

What Genuine Faith Will Endure and Enjoy

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 9:13-34

Preached on: Sunday, October 5, 2014

We return yet again to the Gospel of John and it is my great joy to be able to minister the word of God to you. As we look at John 9, we find ourselves in verses 13 through 34 primarily here today. I've entitled my discourse to you "What Genuine Faith Will Endure and Enjoy." Follow along as I read John 9, beginning in verse 13,

13 They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind. 14 Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, "He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. 17 So 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." 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, 19 and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23 For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 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." 25 He then answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." 26 So they said to him, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 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?" 28 They reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the

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beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.

Here we have before us an amazing historical narrative that not only attests to Jesus' claim of being the Son of God which is the primary purpose of John's Gospel, but we have also a narrative that gives us great insight into what genuine faith will endure and what it will enjoy, what believers must expect from unbelievers and even from the Lord. This whole story of the blind beggar receiving sight moves from glory to sorrow and then back to glory again in some unexpected way and I'm sure we're all going to see parallels in our own life here but we have been gloriously saved. Life is filled with troubles as sparks fly upward as Job says and we all look for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. Perhaps you are in some crucible of grace right now in your life; perhaps there is some great issue that you are dealing with; perhaps persecution is mounting in your life maybe from friends or family members, whatever it is, you will find deep encouragement in this passage. All of us who truly love the Lord and have a desire to know him more intimately and serve him more faithfully and experience him in a more profound way, will see a glimpse of his glory and grace in this text.

Now, we don't know for sure when this man came to Christ completely. We see, however, that he was blind and now all of a sudden he can see and it would appear sometime in the midst of that, the Spirit of God is working on him and he begins to see more fully who Jesus really is and somewhere in that context, he comes to saving faith; he is genuinely born again. Therefore, I believe it's fair to say that we can say of this man that he illustrates in some measure what faith really looks like as it starts in an embryonic way and grows into maturity and we see some growth here even in these few short days that encompasses this narrative. So having said that, in the faith of this new believer who was once physically and spiritually blind, we can say that genuine saving faith will be four things: it will be tested; it will be validated; it will be strengthened; and it will be blessed, blessed in ways that we cannot imagine.

Let me give you the context once again: the Feast of Tabernacles is now over where Jesus has declared himself to be the light of the world and he has gone to this beggar, blind from birth and in verse 6 we read that, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing." That this man was blind from birth, once again, points to the reality that we as human beings are all born spiritually blind. The Scriptures speak about this in many, many different ways. Because of our innate inability to conform to the moral character and

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desires of God, we have no capacity to see our wretchedness for what it is and see the wrath of God abiding upon us in our sinful state. So God must do something. God must come along and give spiritual sight which he did with this man. He must take the initiative in salvation.

Now, I want to move away from that concept just for a moment to remind you of something else that is very important, a theme that we see throughout John's Gospel and certainly what we see pictured here and that is: this is another picture of Israel's persistent unbelief, the kind of unbelief that began soon after God delivered them from Egypt. Remember, they murmured against God. They complained against God, even before they reached Sinai and they continued to rebel. They would not believe in him fully. They would not trust him fully and sadly their rebellion and unbelief resulted in banishment of the original redeemed generation from entering into the Promised Land and consequent wandering in the Sinai wilderness. The writer of Hebrews summarizes this in chapter 3, beginning in verse 18, he says, "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." And in a similar way, Jude says that the Lord after saving the people out of the land of Egypt subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. Israel's unbelief persisted into subsequent generations resulting in God's judgment upon them. You will recall in 721 BC the northern kingdom fell to Assyria because, according to 2 Kings 17:14, "They did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God." Then a few years later in 605 BC, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians for the same reason: because of their unbelief; because of their recalcitrance; their rebellion against God.

So now some 600 years later, we come to this text and God in his faithfulness to fulfill his covenantal promises to Abraham, sends his beloved Son to Israel, their Messiah. But John tells us in John 1:11, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." Why? Because of unbelief, persistent unbelief. In Romans 10:21, the Apostle Paul quotes the Prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 65:2 and he says this, "But as for Israel God says, 'All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'" This is a recurring theme throughout the New Testament, certainly in John's Gospel. In fact, John tells us in chapter 12, verse 37, "But though He had performed so many signs before the people, yet they were not believing in Him." This account gives us yet another illustration of Israel's unbelief. One day, however, the Lord will come to them again and will give them sight. This is an important footnote that I want to share with you. The prophetic Scriptures reveal that before the Lord returns, there will be a period of pre-kingdom judgments. We read about this in a number of passages, especially Revelation 4 through chapter 19, basically. And in those texts, we read how the court of heaven will be opened and the Lamb that was sacrificed, the Lord Jesus Christ, will take from the hand of God a seven sealed book of successive pre-kingdom judgments that will

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come upon Israel and the nations of the world. Today as we look at the constellation of events, we see that all of these prophetic signs are pointing to these things. We see as I like to say, the curtains getting ready to be pulled back; we hear the drum roll. The church during this time will be in heaven; we will have been snatched away for God has not appointed us to wrath, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. But because of her sinful rejection of the Messianic King, we know that Israel has been temporarily set aside and now the church is the custodians of God's truth. But during the pre-kingdom judgments of the tribulation, the nation of Israel will once again appear as the object of God's special concern as he judicially prepares to establish on earth the long expected kingdom. It will be at that time that the angelic messenger revealed to the Prophet Daniel, his words will come true. You will remember in that text in Daniel 9:24, the angel says, "Seventy weeks," which is sevens of years, seventy sevens of years, "have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place." So in other words, there is yet another year of judgment, so to speak, another seven years of judgment, that God must fulfill in order to do these things as he once again focuses on Israel.

Today, the world is being prepared for the antichrist. He will be the one who will rule during the time of the tribulation and he will unleash upon Israel unparalleled violence and we know that in the moment of Israel's greatest peril, the false messiah will be defeated and the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, will return again in power and great glory and he will establish himself upon the earth and at that time, according to Romans 11:26, "all Israel will be saved." There is a remnant waiting to be saved. "Just as it is written,' Paul says, "The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob and this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins.' From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake," referring to the Gentiles, "but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Though the tragedy of Israel's unbelief seems hopeless, Paul reminds us in Romans 11:5 that a remnant of Israel will one day believe. And we know from other passages that during the millennial kingdom, the nation itself will be restored once again to its ancient place of favor and supremacy. In fact, the stock or the stump of the tree spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 6, verse 13, appears yet again as the root of Paul's olive tree that will never die that he describes in Romans 11.

My friends, what a picture of God's elective love, of his faithfulness to his covenant promises and what a vivid illustration of undeserved mercy and grace. But now we return to this text in first century Israel and we see once again this stubborn unbelief that prejudices everything in their life. The same unbelief, frankly, that dominates Israel today and the vast majority of the world. In light of this, what can we learn about our own

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faith? So let's examine this text and we'll get some answers. In verse 13, "They brought to the Pharisees the man who was formally blind." Obviously such a miracle required an explanation from the religious authorities and so at some level, this might be an appropriate reaction. However, with such an unprecedented event linked to this Jesus of Nazareth that was causing such a stir, one whom the religious authorities have already sought to stone within the temple, I'm sure that these people were tattling on the blind man a bit, bringing him, trying maybe to curry favor with the Pharisees and so forth. So between just the inveterate hatred of the Jewish people towards Jesus, having tried to stone him in the temple, combined with the consternation of the Jewish people who, mind you, believed that this man was born in sin and he was really deserving of what he was getting, I believe that by coming and taking him to the authorities, they had malice in their heart.

So in an effort to discredit the miracle and the miracle-worker, they bring this man to the Pharisees and here we are introduced to the first thing genuine saving faith must endure. Again, we don't know exactly when this man came to Christ. I personally believe that very soon, maybe right on the heels of suddenly being able to see, knowing all the stir about Jesus, that somewhere in the midst of that, he came to Christ. But little did he know that one day he would have physical sight and have the keys to the kingdom and the next day, be put out of the synagogue because of his faith in Christ. Certainly there is a high cost to discipleship, isn't there? But the value is beyond calculation. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you," and my, how they hated Jesus. In fact, the Jewish leaders according to verse 22 have already agreed that if anyone confesses him as the Christ, as the Messiah, he should be put out of the synagogue. So to be put out carries with it the idea of being excommunicated or being banned from the religious and the social life of Israel, a status worse than he would have experienced as a beggar. So he was immediately faced with a choice here in the context of all that was going on: either he had to renounce Christ or worship him and suffer the consequences. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Yet I love what Peter says in 1 Peter 4:13, "To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation."

Now notice what happens in verse 14, "Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes." Folks, here you must understand some of the insanity of legalism in that culture. What Jesus did according to the Jews was a violation of some of their ridiculous rules that they had added, primarily the Rabbis had added, to the divine Sabbath regulations revealed in Scripture. Jesus, of course, knew that he would give offense to his adversaries inspired by Satan. By the way, Jesus would never violate the law of God but he had no regard whatsoever for the man-made laws of men. You see, the oral law regarding the Sabbath disallowed healing on the Sabbath unless a person's

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life was in danger and this man's life wasn't in danger so, "Can't do that. You violated the Sabbath." Secondly, some Rabbis believed that it was a violation of the Sabbath to anoint a person's eyes with medicine on the Sabbath and they believed that saliva had some medicinal value to it. So there are two strikes. They didn't play baseball back then but you know where this is going: three strikes and you're out. You see, others even considered that when Jesus mixed the saliva with the mud that that was tantamount to kneading, like you would knead dough. Well, now you can't do that because that would be an act of work and you would also violate the Sabbath.

So on as many as three counts by their ludicrous measures, Jesus was guilty of breaking the Sabbath. Isn't it amazing, rather than being awestruck with this miracle and marveling at this man's deliverance and rejoicing with him and focusing on the God of glory, they're obsessed with somehow finding offense. You know, there is no greater idol than self and the proud love to bow before it. This is always the mark of hypocrisy. Those who stand on the pinnacle of pride will look down upon others and see them as mere ants, just a nuisance. There is perhaps no higher place for the proud to ascend than the pinnacle of phony religion because it is there that they can strut around like a proud peacock, flaunting the plumage of their phylacteries and their robes and their tassels and their silly little hats while they condemn other people. In fact, it has been my observation and personal experience that those who are the most strident in their convictions in terms of shouting them and their personal preferences, tend to be the greatest opponents of those who love Christ, especially new believers.

So being filled with self-righteous legalism and blinded by their prejudice, by their hatred for Jesus, they interrogate this man in an effort to intimidate him to discredit the miracle and to discredit Christ and find more reasons to kill Jesus. So in verse 15, "The Pharisees also were asking him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, 'He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.'" Mind you, once again, what John is giving us here is a condensed summary of all that is said, all that really happened but as I explained last week, it is my belief that Jesus' method of mixing the saliva and the mud had something to do with offending and insulting the legalistic sensibilities of the Jews that would have seen that as a disgusting taboo.

Verse 16, "Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, 'This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.' But others were saying, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And there was a division among them." Again, it's amazing to me that here we have an unprecedented, undeniable miracle and the most religious people in the world are quibbling over breaking their rules rather than worshiping God. I have seen that before and you have too. And what a mockery they make of the Sabbath. You will recall that Jesus said in Mark 2:27, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Consequently the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." You see, it's for

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this reason that Jesus could reject the Pharisaic regulations and restore God's original intention for Sabbath observance. You see, the Sabbath was meant to be a blessing to man; to be an opportunity for man to rest and to focus on the glory of God and his redemptive purposes, not a burdensome day of fastidious man-made rule-keeping designed to glorify yourself. It's because of this that Jesus would say to his kinsman in Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Can you imagine living in that culture having to deal with all that stuff? He says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light."

So this division among them caused them to further interrogate the man who had been healed in verse 17. "So 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.'" Here is where the testing really begins to heat up. You see, the man would have known as all of the people would have known that they were trying to kill Jesus and word would have gotten around very quickly that anyone that confessed him as the Messiah would be excommunicated. By the way, this man had not seen Jesus yet. That doesn't come until later even though I believe by now he has already placed his faith in him as the Messiah but he has not really seen him. We don't know what other conversation he had with him other than what the text records but we know that he trusted him. He obeyed him and he went and washed and the text says, "He came back seeing." But he doesn't really meet until later in verse 35.

So at this point, the Holy Spirit I believe has worked within him and he knows that Jesus as he says here, is a prophet, a messenger sent from God to declare his word and act on his behalf. As the story unfolds, we begin to see how this man sees more clearly who the Lord is and all that is going on while at the same time we see how the Jews kind of slither further into a cavern of darkness and unbelief. So next we see the testing intensify, 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, and questioned them, saying, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?'" Again, isn't it sad? They knew Jesus had miraculously healed this man. Everybody knew it but they couldn't stand it. I can't imagine what the poor man must have been experiencing. Once again, put yourself in his place: you have not been able to see anything but darkness your whole life and suddenly you can see. Not just physically, but you're seeing more clearly these spiritual truths and yet your religious authorities all around you simply will not admit what has happened. This is characteristic of the unregenerate.

I believe there are a couple of lessons that can be learned here and that's this: 1. whenever your faith is under attack by some intimidating authority that is placed over you, know that behind it all Satan is in it. Satan is in it and phony religionists tend to be the devil's

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favorite archers to shoot his fiery arrows at us and yet the shield of faith will not allow them to penetrate that shield and destroy us. Secondly, I believe another lesson here is that we have absolutely no power to overcome unbelief. No power. Only a miracle of mercy can conquer the enmity of the human heart towards God. God has got to do something and this man is learning this firsthand. Think about it: personal testimony? Talk about a personal testimony. He was blind and now he can see and they're still not believing? You see, nothing can penetrate the fortress of a hard heart. Our most convincing, compelling arguments are not more effective than shooting a Nerf gun at a battleship. God must do something in order to penetrate the walls of unbelief.

So they summoned the parents knowing full well that they would be terrified of the possibility of being put out of the synagogue which would make it fairly likely that they would turn against their son who, after all, had just been a blind beggar. "Is this your son?" they say, "who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see? His parents answered them and said, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself.'" Ah-ha, they saw the hook within the bait and they did not bite. They acknowledged that he was born blind and now he sees, we can all see that, but they evaded their question about how does he now see.

Verse 22, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'" Isn't it sad to see people that are normally intelligent somehow grovel in fear before religious tyrants? It's such a sad thing. Friends, denying Christ might protect you from men but it will condemn you before God. Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted." You know friends, we need to implore of the Lord to help us fear him, for him to put his fear within us that we might not fear man but fear and worship the Lord our God.

I believe there is another lesson to be learned here, especially for new believers and that's this: don't expect your relatives to rejoice in your new-found faith, the radical change that they see in your life. More often than not, they will be indifferent at best, hostile at worst. I believe early on the Lord is teaching this man this. We all need to learn to solely rely upon the Lord our God for our strength because, after all, he is the one who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Still unable to find any reason to deny this miracle and discredit Jesus, they turn again to the man and I believe the testing now is increasing. Verse 24, "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 see, what's happening here is these characters are challenging

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and pretending to tell this man that somehow they have discovered some evidence that would impugn the character of Christ and therefore that would give him a little incentive to deny him. "Hey, we know something about this guy. You need to fess up." "Oh, okay." But he doesn't do that. It's interesting that the term that they use, the phrase "give glory to God," that is the identical statement that Joshua used when he confronted Achan in Joshua 7:19. He said this, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me." So you must understand that this is yet another blasphemous attempt to coerce this man to deny Christ.

Genuine saving faith will be tested but secondly, it will also be validated. I think we see this here. In other words, it will be proven to be real because it endures. Folks, don't miss this: here we have an example of what James says when he tells us that we should "consider it all joy when we encounter various trials knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance and let that endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." In other words, that we might have an undivided obedience to Christ and an unblemished life that manifests the virtues of Christ.

So here we see how Satan uses his servants to force this man to join them in dishonoring Christ but he resists the devil. He's basically saying, "Look, I refuse to get side-tracked with a discussion about the character of my Benefactor, about the character of Jesus. All that is irrelevant but one thing I know, I once was blind but now I see." What a great statement. There is the simplicity of the Gospel. You know, this is another lesson that we can all learn here, especially for those of you that are new believers. You may not know a lot about the God that saved you, you may not know the finer points of theology, but you will know that once you were blind to your sin, blind to the Savior, but now you see it all very, very clearly. You will be able to say with the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." And as John said in 1 John 3:14, "I know that I have passed out of death into life." Romans 8:28, "I know that all things work together for good to those who love God." 1 John 3:2, "I know that when He appears, I shall be like Him." Or Job 19:25, "I know that my Redeemer lives and at last He will take His stand on the earth." These are the basic things of saving faith. Oh child of God, rejoice in just the simplicity of the Gospel. "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

I'm convinced that with all the manipulation here and all this testing with this newborn believer that he is gaining more and more spiritual sight. Verse 27, "So they said to him, '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? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?'" Pretty bold statement. You see, this is a sarcastic

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question used to expose their irrational line of questioning and their obvious prejudice. I think what we see here is the Spirit of God giving wisdom, giving boldness in the face of all this badgering. He obviously sees through their efforts to trip him up and he will not bow before them. He will not fear them. But I think there is another important lesson for us to learn here and that is this: friends, it is futile to discuss the things of God with those whose hearts are so clearly hardened against him. You are casting pearls before swine. You see, apart from regenerating grace, inveterate unbelief will never yield to the truth. God has to do something. Yes, he can speak through you, even sometimes through your testimony, but don't think that somehow you can out-argue them and they're going to come to a place where they say, "Oh, now I understand. I repent and believe."

As I've told you before, when I encounter folks like this, I try to be kind and tell them in a tender manner, "You know, until your heart is softened to the truth of the Gospel, until you see your sin in the Savior, until you believe in him and place your faith in him and the Spirit of God comes to dwell within you, it's frankly a waste of time for us to discuss these theological issues. You're never going to see it and so I'm going to pray to that end. So, who does your team play next week?" You might as well change the subject. Does that make sense to you? I hope it doesn't sound unkind or flippant.

His whole demeanor is changing here as I look at this and he now refuses to bow before their pressure. This is consistent with Solomon's admonition, "Answer a fool as his folly deserves lest he be wise in his own eyes," Proverbs 26:5. In other words, expose the sheer folly of their schemes and their idiocy and their unbelief. In verse 28 it says, "They reviled him." It means they hurled insults at him. I find it fascinating that he doesn't cave which I think, once again, validates genuine saving faith. They says, "You are His disciple." They could see it. "Ah, but we are disciples of Moses." Well, that settles it, doesn't it? In other words, "How dare you to insinuate that we have a secret desire to become a disciple of this man. Unlike you, you miserable, wretched sinner, we don't follow this blasphemer, Jesus. We follow Moses." You know, there is another lesson to be learned here: beware of men who identify themselves with anyone or anything other than Jesus. I don't care if you're a Calvinist. I don't care if you're an Arminian. I don't care if you're a Lutheran, a Methodist. You can hide behind MacArthur, Piper, Driscoll and all of these and none of that matters. Our boast is in Christ and in Christ alone.

So, "Oh, we're of Moses." By the way, isn't it sad to see Christians who may be orthodox in creed but unorthodox in character? I have to guard my heart here as well as you. We can have all of our doctrinal ducks in a row, if you will, and yet have an interpersonal style of relating that is so unChristlike that when people see us coming, we're like a skunk, they just all want to move away. How sad. Of course, we see this to the extreme here in the first century Jews. Verse 29, "We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man," referring to Jesus, "we do not know where He is from." Nothing blinds the

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What Genuine Faith Will Endure and Enjoy

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 9:13-34

Preached on: Sunday, October 5, 2014

eyes like pride and prejudice, right? Of course they knew that Jesus was from Nazareth of Galilee and that's one of the reasons they despised him but they didn't really know ultimately where he's from because all these things that he was saying, they refused to believe them, certainly that he came from heaven to do the Father's will. They thought that this guy is either deranged or demonic.

Now, what this man says next is really, I think, not only a product of tested faith and validated faith but something that continues to move in a particular direction and that is: genuine saving faith is going to be strengthened. It's going to be tested; it's going to be validated; it's going to be strengthened. To be sure, the steel of our faith will always be forged in the fires of testing and it will be shaped on the anvil of adversity. We see this happening, I believe, here with this dear man who is now becoming a more discerning and faithful disciple of Christ. Verse 30, "The man answered and said to them, 'Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.'" It's really an interesting statement. If I could put it a little bit differently, I believe what he is saying is this: "Ah, now this is interesting. Let me see if I get this. You who pride yourselves on being the spiritual eyes of the people of Israel are unable to see what is clearly before you?" That's the point. Verse 31, "We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him." By implication, this has to be one from God. Verse 32, "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." So he is defending Jesus. He's saying, "If this man were a blasphemer and an imposter, how could he work a miracle that has never, ever happened in the history of the world? Obviously this is the Sent One of God. Only he could do such a thing." And so with great boldness he says in verse 33, "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing. They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?'" So they put him out." So they put him out. Friends, he believed Jesus was sent from God and because of this, he was banned from the religious and social life of Israel which would have included even his own family. The high cost of following Jesus but the infinite value of following him.

Well, genuine saving faith will be tested, validated and strengthened and then finally and we end with this: it will be blessed and it will be blessed in ways that we cannot imagine. Notice verse 35, "Jesus heard that they had put him out," and I love this next phrase, "and finding him." Knowing all that had happened, knowing all that was going on in this man's heart and knowing all that would transpire in this beggar's life, Jesus seeks him out. Dear friends, can there be any greater blessing than to know that God not only sees our pain but he comes and meets us in the midst of it? Oh, the love of Christ for his own. I mean, think about it: can there be anything more amazing in all of the universe than this, to think that the uncreated Creator, eternally sufficient in himself, the one who from eternity has enjoyed the ineffable fellowship with his Father and with the Spirit, would now stoop

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to take on my flesh to show his love for me and for you? That he would bear my sins in his body? That he would find me, search me out and find me? And renew the divine image within my soul? I mean folks, these are mysteries that caused the angelic host to just pause in speechless wonder and to stop their flight in breathless adoration. And if we're not careful, we can become so used to thinking and hearing about these things that we lose the wonder of it all. Oh child of God, think often of the love of God, especially in those dark days of misery and despair so that you can echo within your heart the words of Isaiah who rejoiced in Isaiah 49:13 saying, "Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted."

"Jesus heard that they had put him out, and finding him, He said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?'" In other words, "Show Him to me." "Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.' And he said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshiped Him." What a beautiful climax to this man's spiritual journey. Aren't you glad that God finishes what he starts? As Paul says in Philippians 1:6, aren't you glad "that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"? Dear friends, your faith if it is real, will be tested but in the context of that testing, it will be validated. It will be proven because you will not be able to endure unless God is in it, unless God's grace causes you to thrive and you will grow stronger and stronger and because of his great love for you, he will meet you in the midst of whatever pain your experience.

I want to challenge you to do this one thing this week: share with at least one person this progression, this same progression that has been manifested in your life, because by telling it you not only rehearse the most staggering mystery in all of the world that the love of God for his own, but you also preach the Gospel to yourself, don't you? And you preach the Gospel to others that in these days where there is so much bad news, we need a lot of good news and this is the greatest news in the world.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Press them upon our heart. May we live consistently with them to the praise of your glory, I ask in the name of Jesus who sought us and saved us and for his sake. Amen.

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