

49. A Blind Beggar Healed

Luke 18:31-43

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

In this ongoing war of the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness, Satan and his angels are active behind the scenes to keep people in the dark as to the plans and purposes of God. They want to keep people blinded to the mission of Christ, which is to break the power of evil forces and to bring people into the Kingdom of God (1 John 3:8). The lies that are perpetuated in the world by dark forces and false religion include the lie that Jesus failed in His mission of bringing the Kingdom of God. However, we know that Jesus did NOT fail; instead, His death has brought about the most wonderful victory! □

Jesus knew ahead of time exactly what would happen to Him, and again and again, He told His disciples that the time for Him to come as the conquering King was not at that time. He tried to unfold the plan to them, but they could not understand it. Jesus understood that He was to be the sacrifice to redeem guilty man out of the clutches and dominion of Satan. Only a perfect sacrifice would accomplish this task, i.e., to pay the redemption price. God Himself had to come as the only One Who was perfectly sinless—a Lamb of God without blemish. This plan overcame Satan's slavery over all who enter the new covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. □

When Jesus took the disciples to Caesarea Philippi, amidst all the temples and false worship in that place, He asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" Peter was the first who received the revelation from the Father that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah. Once they started to comprehend His identity, the Lord began to reveal the plan of God: **"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life"** (Matthew 16:21). The concept of Jesus' being brutally tortured and dying did not go down well among the disciples. Peter took Him to one side and rebuked Him for talking like that! The Lord knew immediately from where that thought came. Peter became the mouthpiece of Satan for an instant. Jesus said to him, **"Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me. For you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"** (Matthew 16:23)

Now, we come to the last leg of the journey just as Jesus and His disciples are on the outskirts of Jericho and getting ready to make the ascent to Jerusalem for what will be Christ's last appearance in that city. He again reminds them of His mission to die for the sins of the world.

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

³¹Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³²He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. ³³On the third day he will rise again." ³⁴The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about (Luke 18:31-34).

One reputable source claims that 2,875 verses of prophecy relate to future events in the entire Bible. This statistic means approximately 12.8% of the Bible relates, directly or indirectly, to the times in which we are now living or to the future.¹ It strikes me as incredible that God wants to let us know about the future. He knows the end from the beginning (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2). The God of the universe plans to invade earth and put down all rebellion and sin, and He has revealed His plan to you and me through a love letter that we call the Bible. Some have referred to history as being “His-Story.” In preparation for this event, He came approximately 2000 years ago for the express purpose of giving His life as a ransom price for many. God does not do anything of a significant nature without revealing the details of His plan to His people.

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

In Luke 18:31-34, we see Jesus’ revealing His plan to the disciples. These twelve disciples were entrusted by God to be the messengers of the redemption story of the planet. He took them into His confidence and explained to them about the way ahead and what would happen to them. God reveals His heart to those who pursue Him, i.e., to those who are intimately acquainted with Him. The disciples had gone from being servants to being friends. Because of their intimate relationship with Him, He chose to reveal His purposes and plan. The majority of the people following Him at that time were seeking for a sign that would amaze them. To His disciples, Jesus had this to say: □

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:15).

As a Christian pursues Christ, He reveals Himself as a friend. There is always a cost involved in being in an intimate relationship with Christ, but not many are willing to pay the price to walk the road of intimacy. People tend to pick and choose as what kind of truths they hold, just as the twelve disciples did. The natural thinking processes of the unregenerate mind does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Jesus knew that the things He had to share with His little band of close friends would be hard for them to understand, but He wanted them to be prepared. He was transparent in sharing His heart, explaining what He would go through, the hard things that the prophets had written about. But He also shared that it would not end in defeat but victory. He would rise again!

Question 1) What do you think was going on in the disciple’s minds and hearts that hindered them from understanding? (v. 34). Was this spiritual warfare, naturally sluggish thinking, or just the refusal to accept His words?

The prevailing thought among the Jews was that the Kingdom of God would come to earth in their time. The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the One who would come as the conquering King of Israel, but they overlooked the prophecies of Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 50:6, that spoke of the Suffering Servant of God. They would not allow themselves to grasp what

¹ http://www.parentalguide.com/Documents/Bible_Desk/bible_statistics.htm#8-BIBLE%20STATISTICS

Jesus was trying to tell them because they quite simply did not want to hear it. This plan did not fit into their world view! They passed by the truth of what He was trying to tell them. □

Before the crown, there is a cross. Many people want the crown, but don't want to carry the cross. We don't read of any response from the disciples. He was vulnerable with them about what He would go through, but they didn't even pray for Him, question Him, or seek to understand why He would have to go through being mocked and spat on and killed: ³⁴“The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about” (v. 34). He knew what was awaiting Him in Jerusalem barely a week away, and He sought to share His burden with His disciples. How hard it must have been for the Lord to share something most intimate with His disciples and to get no response.

The enemy is often involved in seeking to steal truths from fertile ground in the soil of our hearts (Matthew 13:4). If we allow him, Satan does have the power to close minds to the truth that is heard:□

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

We cannot blame Satan for everything, though. Sometimes, our minds are sluggish and slow to receive God's word. On more than one occasion, the Lord told His disciples that they were dull (Matthew 15:15; Mark 7:18). The word *dull* means: “to not have a sharp edge or point; blunt: as in *a dull knife*.”² Meditation on God's word requires mental concentration, mulling over particular truths that are shared with us, and letting them sink into our hearts. Christ bared His soul and sought to share His burden with them, but there was no response, no questions, no grief, and no prayer of support.□

Question 2) Jesus suffered as we do. Imagine what it was like for Him to have no response from His friends. Have you ever had to face a problematic situation totally on your own? Did you cry out to God for help at that time? If not, why not? Is it hard for you to share your burdens with others? Why are we reluctant to be vulnerable to others? □

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

³⁵As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:35-37).

The text mentions that the procession of people approached Jericho on their way to Jerusalem. They were traveling in a depression called the Great Rift Valley that extends north of the Sea of Galilee, down through the Dead Sea, and into Kenya in Africa. It is the lowest place on earth. Just a few miles south of Jericho are where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located. Jericho would have been a welcome little oasis along the way in their journey to Jerusalem. It is

² Dictionary.com

a very fertile place with palm trees, gardens of roses, and sweetly scented balsam plantations. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes it as the richest part of the country, and he called it a little paradise. The temperature here is always warm, even in winter.

It's possible that Jesus stayed at least one night in Jericho as it was the perfect stopping place before the climb of 17 miles to Jerusalem. Jericho was 850 feet below sea level; whereas, Jerusalem was 2,500 feet above sea level, so the climb to Jerusalem is very steep. Usually, this path would be dangerous for single travelers, but that was not a problem just before the Passover when many pilgrims traveled the road together. The parable of the Good Samaritan mentions this road up to Jerusalem.

Jericho was the central station for the collection of tax and custom. Traders met here from the other side of Jordan. It was also a principal city on the Kings Highway, the main trade route from Syria and Mesopotamia to Egypt. Amidst all the hustle and bustle of this main thoroughfare, Jesus had a significant appointment to keep. A man was waiting for him, one whose story would live on in Scripture for our encouragement. He was sitting at the side of the road when Jesus approached. His life was about to change forever.

Luke takes us from the spiritual blindness of the disciples to this blind beggar who is about to have his eyes opened. As Jesus approached the city, the blind man had positioned himself in a place along the main road that was strategic for begging. With the popularity of Jesus being what it was, a great crowd of people was traveling with Him. □

William Barclay, the commentator, says: "One of the commonest ways for a Rabbi to teach was to discourse as he walked. That was what Jesus was doing, and the rest of the pilgrim band were crowding close around him so as not to miss anything he might say."³ It is likely that, because of the crowd, Jesus did not even see the blind beggar; His focus was on what He was teaching as He was walking. It is also possible that Christ did see the blind beggar out of the corner of His eye, but He chose to wait until there was an expression of the beggar's faith.

Question 3) What do you think it would have been like to live as a blind beggar in the time of Jesus? Imagine what his daily routine would be like and discuss.

There was no sidewalk in those days, so he would not have known if he was beside the road or in it. Perhaps, he carefully followed the wall around until he came to the gate of the city, parking himself in a strategic location for begging. With no ability to read, his life focused on talking with others and being alone in his thoughts. We can only imagine what he faced: boredom, isolation, loneliness, and humiliation. He was reliant on others to feed him and to give him a drink. He had learned to be curious about the dark world in which he lived.

When he heard the commotion of a large band of people passing by him, he inquired who it was. He must have heard testimony about Jesus at some time because, when he was told it was Jesus of Nazareth, his response was to call out, "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**" (v. 38). Even though he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, he did not call Him by that name. He cried out to

³ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, Book of Luke*, Published by The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1975. Page 232.

Jesus as the Son of David, a title for the Messiah (Messiah is the Hebrew word for Christ; it means God's Anointed One). He began to cry out for mercy:□

³⁹Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:39).

The blind man could not be kept quiet by those around Christ. There will always be those who do not want us to get excited about Jesus and His Word. Some on the outskirts of the crowd could not hear the master teach over the beggar's shouting, so they rebuked him and told him to be quiet, possibly because they thought he wanted money from Jesus.

This blind man could not be put off by the naysayers. A different Greek word is used the second time to emphasize how this man shouted. In verse 39, it is translated: "**he *shouted* all the more**" (v. 39). The Greek word translated as "shouted all the more," is *krazō*, which means to scream or shriek.⁴ In his desperation, he began to scream out loud to the Lord. What a distraction he must have caused!

The tense of the Greek also brings out the fact that he *kept on* shouting and screaming. They wanted him to shut up, but he would not give up! Has anyone ever tried to dampen your enthusiasm for the Lord? Do not listen to them. Keep pressing on and reaching out to Him! The picture we get is of a man going crazy with emotion.

There is desperation behind the blind man's voice. He likely had heard of Christ and His power beforehand, and now he has this fantastic opportunity! In hearing testimony from others about Christ, he concluded that this was the prophesied Messiah, the Son of David.

The Spirit had already been working in his heart to produce the faith for when the opportunity came. If there was ever a picture of one who sought Christ with all his heart, this was it. The blind man had this one opportunity, and he was not going to let Jesus go by without doing all in his power to get his need met. He began to call out to the Lord with his whole heart and voice, just as the Spirit has told us in the Book of Psalms: "**and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me**" (Psalm 50:15). This heart cry to the Lord when in trouble is not something we should allow to pass by us without grasping it because there is a great spiritual truth set before us. This is not just regular prayer, but it is a deep crying out in distress and anguish of soul. ¹⁶As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. ¹⁷Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice (Psalm 55:16-17).

Leonard Ravenhill, the Bible teacher, has said that God doesn't answer prayer; He answers desperate prayer! I'm not sure I agree entirely with that statement, but there is a truth worth digging the gold from the quote. Desperate prayer touches the compassionate heart of God. Again and again, we read of encouragement to cry out to God just as the blind beggar did. For instance, in all the troubles that King David went through at the hands of King Saul, the Lord taught him to call and cry out to Him: "**In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears**" (Psalm 18:6).

⁴ e.Sword.com

We see example after example in the Gospels of desperate people getting their needs met by Jesus.

The Gospel writer, Mark, gives us more insight into what happened that day. He tells us that all that the blind man had in his possession was a cloak. He also adds that his name was Bartimaeus, and that, when Jesus called him, he threw his cloak aside, jumped to his feet, and staggered toward the center of all the noise:

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus (Mark 10:50).

Question 4) Why do you think Mark mentioned that Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside? Also, why did Jesus ask him what he wanted?

The cloak likely covered him in the evening. He may have been homeless with his evening blanket to keep warm at night. Faith and desperation rose within him as he shouted out passionately to Jesus. He threw his cloak aside as a faith statement as if to say that he would not need it from now on—now that he knew the Lord had heard his voice and was calling him.

In his Gospel, Mark indicates that this happened as Jesus and the crowd was leaving the city (Mark 10:46); whereas, Luke says that it happened as He was arriving (Luke 18:35). Some have used this as an excuse, saying that this is an example of a contradiction in the Scriptures. However, you should know that there were two Jericho's. The Old Jericho was destroyed by the walls falling under Joshua's attack, and Joshua also cursed the city (Joshua 6:26). Many years later, the town was rebuilt nearby. It could be that Mark was referencing Jesus' leaving the new Jericho, and Luke was referencing Jesus' approaching the Old City environs.

Whatever the reason for the discrepancy, it is a nice thought that, even though Christ is on His way to be crucified and with all that was on His mind concerning what would happen there, He had time to stop and call Bartimaeus, asking him what he wanted before healing him. Jesus was teaching while walking before Bartimaeus called out to him, but the teaching took second priority due to the need of a person crying out to Him. □

Don't ever think that the Lord does not have time for you in your need. He cares and will hear your cry if you seek Him with all your heart. Bartimaeus was whole-hearted in finding God for his need, throwing his cloak aside. He did not have another concern about that cloak. Perhaps, it represented to him his old tattered life; Christ was now his only concern.

Be Specific and Fervent with Requests to God

⁴⁰Jesus stopped and ordered the man brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. ⁴²Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." ⁴³Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God (Luke 18:40-43).

His life had become so dependent on others, but it would change considerably if he were healed. People would resent the fact of his continuing to beg, and he would have to work for a living if he was healed. Is that what he wanted? Often, Christ waits for us to put into words exactly what we want. He is looking to see how much of our heart is in what we desire Him to do for us. How much passion or importunity is in your praying? Effective prayer begins by how much of yourself goes into your prayer life. James tells us:

¹⁶Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual **fervent** prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16 KJV).

Bartimaeus approached Christ with a fervency of heart. The Greek word translated fervent is *energeō*. We get the English word *energy* from this Greek word. Bartimaeus' heart was in His approach and plea to Christ. The ability to call and not be put off by distractions, people, and things are of the essence in a prayer life that is effective. Jesus found a man in great need, and He would not pass by.

Let's think about this. This blind beggar had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and he wholeheartedly seized it. We have a continual audience with the King of Kings, why do we not approach the throne of His grace more often? What keeps us from crying out to God with all our hearts? Do we really believe that He can help us in our time of need? The blind beggar was convinced of it and committed to receiving what he needed from God. □

When I was a young Christian, God intervened to save my life when I fell overboard from my father's fishing boat. We caught at least two or three tons of fish that day, and to bring them aboard; we had to maneuver the boat in such a way as to bring the net to the side of the boat. In the wheelhouse, my father reversed the engine to begin the maneuver. I needed to pin the net under the rail at the back end of the boat. I had performed this task many times, but this time, my fingers got caught in the net! When the net tightened, it caught me and pulled me over the back end of the boat into the North Sea, where my father could not see me. □

It was winter, and the shock of the cold hit me hard. I had long boots that went to my thighs. They quickly filled up with water and started dragging me down. On top of that, my father did not realize I was down there, and he was now going in reverse, sucking my body down towards the propeller. I cried out a simple prayer to the Lord, "Help!" I grabbed hold of the net and started panicking and pulling down all the loose net into the water. Of course, all this happened so quickly as I stared death in the face.

Thankfully, my Father heard me and put the engine in neutral. Dad dashed to the back of the boat, put his feet on the loose net, and looking down at me in the water, said, "What on earth are you doing down there?" Panting for breath, I held onto the net to stop from going under the water. My Father saved me that day, passing down a rope to put under my arms and hauled me out of the water using the winch just like a catch of fish! Thank God that He hears our desperate cry for help! □

When the man voiced his need to the Lord, the next words were: “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you” (v. 42).

Bartimaeus had never seen Christ; all that he learned about Christ was due to the testimony of others. When people told him: “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you” (Mark 10:49), he believed their testimony and abandoned his cloak, and men led him to Christ. If you have not yet believed and trusted the evidence of those that tell you of Christ, why not today? Give Him your life and abandon all into His care. You will never regret it! □

It was not faith in faith that healed Bartimaeus; it was faith in Christ. His faith was expressed not only through his actions by coming to Christ but also by his ability not to be put off from getting his need met. There was a mixture of faith in his words, his acts, and his passion or fervency. No wonder he followed Jesus, praising God. Who wouldn’t?

Question 5) What restrictions have kept you in the past from living or coming wholeheartedly to the Master? Has it been a person, or has it been things? If you saw Jesus walking by today, would you scream your need? If not, what would hold you back?

Can you see Him with the eyes of faith today? He is very much alive and close to all who are hurting and in need of a Savior. All He waits for is your heartfelt call, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Would you tell Him your need today? He hasn’t changed. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). What He did for blind Bartimaeus, He can do for you. When Jesus finished saying the words, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you,” the blind man’s eyes were opened to see...the Savior of the World, Jesus, God in the flesh. Wouldn’t that be awesome!

Imagine with me. Many of us reading these words will one day have our eyes of flesh close for the last time, and our spiritual eyes will be opened to the same sight: Jesus the Christ. We will gaze on His loveliness and majesty, and all the pain of this life will be gone. What an awesome day that will be!

Prayer: Father, grant us passion in our approach to You. We want to live the rest of our lives focused on the things that matter, a life of devotion to You and to people about whom You care. Amen.

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