

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 18- Luke 18:35-43
295- Saving Faith in a Blind Man

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Luke 18:35-43

35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging.

36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he *began* to inquire what this was.

37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him,

41 **"What do you want Me to do for you?"** And he said, "Lord, *I want* to regain my sight!"

42 And Jesus said to him, **"Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."**

43 Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

To the Glory of God

Now I spend a lot of time talking about the Sovereignty of God. The Bible declares repeatedly that the God that we serve is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time. God doesn't merely know about His Will being performed at some point in the future- no, God actually moves in such a way that assures that His Will is *always* carried out- whether that is the Salvation of those He chose from before the foundation of the world or the actions of evil men.

But, the way in which God assures that His Will is accomplished in people is by sovereignly giving them both the desire and the power to “do” certain things that bring about His Perfect Will. So, for example, God saves all of His Elect- that is true. But the way that He saves these unworthy sinners is by sovereignly changing their nature and *causing* them to love Him. And this transformation of their nature in sovereignly giving them a new love for Himself is what provides us with both the desire and the power to repent and trust in Jesus.

And so the mystery is that we are told to do things: we are told to repent and to obey and to struggle and to yield and to labor and to surrender and to follow. And yet in all of our repenting and in all of our obedience and in all of our struggles and yieldings and labors and in all of our surrendering- it is all of Grace. And since it is all of Grace- God receives all the Glory, all the Praise, and all the Honor for everything that we do.

And so I can flip a switch- but I don't provide the electricity. And I can turn on a faucet- but I can't make the water flow. So no matter how hard I flip the switch or how much effort I put into turning on the faucet- unless somebody else provides the light and water- nothing will happen.

And so it is, in a limited sense, for the Christian with the ongoing Grace of God. God's Grace is *essential* for our spiritual lives, and yet- we don't control the Supply. We simply can't make the Grace flow- no matter how much effort we put into it. But God has given us “circuits” to connect and pipes to open- in case water and light is there.

Our God is lavish in His Grace- often liberally dispensing His Favor without even the least bit of cooperation or preparation on our part. But He also has regular “Ways” or “Means” by which this Grace is dispensed. And we can routinely avail ourselves of these revealed “Paths of Blessing” or we can neglect them to our detriment. Jonathan Edwards said:

“The essence of the Christian life is learning how to fight for Joy in a way that does not replace Grace.”

So we must understand that Grace is always “free”- in the purest sense of the word. Grace is *always* unearned and *always* undeserved on our part, and Grace is entirely *unobligated* on God's Part. And that

means that we are *never* in a position, through our service and devotion to Jesus, where we *deserve* Grace or where we are *owed* it. And God is *never* at any time in a position where He is *forced* or *coerced* or *obligated* to give the Grace that we so desperately need.

Grace is dispensed solely on God's Own Free Will, His Own Prerogative, His Own Pleasure. And that means that we can't "do" anything to "make" God's Grace flow to us- apart from the absolute Freedom of His Will.

But even though that is true- God has mercifully provided various "Means of Grace" that He created that allows us to position ourselves to receive God's Grace- if God would choose to give it. So as Edwards said, we can:

“... fight to walk in the paths where God has promised His Blessings.”

So we can ready ourselves for receiving Grace along God's regular route that is sometimes called "The Spiritual Disciplines." And these "Spiritual Disciplines" or "Means of Grace" are the areas where God has promised to meet with us in- and where- if God wills- we can receive fresh Grace from our Savior to help us along the way.

And these "Means of Grace" or "Spiritual Disciplines" are things we "do" as already saved people- endued with Power from on High. And the "doing" of these things- the "practicing" of these things- the "engaging in these Means" and the "yielding to these various Disciplines" are not fancy or highfalutin. They are the stuff of everyday, basic Christianity- unimpressively mundane, but spectacularly potent by the Spirit.

And while there is no final and complete list of such Spiritual Disciplines- the long tally of helpful habits can be clustered into four basic groups:

1. Hearing God's Voice
2. Having God's Ear
3. Being with God's people
4. Doing God's Will

... or more simply put:

1. Bible Study
2. Prayer
3. Fellowship
4. Partaking in the Ordinances (Baptism/Lord's Supper) and Service

And these were called "The Means of Grace" by previous generations of believers. JI Packer once said,

"The doctrine of the disciplines is really a restatement and extension of classical Protestant teaching on the means of grace" (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9).

But whatever you call it- the one, true, and living God of the Bible has revealed certain "ways" or "means" through which He regularly pours out His Favor. And we're just being foolish not to take Him up on it.

Now, anytime you add the word "*means*" with the word "*grace*" you run the risk of endangering the utterly free nature of Grace. But even though there *is* a risk of becoming legalistic- that risk doesn't have to become reality. Especially if there is an ongoing understanding and acknowledgement that every "Means of Grace" are coordinate with receiving and those exertions of human effort are graciously supplied, which is emphatically the case for the Christian. When that is true- there is no ground for human boasting.

The Apostle Peter called God:

1 Peter 5:10b

... The God of all Grace...

And this God not only "elects" the undeserving without condition, He not only works in them the miracle of New Birth and the gift of faith- but this God of Grace also freely declares them "righteous" by that faith, and begins supplying the flow of spiritual life and energy to experience the joy of increasing Christlikeness.

God's immense flood of Grace not only sees us as holy in Christ, but also *progressively* produces holy desires in us. It is Grace to be forgiven of sinful acts, and Grace to be supplied the heart for righteous ones. It is Grace that we are increasingly "**conformed to the image of his**

Son” (Romans 8:29), and Grace that He doesn’t leave us in the misery of our sin, but pledges to bring to completion the “Good Work” that He has already begun in us (Philippians 1:6).

So for the Glory of God and the good of others and the satisfaction of our own souls- the goal of the Christian life is this “Christlikeness”, or this “godliness”, or this “holiness”- rightly understood. And all our exertions of effort toward that goal- are gifts of God’s Grace.

So yes, it is all of Grace- and yet we must also say, *“Yes- we must also expend human effort.”* And so Paul says to his young protégé:

1 Timothy 4:7b

... discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness

In other words- the Holy Bible teaches that once we have been sovereignly born again- we are to take regular actions- we are to “do” things- in order to get more of God in our minds and hearts- so that we may “echo” Jesus Christ in our lives. And *that* is the definition of “godliness.” And it is a gift of God’s Grace- and yet we don’t actually *receive* that gift- unless we “obey” and “become” it.

The Apostle Paul’s own reliance on God for ongoing Grace is a powerful testimony to this “means-of-grace” dynamic. He said in the first part of **1 Corinthians 15:10**:

But by the grace of God I am what I am...

... and we might be tempted to stop after quoting that part. But then the very same man said this in the very same verse:

1 Corinthians 15:10b

... and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

And so he says here that the Grace that made him what he was- was not given to him in vain. How is that? Because the Grace of God that made Paul what he was caused action and effort on his part:

... I labored even more than all of them...

And immediately after he said this- so that no one would get the notion that Paul was teaching that he could *earn* or *deserve* what he got from God or what he did for God- he finished his statement by saying,

... yet not I, but the grace of God with me

So which one is it? Is it all of Grace or does it require effort on our part? And the answer is, "Yes- to both!" In fact, the way that he words this verse shows us that he was saying that if he had *not* labored more than the rest- then the Grace of God would *not* have made him what he was.

So what we should get out of this is that Grace is both the *catalyst* for our doing and the *reward* for our doing. Grace alone gives us the desire and the ability to love and serve God, and therefore, God's Grace alone is magnified anytime we actually do love and serve God. Paul himself said:

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

And the way this is phrased here lets us understand that Paul was saying, "It is God- all by Himself- Who is at work in you- to give us both the will and the power to love and serve Him. So the first part of this equation is:

God alone is at work in us (by His Grace)

But the mysterious second part of this Biblical equation is:

We "will" and "work".

... to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

So if we do not have either the "will" or if we do not expend the "labor"- then we are proving that the Grace of God is *not* at work in us. In other words- the Bible teaches that if we are truly being endowed with God's Grace- the result of that fact will be that we will "will" or

"desire" to love and serve God, *and* we will "work" or "expend human labor" to love and serve God.

So we have to understand that there is absolutely nothing about God's Grace that should make us ever sit back and be passive. But rather we are to understand that the energy for our spiritual discipline and every ounce of energy that we expend in God's Name and to God's Glory- is all of Grace!

Or how about **Romans 15:18a**:

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me...

In other words- Jesus' Grace didn't mean accomplishing this purpose *despite* Paul, or *apart* from him- but rather *through* him. So where did Paul get the power to labor and expend such spiritual effort?

Colossians 1:29b

... I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

... so what proved that God's Grace was alive and empowering in Paul's life was the fact that he labored and struggled.

Now it is very important to understand that this dynamic is true- *not* because Paul was an Apostle- but because he was a Christian. So he says to *every* believer- two things that on the surface seem to be contradictory:

Philippians 2:12b

work out your salvation with fear and trembling

And he tells us to expend this labor and human effort because of the great Promise from God:

Philippians 2:13

for it is God [all by Himself] who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

And that is why the **Epistle to the Hebrews** closes with this prayer:

Hebrews 13:20&21

20 Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord,
21 equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

... and this is why Jude closed his Epistle by repeating these very same seemingly contradictory statements:

Jude 21&24

21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.
24 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling [all by Himself], and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

So the “way” or the “means” by which we receive the gift of God’s gracious empowering of our actions- is to actually “do” the actions- depending solely on Him. And that isn’t double talk or circle reasoning- it is Scriptural Truth. And the fact that we don’t understand this dynamic very well proves how far we have strayed away from being Biblical.

God graciously gives the gift of effort and we *receive* that gift *by* expending the effort. Another way of understanding this is that our actions are normal and natural *responses* to the sovereign Grace that is at work within us. So when God gives the Grace of growing in holiness- we don’t receive that gift apart from actually becoming more holy. So when He gives us the desire to have more of Him in His Word, or in prayer, or among His people- we don’t receive that gift without actually *experiencing* the desire and *living* the pursuits which flow from it.

So Bartimaeus may have been blind- but he modeled this big reality by *positioning* himself along the path of Grace- and by refusing to move. He certainly had no ability or right to force Jesus’s Hand- in other words- Bartimaeus couldn’t “make” Grace flow- but he *could* put himself along the path where Grace was coming- and Luke tells us that he did!

One of my living heroes- Don Whitney said:

“Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as ways we can place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek him as Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus placed themselves in Jesus’s path and sought him” (*Spiritual Disciplines*, 19).

Or, as one of my dead heroes, Jonathan Edwards, put it, we can:

“endeavor to promote spiritual appetites by *laying yourself in the way of allurement.*”

... so as I said, God’s regular and ongoing “Means of Grace” are His Word, His Ear, and His People and His Will- Bible Study, Prayer, Fellowship, and Service.

Now every so often- God showers His people with unexpected Favor. But, typically- the Grace that sends our roots the *deepest* and that truly “grows us up” in Christ, and that produces lasting spiritual maturity- streams from the very ordinary and unspectacular paths of Fellowship, Prayer, and Bible intake in its various forms.

Now even though these simple “Means of Grace” may seem as unimpressive as everyday switches and faucets- it is through them that God regularly stands ready to give His true Light and pour forth the Water of Life.

Now in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you- the name of this blind man is not mentioned. But in the “sister” Passage over in **Mark 10**- John Mark tells us in verse 46 that the blind man here was named,

Bartimaeus

And the first part of verse 35 says:

As Jesus was approaching Jericho...

Now everybody is familiar with Jericho from the Old Testament. As Joshua approached the Promised Land from 40 years of journeying through the wilderness- the first city/state that they came across was Jericho- because it was promised to Abraham and to his seed. And you remember that according to **Joshua 6**- the children of Israel encamped

against the walled city, and God told Joshua to march around the city for six days. And on the seventh day- God told Joshua:

Joshua 6:4b&5

4 ... march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

5 "It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

... and God gave them the city.

And you will remember that it was in this battle for Jericho that we meet one of the of the strangest characters in all the Bible- a sinful Gentile harlot by the name of Rahab- who lied to the rulers of Jericho in order to protect God's people. And even though this woman was a great sinner- she is listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ that the Apostle Levi gave us in Matthew 1- where we see that in God's economy- Rahab went on to become the great, great grandmother of King David.

Now Matthew's Gospel tells us that Jesus was accompanied in this journey towards Jerusalem by a massive crowd because everybody was heading toward Jerusalem for the Passover. And the journey would take you through the city of Jericho because if they came from the region of the Galilee- they would come down from Galilee and they would cross the Jordan River to go through an area called "Peraea". And the travelers would go through Peraea so they didn't have to go through Samaria because the Jews thought Samaria was cursed by God.

So they would then cross the River Jordan to go down through Peraea, and then they would cross the Jordan again down at the south and they would cross just east of the city of Jericho which would be the first city on the west side of the Jordan River, and then they would go through the hills through Jericho and on into Jerusalem. So there was a steady stream of people flowing south toward Jerusalem during this time of the year.

Now back in the first century- Jericho was called "the city of palms". And in those days Jericho was fed by springs. And the water from these springs was piped into reservoirs to use in the city, and also

used to irrigate and make the area productive, and so it was a flourishing area for certain crops.

Jericho was filled with date palms- which is how it got its name, and there were fruit trees everywhere. And a plant grew there called balsam- which was a bush that produced the juice that was used for medicinal applications and was found only in Jericho.

The climate was warm in the winter and really hot in the summer. And the Jewish historian, Josephus, says if you were going to live in Jericho back then- you only needed linen clothes because even when there's snow fifteen miles up in Jerusalem- it was still very warm in Jericho. John Mark tells us in **Mark 11:13** that in Jerusalem during Passion Week on the Mount of Olives- it was not yet the season for figs.

But it *would* have been the season for figs down in Jericho, so they would have been ripening everywhere on those palms. Almonds also grew there, as well as rose plants which made Jericho a really beautiful place. In fact, it was such a magnificent place with the Dead Sea nearby that according to Josephus- Marc Antony gave the city of Jericho to Cleopatra. Jericho was also the place that Herod loved, so much he built a fortress and a palace there- and he went to Jericho to die.

So the New Testament Jericho had a rather large population and was flourishing. But during Jesus' Ministry- there were actually two Jerichos. There was the old ruins of Jericho that was actually a little bit east and north of the city that had been built that was also named Jericho.

Now this may not be of any interest to anyone else- but it is to me, and I'm preaching so I want to say something about this. Dr. Luke says that Jesus was *approaching* Jericho. But both Matthew and Mark's accounts say that Jesus was *leaving* Jericho. And so this is an area that evil unbelievers use to try to establish that the Bible is inconsistent and contradictory and, therefore, unreliable.

But when you realize that there were actually two *different* Jerichos in the First Century- it allows us to understand that as Jesus was winding His Way down to Jerusalem to die- He was *approaching* the *new* Jericho while *leaving* the *old* Jericho at the same time! So rather than this discrepancy in the Gospel Records being proof that the Bible is *inaccurate*- it is actually evidence that proves great *accuracy* in the facts of geography during the 1st Century! And this proves that not

only is the Word of God trustworthy as it pertains to theological issues- it is also trustworthy in the geography of the land.

Now, also, in Jericho there is this massive rock mountain that casts its shadow every night over the city as the sun goes down. And archeologists have called this formation "The Devastation" because many scholars believe that it was on *that* very mountain where Jesus fasted 40 days and was tempted by the devil.

Now try to picture this scene- here is a virtual army of people coming down into Jericho. You have a literal sea of people making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, and you now have Jesus and the great multitude who were following Him added to this mix. It really must have been quite a sight- thousands of people walking- some singing, some praying – all kicking up dust from their feet that must have literally been choking.

And when Jesus got to Jericho- people came out of their houses and out of their fields and they lined the streets- everybody trying to get a glimpse of Jesus.

And among the normal Passover excitement that was present every year- this time- the excitement was reaching a fever pitch. *"Is Jesus really the long awaited Messiah? Is He coming to Jerusalem to establish His Kingdom?"* And this excitement kept building until Palm Sunday.

But there's something else in the mix here. As Jesus approaches Jericho- everybody is very aware of the miraculous event that happened just a few miles up the hill in a little village called Bethany- just a few weeks before. And even though Dr. Luke doesn't record that event- John does- Jesus had raised a man named Lazarus from the dead, and everybody knew he was dead because he had been dead for four days and he was in the tomb.

And so the word of this resurrection of Lazarus had spread up to Jerusalem, and to all the leaders who wanted to kill Jesus, and to the people here in Jericho. So as Jesus comes into this city- He was the focus of the attention of everybody. So the entire city of Jericho must have been absolutely chaotic as Jesus comes near.

Now what is interesting is that Jesus was in Jericho for two days because He spent one night in the house of Zacchaeus- which was about THE single most defiling thing any self-respecting Jew could do. But as we see- the next day, the tax collector started paying everybody back

what he owed them four-fold. And so being with this dirty sinful tax collector hadn't made Jesus unclean at all- it made Zacchaeus clean!

So, He's there for a couple of days. And so Jesus may very well have actually healed this blind man as He was *leaving* Jericho so that the crowd was not only buzzing about Jesus, but they were buzzing about what in the world happened to Zacchaeus as he was giving people their due and four-fold. So a lot is going on.

And so here- the good doctor takes us away from the Divine Teaching of Jesus and shines a light on the most unlikely person who was in this virtual sea of people- a beggar. Now beggars were common in Israel in the First Century. There were beggars lining nearly every street in the country. And the beggars were people who were blind or cripple or sick, or who were somehow unable to find work. And along with the beggars you would find women with starving children- all crying out to the passersby to help them. It had to be a gut-retching sight- because the truth is that most of these people died right there on the side of the road.

Now blindness was a big deal during Jesus' Ministry. And it was so common that Jesus used blindness as an illustration of what it was like to be ignorant of God and His Truth. And so to be spiritually blind- was infinitely *worse* than being physically blind. And it is the various "Means of Grace" that God has provided for us that opens our eyes and keeps them open- so that we will not be spiritual blind and overtaken with either the sin or the cares of this life.

Now, as we know today- blindness is usually brought about by birth defects, injuries, or disease. But back then- there was a lot of sexual sins going on and blindness also came about through contracting gonorrhea of the eyes. So as the little babies passed through the birth canal of a mother who was sick with a sexually transmitted disease- it would cause the baby to become blind.

And because the blindness was brought about by the sinful activity of either the mother or the father or both- there was a social stigma attached to the little blind baby where nobody who was trying real hard to earn his own righteousness would help it. And so the blind were reduced to begging because the idea was- if you're blind, you're sinful.

And this issue is discussed in great detail over in **John 9** as the self-righteous Pharisees didn't care one whit for the blind man himself-

all they were worried about was who sinned- him or his parents? So the assumption was this blindness was the Judgment of God, and so all the religious hypocrites just left the blind person to suffer and die. So Dr. Luke tells us in **Luke 18:35**:

As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging.

Now as I said, John Mark tells us in his Gospel Record that this *particular* blind man- that was in a huge crowd of beggars- some of whom were also blind- was a man named "Bartimaeus". And as we have found out in our "journey" - the word "Bar" means: "son of". So Bartimaeus was the son of some man named Timaeus.

And Mark tells us his name because this man became well known to the readers of the Gospels. When these Records of Jesus' Life and Ministry were put down in writing- Bartimaeus had become a well-known person in the Church- which is why Mark used his name. And while Dr. Luke doesn't give us his name- he focuses on this man and his Salvation- and so will we. Now read **Luke 18:36-38** with me again

36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he *began* to inquire what this was.

37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now the Bible tells us that this man was physically blind. But we also can see that Bartimaeus was also spiritually blind as well. And as soon as this man understood that it was Jesus Who was passing by- Bartimaeus began shouting to Him. He did not want the Son of David to pass him by- without giving him what he so longed for. Now look at verse 39:

Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now this was no time for Bartimaeus to observe the social taboo of blind beggars violating a holy rabbi's sacred space. This was no time for the passive fatalism of "*I guess God just doesn't listen to me!*" No, this was a time for complete desperation. This was a time for prevailing

prayer. This was a time for crying out for Mercy- something to which he was not entitled to receive and that God was not obligated to give.

And if the Son of David wasn't hearing him- then Bartimaeus was going to shout even louder! He was *going* to be heard! He *had* to be heard! Without Jesus- he had no hope at all. And so *nothing* was going to stop him from getting Jesus' attention! "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*" Now read verse 40 again:

And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him,

Suddenly the rebukes stopped. The crowd buzz quieted. Adrenaline flashed through Bartimaeus when someone said to him, "*Get up- Jesus is calling you.*" So this blind man pushed his guide through the crowd to wherever Jesus was. Now read the first part of verse 41:

What do you want Me to do for you?

Suddenly Bartimaeus heard a Voice. "*What do you want me to do for you?*" And this Voice was patient and kind but confident. Bartimaeus had never heard anything like this Voice before. These Words seemed to rest on immovable Authority- as if Mount Zion itself was speaking.

Bartimaeus suddenly felt his own unworthiness to address Jesus. He now spoke his desperation with deference. Look at the rest of verse 41:

... And he said, "Lord, *I want to regain my sight!*"

Here this blind beggar called Jesus something that no Pharisee up until this point had done. Bartimaeus called Jesus "**Lord**"- and this is significant. There was a silent pause and Bartimaeus's heart was pounding; his palms were clammy. Then the Voice spoke again:

Luke 18:42

Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.

And *immediately*- Bartimaeus could feel a strange sensation in his eyes. Revived optical nerves detected their first brightness and then swimming images. Could it be? Tear ducts began to overflow- both to lubricate the eyes and to express a joy just dawning after darkness. And as his pupils contracted from the brilliance of the midday sun- Bartimaeus rubbed his eyes.

Luke 18:43

Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

When he opened his eyes- Bartimaeus was looking into the intense Eyes of a young man. Bartimaeus had imagined what the Messiah might look like- but somehow, Jesus didn't look like he had expected. The extraordinary Voice that he had heard just a few moments ago was housed in a Man Who looked surprisingly ordinary. In fact- He looked just like- a man. But then a cheer went up from those who understood that Jesus had made this blind man able to see.

And Dr. Luke tells us here in verse 43 that Bartimaeus took no time at all to begin to do two things- things that set him apart from almost all of those Jesus had previously healed:

1. He began following Jesus.
2. He began glorifying Jesus.

Now this is an amazing miracle! And most sermons about this Event deal almost *exclusively* with the *physical* aspect of this miracle- a blind man receives his sight! And there is good reason for that because physical healing is still in the top three of all the issues that we deal with in our day- in spite of all the advances in medicine and science. And so I think we *should* marvel at this miracle and use this event as yet simply another reason why we should worship, adore, and obey our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we must always remember that miraculous healings carried out to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ- and *not* to remove physical handicaps and disease from the earth. And the reason we know this- is first of all- because that is what the Scriptures declare to be so. The writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 2:1-4**

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

But secondly, we know that to be true because of two very important facts of Scripture:

- ✓ Physical Healing has *always* been rare.
- ✓ All the sick people were *not* healed.

There was never a time when all sick people on earth were healed. The time when most people were healed was during the 3-1/2 years of Jesus' Ministry- but even then- people were left sick and hurt. So if you are going to believe the false teaching that says that physical healing *always* comes to the person who has the most faith and is denied to those who have no faith- then you have to explain how people can have enough faith to be saved- but not have enough faith to be healed- even though the faith that it took for them to be saved has produced godly fruit in them. And then you would also have to explain what we are to do with little children, mentally impaired people, and unborn babies- because they are not mature enough to manifest any faith.

So I think there are a number of issues that go way *beyond* physical healing that we can learn from this blind man this morning.

1. Bartimaeus Teaches Us How to Pray

Bartimaeus teaches us something very important about prayer. Dr. Luke's account of Bartimaeus here is a picture of one of the "Means of Grace"- "Prevailing Prayer"- not in its time scale- but in its dynamics.

You see, *real* prayer begins with *real* desire- motivated by *real* desperation- empowered by real Grace. We cry to God- but many times- He does not seem to respond. And we are faced with questions and doubt about how God wants us to respond to that silence.

So Bartimaeus teaches us to *keep on asking and cry out louder!* So don't be "polite" in prayer. God is not looking for polite pray-ers- He is looking for persistent, prevailing, desperate pray-ers.

The widow's persistence, in **Luke 18:1–8**, is *precisely* the quality God is encouraging in us, and *exactly* the kind of praying that blind Bartimaeus carried out. So God is looking for those who are willing to:

Luke 18:7b

... cry to Him day and night...

God is looking for desperate Bartimaeus'- who will *insist* on being heard- who won't take a non-response for an answer. He's looking for those who will:

... pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1)

Because God is looking to:

Luke 18:8b

... find faith on the earth

Listen to what Jesus asked this blind man:

Luke 18:41a

What do you want Me to do for you?

Do you even know what you want? In other words- what are you desperate for? Now this is not the first time that Jesus asked a question like this. Over in **John 5** by the pool of Bethesda- there were tons of sick and physically impaired people. And when the angel troubled the water- the first person to get into the water was healed.

But sick and blind and maimed people couldn't get into the water first- unless they had somebody to help them push everybody else away so they could get there first. And so as soon as the angel troubled the water- everybody made a mad dash to get into the water first- biting, scratching, and clawing their way there. And so this was a place where human depravity was at its worse.

Jesus walked into that chaos and asked a man who had been there for a long time:

John 5:6b

... **Do you wish to get well?**

Now what kind of crazy question is that? Of course he wants to get well- that's why he's by the pool! But look how he answers Jesus:

John 5:6b

... **Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.**

So this man was at his lowest ebb and had lost all faith in ever being healed. And yet Jesus healed him anyway, and then Jesus left- without healing or even speaking to another soul! So this healing was carried out without this man having any faith at all- because it wasn't about his healing- it was done to prove Who Jesus was.

So the man was vague in **John 5**- but here in **Luke 18**- Bartimaeus was very precise. When Jesus asked him what he wanted- he cried out:

Luke 18:41b

Lord, I want to regain my sight!

So Bartimaeus teaches us here to not be vague in our prayers- but to be specific. Not to be timid- but to be bold. The Son of David is near. So we are to follow Bartimaeus's example and do not let Jesus pass by without giving us an answer. And *whatever* His Answer is- the Promise of Scripture is that it will open our eyes to mind-blowing Glory!

God promises to give Divine Justice to his prayerfully persistent elect. And He promises to give that Justice- "**speedily**" (**Luke 18:8**). Now we must allow God to define what "**speedily**" is- that's His Business. But let us determine to cry out louder, and to cry to Him night and day, and to cry out of deep conviction and desperation- not to twist God's Arm behind His Back so He will give us what we want- but as a "means" of His Grace- to change us into becoming the kind of people that will cry out to God in what the Puritans called:

Desperate Confidence

... it is desperate on our part and yet trusting fully in the Promises of God- empowered and enabled by God's Grace. Because the Bible says that God loves that.

2. Saving Faith Always Produces Human Action

Bartimaeus was not simply healed from his physical blindness in this Passage- he actually expended human effort to do two other things:

1. He glorified Jesus Christ.
2. He followed Jesus Christ.

In other words- this encounter with Jesus here resulted in this man being healed of *spiritual* blindness. In other words- Bartimaeus was saved! So even more important than physical healing- is the fact that this text is huge for understanding how you came to be saved from God's Wrath, and from the guilt and dominion of sin with the hope of eternal joy in God. And it is huge for understanding how your children or your parents or your brothers and sisters or neighbors or colleagues or the unreached peoples of the world will be saved.

The process of coming to faith and Salvation in Jesus Christ is laid out here very clearly. Bartimaeus called Jesus "Lord"- as moved along by God the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul said in **1 Corinthians 12:3**:

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

... and the Apostle also taught in **Romans 10:9&10**:

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;
10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

So we see here that we are to expend human effort to confess and believe. And that confession and that belief is entirely brought about by a Sovereign Work of Grace- even though we are required to confess and believe. And that is what Bartimaeus did. But then the very same Apostle wrote in **Ephesians 2:8&9:**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

And the way that this is worded here in the original Greek makes us to understand that Paul was saying,

For by Grace [alone] you have been saved through faith [alone]; and that [faith is] not of yourselves, [but] it [the faith that saved you] is the gift of God.

And that “**gift of God**” that is “**not of yourselves**”- meaning that it doesn’t originate from inside any lost human being- that Paul is talking about here- is what Theologians call, “Saving Faith”.

So God grants “Saving Faith” to His elect at the moment they are given “spiritual Life”- which is being “born again”, or being “regenerated”. That is when God opens their eyes and unstops their deaf ears and gives them a soft heart to believe. This is the giving of the new nature. And that is entirely a Sovereign Work of God’s Grace that is appropriated to the person by this “Saving Faith”. And that is what happens here to Bartimaeus.

And once that happens- the disposition of that individual changes, and instead of loving sin and self- he now loves God and the things of God. And so the natural and normal result of that person being given a new nature and being granted with Saving Faith is that we will see his sinful condition, he will hate his sin, he will despise what his sin has done in dishonoring God, and he will repent of his sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this is called “Justification”. And the *fruit* of Justification is that he will now mimic what Bartimaeus did:

1. He will glorify Jesus Christ.

2. He will follow/obey Jesus Christ.

And that redeemed soul will then avail himself of the various and normal "Means of Grace" that God has sovereignly provided so that his love for Jesus and his ability to follow and obey Jesus will grow. And *that* is what happened on that road side encounter in Jericho on that day with Jesus and this blind man.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.