

When Unbelief Investigates a Miracle

Scripture: John 9:13-34

Code: 43-50

Now, open your Bible to the ninth chapter of the Gospel of John. As you know, if you've been with us in our study of the Gospel of John, it's often called the Gospel of Belief, or the Gospel of Believing because John gives us his purpose in writing at the end of the gospel. As he begins to wrap up, in chapter 20, he expresses the purpose for which he has written. "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." It's the Gospel of Believing. It is to give us the history of Jesus with particular emphasis on the evidence that He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, that we might believe in Him, and therefore have eternal life.

From the first chapter on, to the very end, it talks about believing. But we've also noted, all the way along, that it is also a gospel of unbelief. And while it presents to us the truth concerning Christ in order that we might believe, it also chronicles the rejection of Jesus Christ. We learn that at the very beginning, chapter 1 verse 11. "He came into His own, and His own received Him not." It is the Gospel of Belief set in a context of unbelief. So, we are always seeing John writing that you may believe, and realizing that even as Christ comes to prove who He is, He is confronted by constant unbelief, and that is still true today.

God Himself calls all men to believe in His Son. But, the vast majority do not, and the vast majority did not when His Son was here, walking in their midst. So while John's gospel is the gospel, the history that is designed to bring us to belief, it is at the same time a chronicle of unbelief. And, we've seen unbelief in a number of forms. We saw the bewildered kind of confused unbelief of Nicodemus, to whom Jesus said, "If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" We have also seen the demanding unbelief of the noblemen from Cana, to whom Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe." We saw another kind of belief, the self-centered hypocritical unbelief of the leaders of religion in Israel, to whom Jesus said, "Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe Me." We saw the blind unbelief of the Galileans who saw the miracles, and still didn't believe. And Jesus says, "You have seen and do not believe." Belief and unbelief, all the way through the Gospel of John. There is even the mysterious unbelief of the brothers of Jesus, of whom it is said, "Neither did His brothers believe in Him."

But what stands out in this panoply of forms of unbelief is the willful, truth-rejecting, hard-hearted unbelief of the Pharisees, the scribes, the chief priests, and the rulers of religious Israel. To whom, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, and you believe not." You can, in studying the Gospel of John, put together a theology of unbelief. You can draw a very complete characterization of unbelief. But in this ninth chapter in particular, you get an insight into the character of willful, obstinate, stubborn unbelief. You find in this chapter kind of the pathology of unbelief. Its characteristics, its nature, its marks. This is a passage, then, that one can read as a narrative. You can just read the story. It's a wonderful story. A blind man born blind, and of course Jesus meets him at the gate to the temple, gives him his sight by creating two new eyes, puts saliva in dirt, makes a little mud, puts it on his eyes, tells him to go wash. He does, finding his way to the pool blind, he comes back seeing. This incredible miracle has happened. It's a very simple and yet marvelous story. That ends in verse 12.

We went through that last time, the man born blind can now see.

We follow that up, starting in verse 13 this morning, and we begin to see the religious leaders, the Pharisees in particular, investigating a miracle. They're going to investigate this dramatic demonstration of divine power. And as we watch this, we can just read the story, and the story is dramatic and dynamic on its own. But as we go through the story, what strikes me as I read through this story is I see the character of unbelief. I see the nature of unbelief. Now, unbelief comes in many forms. But in all of its forms, it demonstrates these kinds of components. So, they're going to unfold for us. This is one of the, I think, one of the challenging things as we study the Bible is to make sure that we don't just read the history and maybe miss the revelation that it's giving to us that's not immediately on the surface. And while, as I said, the story is enough to sustain our interest and have an impact on us, if we look a little deeper and examine what's going on, we begin to get a better understanding of how unbelief functions and how it operates.

And if you're wondering why that's important, I want to tell you it's very important so that you know what to expect. Because, your responsibility is to carry on the gospel ministry, to preach Jesus Christ. You're going to confront unbelief. Most all of the people to whom you give the Gospel will reject it. You will, your whole life, confront unbelief, and you need to know how unbelief operates.

Now, this is a very important section from, believe it or not, we're going to go from verse 13 to 34. We did it in the first hour, so we have to do it in this hour. This is a narrative story, so it's simple, it doesn't take a lot of explanation. It's not some kind of a dense, comprehensive compound argument of theology or anything. It's just a story. So we're going to cover the story and try to extract out of it the characteristics of unbelief that can prepare us for what we're going to face. So, primarily, I would say, this story instructs us on what to expect when we confront unbelievers. The characteristics of unbelief are exposed.

There's a second feature here, though, that is historic. It's historic, and it is this. It is in this event, and in this conversation that the blind man has, with these leaders, that we see in graphic demonstration, the schism between Christianity and Judaism; between, if you will, the church, which is latent in these believers, and the synagogue. This is where the Jews and Christians divide into two antagonistic, separated realms. And that comes out. On the one hand, the Jews affirmed Moses. On the other hand, the believers affirm Christ. And it is that division that has existed ever since, even to this very hour. So, we will see that schism, which has perpetuated itself through history and will until Israel turns to see the Christ they rejected, and embrace Him for who He is. And that will happen someday in the future.

But the main lesson here is about unbelief. We're going to see how unbelief makes conclusions before it does examinations. It's predisposed to its own viewpoint. We're going to see how unbelief establishes false standards. We're going to see how unbelief demands more and more evidence, but when it receives that evidence, it doesn't respond as any appropriate person should, any thinking person. So, there's a kind of irrationality in unbelief. Unbelief does biased research. It can look at facts and come to the complete wrong conclusion. Unbelief is self-centered, selfish, ego-centric. All these things are part of unbelief, but we'll try to break it down into some words. So, I'll throw some words at you, maybe some you haven't heard.

First of all, I want you to see that unbelief is inimical, inimical. You probably haven't used that word today or any day for that matter. But it's a really good word, and it means "hostile." It means

adverse, it means pernicious, ill-disposed. It could even be dangerous. Unbelief is not benign. You need to understand that. When you're dealing with unbelievers, you're not dealing with some benign reality. This is an aggressive attitude to take. When you don't believe in the Gospel, and you don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you inevitably are hostile toward that. That is why it is unbelievers who ultimately persecute Christians. It is unbelievers, religious unbelievers, rejecting the Gospel, who crucified Jesus by the hands of the Romans. It was unbelievers who persecuted the apostles and martyred almost all of them. It was unbelievers that were pouring out threatening and slaughter against believers in the early chapters of Acts. It is unbelievers throughout all of human history that killed Christians. It is unbelievers today that massacre Christians in various parts of the world.

So, unbelief is inimical. That is to say it is hostile. It poses a certain danger. So you need to see that and understand that. Now, already, the Pharisees have decided that Jesus is kind of a combination of demon-possessed, Satan-inspired, and insane, and they have essentially said that. That's the mantra that the Pharisees have been parading around and articulating. That they have determined already. There is hostility in every one of those identifications. If you say He's insane, that's a very adverse kind of comment. If you say He has a demon or He's satanic, those are very hostile declarations. So, the Pharisees are on record as being aggressively hostile toward Jesus, hostile in their unbelief. And while not all unbelievers are equally hostile, unbelief in its own nature is hostile to the truth, and it may take many forms. It may become aggressive to the point of injury, attack, or even execution, martyrdom, as we know through history.

So, we're going to learn about, first of all, the inimical character of unbelief. Let's look at verse 13. They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formerly blind. Now, who are they? Go back to verse 8. The neighbors and those who previously saw him as a beggar, the people who knew him when he was blind, the people who knew him when he was begging by the gate of the temple where Jesus met him. These people bring this man to the Pharisees. And you can ask: why did they bring him to the Pharisees? There are a number of possibilities of course, and maybe it's a blending of all of them. First of all, maybe just the, some sort of simple need to get the Pharisees, who were the religious leaders, and the ones who supposedly knew the law and knew the Scripture, knew God, could represent heaven, to sort of sign off on how this happened. Maybe they were looking for some theological explanation from the theological elites of Israel. That is certainly within the realm of possibility and reason. They're neighbors, they're folks that see him at the temple, and this is massive. This is incomprehensible to them, because as the blind man says later in the story, no one had ever heard of anyone being healed of blindness. And he was right. He knew his Old Testament. There's not one single healing of a blind man in the entire Old Testament. It was unheard of. He knew that.

So this is remarkable, and maybe they just wanted to check off the Pharisees to find out how they viewed this, and how they were going to explain it. It is also possible, nuancing that just a little bit, that the Pharisees had been continually discrediting Jesus, continually saying that He has a demon, He is insane, He is of Satan, He is not of God. They had propounded this all the way along. They were seeking His death. They had come to the place, according to verse 22, where the Sanhedrin had passed a law that if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, they would be un-synagogued, thrown out of the synagogue, banned, cursed in the society. So, since the Pharisees had made this law, there was a certain fear and concern on the parts of the people that they were going to have to figure out how this Jesus, who could heal this blind man, fit into the purposes and plans of God, when that's obviously divine power. But if we say He's the Messiah, we're going to get thrown out of the synagogue. So maybe they just needed some kind of further explanation why such a severe

punishment for someone who wanted to affirm Jesus.

There's another possibility, and this would be a more negative one, and that is that they knew Jesus had broken the Sabbath. They knew that healing was not allowed on the Sabbath, and they didn't mean miracle healing, but medicinal healing. According to rabbinic law, if someone was sick, you couldn't do anything to make him better on the Sabbath. But if someone was dying, you could sort of prevent him from dying, but not make him well. You were allowed to neutralize his moment of dire straits, but not make him any better, because that would be a violation of the Sabbath. So here, Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. They were perhaps going to report Him to the Pharisees on a negative level because He broke the Sabbath. Furthermore, He had taken clay, spit in the clay, put it on the eyes of the man, and you weren't allowed to do that because that was work on the Sabbath. So, Jesus had violated the Sabbath. It seems to be in their mind, because in verse 14, it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. This is not necessarily still the Sabbath because they wouldn't have convened on the Sabbath. But, they went back and told the Pharisees it happened on the Sabbath, so that must've been part of the conversation.

He had then been guilty of working on the Sabbath. And you know, they had these ridiculous laws. You couldn't fill a lamp with oil on the Sabbath. You couldn't light a wick on the Sabbath. If a man extinguished a lamp on the Sabbath to spare the lamp to save the oil and conserve the wick, he was guilty of violating the Sabbath. So you couldn't light one, you couldn't blow one out. They had laws that said a man may not go out on the Sabbath with sandals shod with nails because nails constitute a burden, and he's carrying a weight on the Sabbath, and that's a violation. A man was not allowed to cut his fingernails or pull a hair out of his head or beard. It just was absolutely ridiculous, adding burden after burden after burden on the Sabbath. And part of it, not only the forbidding to heal; in fact, if you had a toothache, you couldn't pull your tooth on the Sabbath, but you could suck vinegar to mitigate the pain, I guess. I don't know if that works; don't try it.

But they had come up with all of these petty, ridiculous rules. There is even a rabbinical statute recorded by Maimonides, the historic Jew, specifically prohibiting the spreading of saliva on anyone on the Sabbath because they believed saliva had some kind of medicinal value, and they weren't allowed to spread the saliva on the Sabbath according to Maimonides. So, Jesus had done that. So He had broken their Sabbath. So, there has to be that component in them coming to the Pharisees. So, some of them are Pharisaic disciples, for sure. Some of the neighbors and the people who knew it was going on have taken up the cause of the Pharisees. They bought into their form of apostate Judaism. So, they dragged the man who had been blind in front of the Pharisees and maybe some of them wanted an explanation, and some of them wanted to know why the law against a man who could do this.

But probably the most dominating reality was: what do we do about the violation of the Sabbath? And that was what concerned them the most. By the way, the Lord did whatever He wanted on the Sabbath, because He says in Mark 2:28, "I'm the Lord of the Sabbath." I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. In John 5, remember verses 16 to 18? When He had healed the man at the pool on the Sabbath, and they were after Him because He did it on the Sabbath, and He said, "My Father works on the Sabbath, and I work on the Sabbath." God doesn't rest on the Sabbath, and I don't rest. And they accused Him of blasphemy because He made Himself equal with God. He paid no attention to their ridiculous rules that they had concocted to compound the Sabbath into the worst day of the week. In Mark 2:27, He said the Sabbath was made for man, not men for the Sabbath. It was made to be a day of comfort, and rest, and joy, and refreshment. And they had turned it into an impossible,

ridiculous burden. So, He purposefully violated their Sabbath, the laws that they had invented, not God's. Matthew 15:9, "You have substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God."

So, this is the issue. They bring this man to the Pharisees. Verse 15. "The Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight." Why does it say "again?" Because the neighbors had asked him back in verse 10, the neighbors and the others, and the people who knew him were saying to him, "How then were your eyes opened?" So, again, he has to answer the question, this time from the Pharisees, how he received his sight. He said to them, He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Very straightforward, very simple answer. What else could he say? That's all he knew. The Pharisees, they don't want to take the word of the neighbors, they don't want to take the word of the folks that are there. They want a first-person testimony, so they ask the man. The other folks' testimony of what the man had said was inadequate for them, so they asked the man. The man gives them a simple, straightforward answer, which is verifiable, by the way. That's a cryptic moment. A lot of other conversation must've been going on with people saying yeah, we know him, we've known him, we've seen him by the gate many days, many months, many years. Yes, this is the man. But he needed to give the testimony himself, and so the Pharisees ask him to, and he does.

Verse 16. Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God because He doesn't keep the Sabbath." Now, stop right there at that point. This is supposed to be an investigation, which means the conclusion's supposed to come at the end. This is the conclusion before the investigation. This man, meaning Jesus. They won't call Him "Jesus." They call Him "this man." This man. And you'll see them do that repeatedly. This man. They don't want to mention His name, but they've already made a conclusion. The conclusion is: this man is not from God, because He doesn't keep the Sabbath. This is their little sort of logical syllogism. A logical syllogism has a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. The major premise: all people who are from God keep the Sabbath. The minor premise: Jesus doesn't keep the Sabbath. Conclusion: Jesus is not from God. That's the syllogism. He doesn't keep their hair-splitting, trifling, ridiculous little rules on the Sabbath. But all people from God would. He's not from God. Couldn't be from God.

So this is backwards, as unbelief would always reveal itself. We start with the conclusion, and then reason backwards. The conclusion is: they reject Him. They're hostile toward Him.

However, there is a group within the Pharisees that can't be so easily persuaded by this syllogism. They have their own syllogism, and it shows up in the middle of verse 16. "Others were saying." We assume others of the Pharisees. "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs? They had their own logical syllogism. It went like this. Only God can open blind eyes. Jesus opened the eyes of this man born blind. Conclusion: Jesus is from God. Group A, it's the Sabbath issue. Group B, it's the supernatural issue. Group A is unmoved. We don't know about group B, but we do know at the end of verse 16, there was a division among them. This is hopeful, hopeful for group B, who just fade away now. They just fade out of the picture. At least, they don't speak again. Maybe they were overpowered by the majority. I don't know.

But this kind of division was part of what was happening with Jesus. If you go back to chapter 7 in particular, you can go back and start, in chapter 7 verse 40, and some say this, and some say that, and some say this, and some say that, and some say well, no prophets coming from here and there. So, there was a division among the people. It says there was a division. Chapter 10 verse 19.

There was a division. Jesus brought a sword. He brought division between people, a schism. So, we're going to follow group A because they sort of take charge. They are the hard-hearted unbelievers, the deniers.

The first thing we learn about them, and we've covered it already, is that they have made their conclusion, and they are hostile toward anything that offends, or anything that assaults that conclusion. This is the first thing to know about unbelief. That kind of unbelief that is willful and resistant is also hostile. That's why we gave you the four steps of conflict. It starts intellectual, becomes emotional, then becomes verbal, and ends up physical. That's what'll happen in the story. It starts as a discussion about facts. It then becomes emotional. And the man starts sarcastically firing away at them. And then it becomes them firing at him, reviling then, and eventually physically, they throw Him out. Those are the sequences of conflict. And unbelief, if pressed, can go down that path pretty fast.

So, unbelief, first of all, is inimical. That is, it is hostile toward the truth. Secondly, verses 17 to 24, we're going to work through this quickly. Unbelief is intractable. And what does intractable mean? Will not bend. Cannot be convinced. The blind man told him exactly what happened. I was blind. I can see. Jesus came, he names Jesus in the first testimony back in verse 11. He came, He told me to go to the pool. I went to the pool. I washed the mud out of my eyes, and I see. And he is literally staring at them, and they at him, as he gives this testimony. And there are all kinds of people around affirming the reality of this. But it is the nature of determined, willful unbelief that it wants more evidence, but never wants to do anything with it. It's really on a mad search to discredit. It keeps probing, not because it seeks the truth, but because it seeks justification for its conclusion. In Deuteronomy 32 and verse 20, Moses called apostates "children in whom is no faith." Children in whom is no belief.

And since God's truth can only be apprehended by faith, they are shut out. So, they want more evidence. Verse 17. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet." This man has no authority, no telling how his life went, but typically speaking, he would never be allowed in a synagogue. Why? Because he was blind. Why would that keep him out of the synagogue? Because his blindness was related to his sinfulness. That was what the apostle said when the story started, right? Who sinned? This man or his parents? He's a cursed man. His curse put him out of the synagogue. He's viewed, anybody who had an illness, a disease, a deformity, a disability, was cursed. They were not a part of the synagogue. Pharisees, scribes wouldn't go near those people. They wouldn't go near them. They wouldn't touch them. They were outcasts.

So, here is a man who hasn't been exposed to the synagogue, hasn't been taught like other people. And yet, he's got enough sense to know that this Jesus is, in fact, the prophet. And by the way, that was in the wind. Back to chapter 7, many were saying he's a prophet. He's a prophet. Even Nicodemus said, "We know You're a teacher come from God, because nobody can do what You do," unless God is with Him. All the way back in chapter 3. He's deemed a prophet in chapter 4 verse 19, chapter 6 verse 14, chapter 7 verse 40. So this man has caught the wind of this man, Jesus. He knows His name from verse 11. He knows He's a prophet. He now believes He's a prophet from God because of His miracle power. And so, He gives them a straightforward, sensible answer, which should've been the end of the investigation. Here's the man. He can see. This must reveal Jesus as a Prophet.

Verse 18. "The Jews then did not believe it of him, that he had been blind and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight." Now remember, they've heard from the man, and the man is surrounded by all the strangers and neighbors who knew him and brought him and all that testimony collectively. And they still don't believe because again, unbelief is intractable. I'm telling you this because you need to understand this is what you're going to face when you give the Gospel. Most of the people are going to reject what you tell them about the Gospel, throughout your whole life of ministry and evangelism, most people will not accept what you say. Then, there is an element of hostility toward the Gospel, and there's an element of being intractable and immovable against the Gospel. This is what we face. The way is narrow. Few there be that find it.

So, this is the predisposed viewpoint. They say look, we're going to dig deeper into this, because they will not give up the notion that this man is a sinner and he is not from God. So, there must be something about the story that they're not seeing yet. There's some kind of cover-up here. There's some kind of lie. There's some kind of deception. We've got to get to the bottom of this. So, they call the parents. And verse 19, they questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" Is this your son? These are really kind of lame parents, to put it mildly, as you'll see. But they get the parents there, and they ask them two questions: is this your son? And the second question: how did he gain sight? Well, you remember that when the miracle happened, there were some people who said, no, no, that's not the man. He just kind of looks like the man. And maybe it's a mistaken identity, we're being fooled here. So let's get the parents. The parents said, "We know that this is our son." Good. We would assume that, right? I mean, you know your son. We know this is our son. End of case. End of case? Hit the gavel on the bench. The case is over. The Man is from God. This is a man who was blind, and now can see. This is our son, and he was born blind.

But, "how he sees," verse 21, "we don't know." And who opened his eyes? We don't know. I have to stop there and say: they're lying. They're lying. That's why I said I don't like these parents. They're lying. They're lying to cover themselves. They're lying to protect themselves. In verse 22, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews." What were they afraid of? "The Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him," Jesus, "to be Messiah, he was to put out of the synagogue." The reason they said we don't know, is because they were afraid that if they said what they did know, that it was Jesus, they might get thrown out of the synagogue. They knew who did this. They didn't just show up and talk to the Pharisees. When they arrived and saw their son seeing, there must've been a conversation. And he knew, verse 11, the man who is called Jesus made clay. Jesus' name was on the lips of everybody in the city of Jerusalem. They knew what it was to be thrown out of the synagogue, by the way, because their son had lived outside the synagogue. They knew what the ban was, what the curse was, with all its implications. They knew what being an outcast was, and they didn't want that.

By the way, it was that law that fixed the antagonism permanently between the church and the synagogue, the Jew, and the Christian. So, his parents are afraid of the Jews. By the way, the Pharisees are now being called Jews in the Gospel of John, the term Jew implies hostility. "The Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Jesus to be Messiah, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason, his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'" Can't throw him out of the synagogue. He's not in the synagogue.

Now, being thrown out of the synagogue was a big deal. A very big deal. If you were in Jewish

society and you weren't in the synagogue, you were like a leper. There were three kinds of excommunication, but each of them had social implications, economic implications, and religious implications. The first, according to the Talmud, there were three kinds of *Shamatha*, which means destruction. That's considered destruction, when you're thrown out of the synagogue, cut off from God, the life of the country. There is *Nezifah*, which was 7 days to 30 days. 7 days to 30 days, a week to a month. You were out of the synagogue. You were a pariah for those days. Second, there was *Niddui*. 30 days and up. That could last a long time. Months, maybe years, depending on the crime. And if you died under that ban, you had no funeral. You were seriously dishonored. The worst was *Herem*, which was an indefinite, permanent ban. The rabbis used to say that being banned was far worse than being flogged, 'cause of its implication socially and economically, as well as religiously.

So, they didn't want to get anywhere near having to experience what he experienced. And since they couldn't throw him out, they said, "Ask him; he's of age."

So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." You just want to say, how do you know that? Why do you keep insisting on that? Talking about Jesus. Give glory to God. Where's that from? What do they mean by that? What do they mean, give glory to God? That's a direct quote from Joshua 7:19. Direct quote from Joshua, 7:19. Joshua comes to Achan, who has stolen all of this stuff, and buried it in his tent. Remember that? When the children of Israel came into the land, they were told to take nothing, and Joshua finds out that Achan and his whole family have conspired together to take all this stuff as booty, and buried in the tent. And Joshua comes in and confronts this crime that Achan has committed in his family, which costs him and his family their lives. And do you know what Joshua says to him? "Give Glory to the Lord the God of Israel and tell me what you've done." These Pharisees know that story very well. That story says, God is glorified when you tell the truth. God is glorified when you tell the truth.

So that's what they're saying. Tell me the truth. They're not buying this testimony. They're not buying the testimony of the parents; they're not buying the testimony of the neighbors. We want the truth. That is how firm and immovable their unbelief is. Tell us the truth. We know that this man is a sinner based upon his violation of the Sabbath. We know. So, he picks up on the use of the word "know." You have to like this guy more each time he speaks, this formerly blind man. He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; but one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." You're going to talk about what we know, and what we don't know? I don't know who He is. I don't know about the accusation of being a sinner, but I do know that I was blind, and now I see. That's as far as he can go. They're not interested in anything remotely related to the truth.

So they said to him, in verse 26, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" Well, this is pretty significant, folks, because now they just admitted what? That he was healed. They've just admitted that he was blind, and his eyes were opened. What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? Maybe they were probing for some trick. Who knows?

And that takes us into the next little section. Unbelief is inimical, hostile; intractable; that is, rigid; and thirdly, unbelief is irrational. With true facts, if you come to a wrong conclusion, you're irrational. Unbelief is irrational. You face this all the time in trying to proclaim the Gospel to people. You give them the facts; you lay out the facts systematically like Peter did on the day of Pentecost. People reject it, because unbelief is irrational. So, they said, "What did He do to you? How did He open

your eyes?" He answered them, I love this, verse 27, "I told you already and you didn't listen." Ooh. This is an outcast talking to the in-crowd. "Why do you want to hear it again? You don't want to become His disciples too, do you?" Sarcasm. He just nails their sarcasm, their hypocrisy. This is a man who's feeling the joy, feeling the confidence, feeling the strength of the conviction that he knows he's dealing with a man who is from God, who is a prophet. And as the story goes, he comes to fully believe in Him for salvation, which we'll see next week.

So, he's free to attack them because he knows he has the truth. And so, they descend to that third level of conflict, the verbal reviling. In verse 28, they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses." There's that breach again. Moses and Christ, the church and the synagogue, Judaism and Christianity. Still at odds. We know this man is a sinner. We are from Moses. You are His disciple. "We know," verse 29, "that God has spoken to Moses, but as for," here it goes again, "this man," they will not say his name, so much disdain. "As for this man, we do not know where He is from." I think they knew He was from Nazareth, Galilee. They should've known where He was from in John 6 when He preached the sermon on the bread of life, He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven. I have come down from heaven to give My life for the world." He had said again, and again, and again, "I come from heaven." He even mocked them by saying, "You think you know where I've come from." Chapter 7. "But you really don't know My heavenly origin." When they said, "We don't know where He's from," they simply meant, not so much the town, but we don't know the origin of this man. We're unwilling to say it's God. In fact, they were convinced that He was satanic. Satanic.

I mean, this is the character of unbelief. Verse 30, the man answers, sort of punctuating the irrationality of all this. "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He's from, and yet He opened my eyes." The obvious conclusion is simple. He opened my eyes. He created new eyes. He must be from heaven. God alone is the creator. Satan can destroy, and falsify. Only God can create. He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where He's from? When unbelief investigates a miracle, it will come up with the conclusion that it starts with, even if it has to function in an irrational way.

Finally, and we'll just wrap it up, unbelief is insolent. What does insolent mean? Abusive, contemptuous. You see the insolence of unbelief in verses 31 to the end of verse 34. The man keeps talking. He's quote a theologian. I wish we had time to kind of develop his whole theology here. "We know that God doesn't hear sinners." That's an Old Testament principle. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That's what the Old Testament says. This man knew his Old Testament. God doesn't hear sinners. "But if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears Him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind." And as I told you, there's no such thing in the whole Old Testament. This man knew his theology. He was a reasonable man. He knew his Old Testament. And then, "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." He couldn't do these miracles. He could not do this if He wasn't from God.

So, he's become the preacher. He's taken over the meeting. He's talking to the leaders. First, he's sarcastic, and now he's specific, and clear-headed, and clear-minded, and faithful to the Old Testament, and even referring to the Old Testament that God doesn't hear the prayers of sinners. He's giving them an explanation of reality, a sensible, reasonable, logical explanation. To which they respond with the insolence in verse 34. They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and you are teaching us?"

That's the disdain of it all. So, it gets physical. They threw him out. Be prepared to face this when unbelief investigates a miracle. This is how it acts. This will be a disappointment. It has been a disappointment already in your life, I'm sure. Major disappointment through the years to any of us who walked with Christ for a long time. We accumulate this kind of disappointment.

What is there to do about this? How can it change? Well, the only answer is where Jesus went in John 6, three times. He said this: "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me. No man comes to Me unless the Father draws him." And then, verse 64 of John 6, He summarized it again. "For this reason I have said to you, no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." The only way an unbeliever can be released and delivered from this kind of bizarre captivity and bondage to what is evil, and irascible, and intolerant, and irrational; the only way an unbeliever can be delivered from this is by the power of God. So, what do we do? We plead with God to be gracious, don't we? We plead with the sinner to believe, and we plead with God to be gracious. Because the natural man, Paul says, understands not the things of God. To him, they're foolishness, because they're spiritually appraised, and he's spiritually dead.

So, we don't go out to evangelize with any hope, really, that we have the power in our reason or the power in our facts or the power in our truth to shatter the blindness and the darkness and the bondage of unbelief. We go with the truth, and we cry out to God to draw the sinner out of this bondage of unbelief. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that we've been able to look at Your Word again this morning, and just really left so many things unsaid. Certain sadness in my own heart for things that could've been discussed, and yet we could say that about almost any passage because Your Word is so inexhaustibly rich. But help us to understand unbelief maybe a little better and use that to arm us, to give us certain expectations, and, most importantly, to know that even our Lord Jesus, who was without parallel, without equal, in proclaiming the truth, faced massive unbelief and rejection, and rested in the fact that the only way hard-hearted unbelievers could ever be rescued from their own belief was when they were drawn by You, O Father. So, we ask, Lord, that You will go with us in the work of evangelism, in the proclamation of the gospel, and that You will draw sinners to Yourself. On the one hand, we have to warn sinners they are responsible for their sin, and unbelief, and rejection; and at the same time, we have to completely depend upon You for the work of drawing them to Yourself. Help us to rest confidently in Your purpose and Your power, and be restless and eager to present Your gospel whenever You give us that opportunity.

Now, Father, we are so grateful again because we couldn't do this week in and week out, to sit and worship You, if we did not have Your revelation, Your Word. We wouldn't know how to worship You. We wouldn't know who You are. We wouldn't know what You've done. We wouldn't know what You've asked. We wouldn't know what You have provided for us. But, we know all of that through Your precious Word. And all our worship, and all our preaching and teaching is informed from heaven, because this is the book that You have written. We thank You for its inexhaustible treasure and truth, and may it be applied to every life to Your glory. We ask in Your Son's name. Amen.

COPYRIGHT (C) 2018 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).