

Luke 18:35-43 – “A Blind Man Who Could See”

(Pew Bible Page: 878)

Intro: Everyone said, “Bartimaeus is blind,” but in fact Bartimaeus could see much better than most men ever can. It’s true that his eyes no longer saw as they should, but the eyes of Bartimaeus’ heart had 20/20 spiritual vision. He was “A Blind Man Who Could See.” Tonight, we begin a mini-series from Luke 18 and 19 focusing on three paradoxes in the story of Jesus as the Lord made His way to Jerusalem for a final time before the cross: “A Blind Man Who Could See,” “A Cheat Who Was Honest,” and “A Servant Who Wouldn’t Serve.” We’ll look at Bartimaeus tonight, Zacchaeus next week, and The Unprofitable Servant the week following. Tonight, we’ll focus on Faith.

Proposition: Faith in Jesus opens eyes that are spiritually blind. Seek to see Jesus if you would have your eyes opened.

Billboard: (vv.35-37) A Man in Need
 (vv.38-39) His Cry, The Crowd’s Reply
 (vv.42-43) Arresting Faith

(vv.35-37) A Man in Need – As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, He passed through Jericho and encountered on the outskirts of the city A Man in Need. We know this man’s name as Bartimaeus from Mark’s account of this same story. Bartimaeus was a man in need: **Luke 18:35 - 35** *As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.* Bartimaeus was blind and indigent – he was a man who because of his blindness had to beg for his daily bread. Apparently, he has carefully positioned himself along the route pilgrims would take on their journey to Jerusalem for Passover, and there is little wonder why: begging for charity from Passover Pilgrims would be likely to pay off in a better way than usual. How long had Bartimaeus been blind? We are not told, but evidently not from birth, for he wants to “recover” his sight we are told in verse 41. The question we should ask perhaps is not “How long had he been blind,” but rather, “How long had he been seeing spiritually?” As our study will show, the eyes of Bartimaeus’ heart were wide open when Jesus came by: **Luke 18:36 - 36** *And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant.* Bartimaeus had been blind long enough that his ears supplied much of what his eyes could no longer see. He picked up from the sound of the crowd that something unusual was happening on the road before him. Jesus, as a well-known Rabbi would have attracted a substantial number of fellow pilgrims on his journey. Doubtless, discovering Jesus of Nazareth in their midst the crowd would have gathered around Him, peppering Him with questions, listening to His teaching (something common for Rabbis to do while walking with pilgrims) and generally basking in the glow of being near someone famous. Bartimaeus might have been blind and indigent, but he was also inquisitive, asking those in the crowd before him, “What does this mean?” **Luke 18:37 - 37** *They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”* The news must have gone through Bartimaeus like a shot! He had obviously heard about Jesus. Who hadn’t heard about the man they said could open the eyes of blind men? Has Bartimaeus longed to meet Him? Has he dreamed of this moment, picturing Jesus coming

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through Jericho, pausing when He sees Bartimaeus, doing what only Jesus can do – the very thing Bartimaeus wants more than anything else – opening Bartimaeus’ eyes? In an instant, Bartimaeus seizes his opportunity. He won’t miss His chance!

[DOCTRINAL POINT] It’s only those who are desperately in need who get to see Jesus.

[ILLUSTRATION] Herbert Lockyer has pointed out that any ordinary beggar would have been more interested in the crowd than in seeing Jesus for the obvious reason that the crowd presented a better opportunity for cash than did an itinerant Rabbi. But Bartimaeus was desperate. He didn’t need cash; he needed sight and only by getting to Jesus could Bartimaeus recover his sight.

[APPLICATION] Desperation leads men past the things of this world, attractive as they may be, and carries them into the places where they can be found by Jesus. The blind man was found by Jesus because he put himself beside the road where Jesus was passing. J. C. Ryle reminds us that if we want to find Jesus, we must put ourselves in the places where He can be found: His church; His Book; His presence by Prayer; His Communion table. Some people avoid these means of grace like a plague, but the desperate man or woman will get themselves to Jesus whenever and wherever they have the chance. Like Bartimaeus, they won’t miss their chance to get into His presence.

(VV.38-39) His Cry, the Crowd’s Reply – Instantly, Bartimaeus cried out: **Luke 18:38 - 38** *And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* His cry is instructive – Not that he asks for mercy. We can all understand that, can’t we? Mercy is when someone looks upon the affliction of another and feels pity – so much so that he is moved to do something for the one being afflicted. It’s no surprise that Bartimaeus would seek mercy from Jesus; we understand that. What surprises us is that Bartimaeus calls Jesus, “*Son of David.*” Everyone knew that was a Messianic title, and everyone knew that when Messiah came one of the marks of His ministry would be to open the eyes of the blind (cf. Isaiah 35:5; Luke 4:18). Bartimaeus was calling Jesus, “*the Christ*” and the crowd accompanying Jesus instantly responded by rebuking him: **Luke 18:39 - 39** *And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent.* Their reaction is revealing. “Shush!” they said, “We understand your wanting to be healed; but don’t call this man ‘the Christ.’ That’s going too far.” Doubtless the crowd was hoping to see Jesus do a miracle. Even Herod wanted to see that, and this would appear to be an ideal opportunity set right before them. The crowd wants to see a miracle *from* Jesus, but they don’t want to see the miracle *in* Jesus. But Bartimaeus is having none of it: *But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”* This man knows who Jesus is and he is not about to lose his opportunity to recover his sight because the crowd is blind. How does Bartimaeus know who Jesus is? That Jesus was Messiah was privileged information and only a few had access to it. Hadn’t Jesus cautioned His disciples: **Matthew 16:20 - 20** *Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.* How could this blind beggar be so certain that Jesus was the Christ? The answer is found in what Jesus told Peter after Peter had made his great confession: **Matthew 16:17 - 17** *And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”*

Luke 18:35-43 – “A Blind Man Who Could See”

(Pew Bible Page: 878)

Bartimaeus may have been physically blind, but God had opened Bartimaeus’ spiritual eyes – Bartimaeus knew in his heart that Jesus was the Christ.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Only God can open anyone’s eyes to see that Jesus is the Christ.

[ILLUSTRATION] Lockyer tells us that “When sinners take their place as beggars and plead for mercy, they find it, and their blind eyes are made to see that Jesus is the Light and Deliverer.”

[APPLICATION] In spiritual matters, desperation leads to deliverance, because God has been at work in the desperate to open their eyes to Jesus. Why does any man seek God? Only because God first has sought the man. When a sinner seeks a Savior, it is never because the sinner initiates the search. God in His mercy reduces a man or woman to desperation – not because He is cruel, but because He is seeking to save them. God first reduces us to beggars, then shows us the One from whom we can receive bread. Bartimaeus was a desperate man, but he was also a blessed man, because through his terrible condition, God was drawing him to Himself. God not only gave Bartimaeus a spiritual hunger, but He also provided Bartimaeus with spiritual food – the Bread of Life. God the Father opened Bartimaeus’ spiritual eyes to see that Jesus was the Christ. He did it for Bartimaeus and He is still doing it today. Anyone who from the heart sees who Jesus is, can thank the Father for His abounding grace.

(vv.41-43) Arresting Faith – Despite the crowd’s discouragement, Bartimaeus continued to cry out all the more, “*Son of David, have mercy on me!*” and Jesus, hearing his cry stopped in His tracks: **Luke 18:40 - 40** *And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him.* Bartimaeus’ cry was a cry of faith, and whenever Jesus hears anyone cry out to Him in faith, He is immediately arrested – stopped in His tracks – and turns to address the one who is crying out for mercy. *And when he came near, he asked him.* **Luke 18:41 - 41** “*What do you want me to do for you?*” He said, “*Lord, let me recover my sight.*” Does this sound like a strange question to you? Surely Jesus already knew Bartimaeus’ desire! As the blind man threw off his cloak and sprang up to come to Jesus, everyone in the crowd knew what he wanted (cf. Mark 10:50). He wanted his sight! But Jesus made him ask. Asking is an essential part of faith because it reveals our desperation, dependance, and trust all at the same moment. What is faith? How is it received? Romans 10: 9-10 shows us what faith is: **Romans 10:9–10 - 9** *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* **10** *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* Faith is believing with the heart that Jesus is Lord, which results in our justification – being put into a right relationship with God; and calling on Jesus as Lord brings all Christ’s work on Calvary to bear on our condition. So, faith is believing and confessing that Jesus is Lord. And how is faith received? Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us that it is a gift from God: **Ephesians 2:8–9 - 8** *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* **9** *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Bartimaeus had received that gift and as a result he cried out to Jesus for mercy, and Jesus, as always, unfailingly responded: **Luke 18:42 - 42** *And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.”* Notice the immediacy of Bartimaeus’ healing when he called on Jesus and notice as well that Bartimaeus not only recovered his physical sight, but that he had received his spiritual needs as well. An older translation tells us that: **Luke 18:42 - 42** *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy*

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faith hath saved thee. Faith heals us both physically and spiritually, bringing us everything we really need (cf. Mark 2:1-12). The crowd got to see their miracle, but perhaps without seeing their Savior. Thousands of people saw Jesus do miracles while only a few saw Jesus as their Savior, but Bartimaeus was not one who missed his chance, as verse 43 assures us: **Luke 18:43 - 43** *And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God.* Bartimaeus gave evidence of genuine conversion, because the redeemed heart always wants to go on with Jesus after meeting Him on the road to the cross. *And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God,* but Bartimaeus followed Him all the way to Calvary, apparently.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus never fails to hear the cry of faith and always answers it by giving everything the sinner needs.

[ILLUSTRATION] Acts 16:25-34 tells the story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. The jailer was a man reduced to the verge of suicide by a sudden earthquake and opening of the prison doors. Trembling, he came to Paul and Silas' cell, fell on his knees, and asked, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Don't you find that a strange question for the jailer to ask under the circumstances? Yet, it was the question God had put into his heart and mind when disaster came down upon him. And what answer did he receive? *“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Like Bartimaeus, somehow the jailer knew that he needed a Savior, and like Bartimaeus, he received much more than mere physical rescue from his circumstances: both the jailer and his family came to Jesus that night.

[APPLICATION] God sovereignly arranges the lives of those He calls to Himself. He brings us low, sometimes so low that we tremble on the edge of despair. In mercy we find ourselves unexpectedly sitting beside just the right road when Jesus comes by, perhaps in the form of a preacher, a friend, a neighbor, or even a stranger. He opens our eyes so that we can see our need for the Savior, and in desperation we cry out, *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* To our amazement and wonder we find that Jesus comes to us, meets us where we are, pours out His mercy and grace and gives us everything we could ever need, and more. What a gracious God! Of course, the proper response is to follow Jesus up the road, even though the road sometimes leads us to a cross.

Conclusion: Bartimaeus, A Blind Man Who Could See, took his opportunity to cry out to Jesus and was saved. But what of the crowd? The crowd saw the miracle, but not the Savior. They praised God for the miracle, but did they call on Jesus? We are not told; perhaps some did. Ryle reminds us that none will be so excuseless at the last day as men and women who had a glimpse of the Savior, but never called on Him. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to bring many more souls into His Kingdom. Everything they need is just a prayer away.