Its religious—vv25-30

1. The Pharisees had continued to ask him the same questions over and again, in hopes to catch him in his words...
2. V26—"Then they said to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I told you already, and you did not listen, Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples..."
3. There is little doubt that he meant this in a sarcastic way—Look, why do you continue to ask the same questions...
4. V28—"Then they reviled him and said, You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from..."
5. The Pharisees claimed they were Moses' disciples, and yet, they failed to believe in the one that Moses foretold...
6. There are basically three types of unbelievers—militant, indifferent, and religious—[a] militant unbelievers (radical atheists etc.)...
7. [b] Indifferent unbelievers—this is largely what I was—they generally fail to give religion any real interest...
8. [c] Religious unbelievers—that's what these Pharisees were—they were very religious and committed unbelievers...
9. They were disciples of Moses—they were very serious students of the Moses' writings (the first 5 OT books)...
10. There was a time when this form of unbeliever was likely the most common in this country (this is changing)...
11. But usually, most people will find refuge in some form of religion, when pressed about their spiritual needs...

12. For example, some will say—my grandmother taught SS for 20 years, or my grandfather was a missionary...

D. Its hateful—vv31-34

1. Here we see two things—the progression of the beggar's faith, but also, the progression of the Pharisee's unbelief...
2. In verses 31-33 the beggar makes a logic conclusion about Christ—since God doesn't hear sinners, He mustn't be a sinner...
3. V31—"Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him..."
4. That is—because opening blind eyes is only something God can do (v32), it's evident that God heard (or helped) Christ open his...
5. V33—"If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing"—it's obvious that Christ came down from God...
6. Thus—with the increased boldness and his faith, came the increased hated and mistreatment of the Pharisees...
7. V34—"They answered and said to him, You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us? And they cast him out..."
8. That is—the cast him out of the synagogue—they banned him from all of the elements associated with being a Jew...
9. To be "put out" of the synagogue was the ultimate form of punishment—it was akin to putting someone to death...
10. A.W. Pink—"How cruelly and unjustly will religious professors treat the real people of God! When these Pharisees failed to intimidate this man they excommunicated him from the Jewish church. To an Israelite the dread of excommunication was second only to the fear of death: it cut him off from all the outward privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, and made him an object of scorn and derision..."
11. Here we see the progression of unbelief—if all else fails—it responds with aggression and rejection of the messenger...
12. This is seen back in v28—"Then they reviled him and said"—to "revile" is to verbally insult, abuse, or berate...
13. Because they were unable to find any actual fault with what he was saying, they resulted to scorn and ridicule...
14. This then resulted in rejecting him, and excommunicating him from the synagogue, the greatest evil they could have done...
15. Now I am sure, that every person present, who has attempted to share the truth with unbelievers, have experienced this treatment...

II. Some Practical Lessons

A. We must be prepared to engage an unbelieving world

1. I suggest to you that extended interaction between the blind beggar and the Pharisees, is given for our learning...
2. Christians must be properly prepared to interact with unbelievers around us, that we might answer their questions...
3. 1Pet.3:15—"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness (humility) and fear (respect for the person and in the fear of God)..."
4. [1] Wisely—"always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..."
5. Most of you know the Greek word rendered "defense" means "a verbal and reasonable response"—an answer...

6. The Greek word is *apologia* from which we get the word *apologetics*—which refers to the art of defending the truth...
7. Now—every generation is given uniquely gifted men who are great apologists and unusually able to defend the truth...
8. But—there is a sense in which every Christian is called to be an apologist of sorts—Peter is speaking to the whole church...
9. And Peter tells all Christians—"to always be ready to give a defense"—to be ready implies ability as well as willingness...
10. If a soldier is to be ready for battle, he is not only alert and willing to go, but he is prepared and properly trained...
11. So too, Christians should be prepared to give a defense—they should be ready to interact with unbelievers...
12. [2] Humbly, Pet.3:15—"always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear..."
13. Now—let me remind you that all men by nature are unbelievers, and thus we must interact with others in humility...
14. There is something VERY unbecoming of Christians, when they speak of unbelievers in a haughty and proud way...
15. [3] Patiently—that is, remember, most people come to the truth over a gradual and often very slow process...
16. This seems to be the case with this man—he knows Christ is a healer, prophet, from God, and then God's Son (v38)...
17. He doesn't come to see the truth all at once, but gradually moves from calling Him "a Man called Jesus" (v11) to the Son of God (v38)...
18. And this is often the case with unbelievers—they come to increasingly see the truth a little clearer each time...
19. Some of us have unbelieving friends and family, that we have witnessed to for 10 or 20 yrs—don't give up...

B. We must be prepared for rejection from unbelievers

1. If I had to describe this nation in a single word, it would be unbelief—this is increasingly becoming true of our country...
2. Don't get me wrong—it's always been filled with unbelievers—this, in and of itself, is nothing new to our country...
3. But—there was at least a general belief in the existence of God and the reality of clear and definable moral absolutes...
4. These things are increasingly denied in this country—unbelief is at the root cause of all these wicked changes...
5. True Christians are increasing becoming the minority as well as the object of scorn, derision, and persecution...
6. Thus—to become a Christian, a follower of Christ, will oftentimes become the object of ridicule and scorn...
7. Oftentimes, to align yourself with Christ and His word, means we will be rejected and maligned by unbelievers...
8. And this will often come from unconverted family members, as well as, those who profess they are Christian...
9. I have found it, in the 20 yrs I have been a Christian, that the majority of my rejection, comes from these two sources...
10. Now—most of you know that in the first century, to become a Christian brought severe opposition from the Jews and the Romans...
11. In the first century, to become a Christian was costly—it inevitably lead to rejection and oftentimes mistreatment...

12. For this man to be cast out of the synagogue meant, that his Jewish family members, must shun and reject him...
 13. It meant a very lonely life—a life of rejection and solitude—all his Jewish friends and family, must reject him...
 14. CHS—"The former blind beggar had never troubled the Pharisees in the days of his blindness and beggary. Perhaps some of them may have proudly tossed him a trifling alms as they walked past, thus getting a name amongst their fellows for benevolence; but now this blind beggar had become a powerful witness. Words of truth now flowed from his lips – truth far too powerful and piercing for them to stand, so they 'thrust him out.' Happy, thrice happy man! This was the brightest moment in his career. These men, though they knew it not, had done him a real service. They had thrust him out into the most honored position of identification with Christ as the despised and rejected One..."
 15. Now—before I leave this second lesson, I want to dip into v35 and draw your attention to a wonderful phrase...
 16. V35—"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe in the Son of God..."
 17. No sooner was this man rejected by man, then our Savior comes to him—rejection was coupled acceptance...
 18. And this I trust brethren is the way our Savior deals with all of His people—He will never leave nor reject them...
 19. And in fact, those who are rejected by man, are drawn closer to the bosom of their beloved Savior and Master...
 20. Oh my friends, those who suffer for the sake of Christ, are no poorer for it, but KNOW His loving embrace...
 21. And so, yes Christian it is true, to share the truth with our friends and family, may invoke their rejection and frown...
 22. But, oh dear brethren, those rejected by friend or foe, will know Christ's smile, and His loving and special embrace...
- C. We must cry to God to open the eyes of unbelievers
1. And the end of the day, all the reasoning, evidence, and proofs, will never open the eyes of one blind sinner....
 2. V32—"Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind..."
 3. In other words—opening physically blind eyes, is a work only God can do—it's beyond the ability of mere man...
 4. Now—if that is true (and it is)—then how much more impossible is it for a man to open the eyes of the soul...
 5. Dear Christian friend—do not put your hope, ultimately, in training, study, arguments, reason, or your wisdom...
 6. But cast yourself upon God's powerful mercy in Christ, and plead that He would open the eyes of poor sinners...