

# Meeting With Christ

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Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

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## YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL

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### Mark 10:46-52

In the previous lesson, we were studying the words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 10:32-45, a passage in which Jesus revealed to His disciples that He was about to be put to death. This was actually the third time He told them that He would suffer and die, and that He would be raised from the dead on the third day.

But while He was speaking of His humiliation, the disciples were thinking of their personal glory, of their own exaltation. They wanted to be exalted to the right hand and the left hand of Christ. James and John said to Jesus, *Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory* (v. 37). That was quite a bold and inconsiderate request, that came so strangely after Jesus has spoken of his suffering and death. There seems to be no connection between the conversation of the disciples and what the Lord had just said.

### Spiritual blindness

The explanation for this is that the disciples were blind to God's plan of salvation. They were blinded by their concept of the Messiah. Generation after generation of Jews longed and looked for the promised deliverer of Israel. They expected the Messiah to be a great general who would deliver and restore the nation to its greatness. They thought that under God, the Messiah would conquer the world and center the glory and majesty of God Himself in Jerusalem. Hence the disciples could not reconcile their expectation and Jesus' words. If Jesus is truly the Messiah, how can He say that He would die and still be king? As Luke tells us in the parallel passage, they could not 'understand these things' (Luke 18:34). In other words, they were spiritually blind.

Immediately after that incident, we find a story which connects faith to the removal of spiritual blindness. We discover that faith leads to sight. The story is about a blind man whose eyesight was restored because of his faith. Let's read Mark 10:46-52.

*Mark 10:46. Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.*

*47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*48 Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

*49 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."*

*50 And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.*

51 So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

52 Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

Jesus was in Jericho, an important city near Jerusalem. It was the Passover season. This meant that many pilgrims were passing through the city of Jericho on their way to Jerusalem. The road between Jericho and Jerusalem was a good place to beg because these pilgrims, these religious people, tended to be more sensitive to the needs of the poor who had to beg for a living. Bartimaeus, a blind person, knew that, and he was among the beggars. Mark tells us that *he sat by the road begging* (v. 46).

Bartimaeus is an example of a person who showed great faith. And because of his faith, this blind man was able to see spiritually what others could not see. This lesson will be focused on the faith of Bartimaeus. There are six aspects of his faith that I would like to show you.

### **Believing without seeing**

The first aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he believed the reports about Jesus.

As blind Bartimaeus sat by the wayside, he could hear all kinds of commotion throughout the day. On that particular day, the commotion was noisier and more hectic than usual. When he asked what was happening, someone told him that Jesus of Nazareth was coming. Immediately he began to cry out, saying, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*

Bartimaeus knew something about Jesus, for his cry stood in contrast to the crowd's description of 'Jesus of Nazareth.' He cried out to the 'Son of David.' 'Son of David' is the common title for the Messiah. All Jews knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of king David. By calling Jesus, 'Son of David,' Bartimaeus showed that he understood Jesus to be the long awaited-Messiah.

How did he gain this insight into Jesus' identity? Well, he had heard of Jesus of Nazareth. He had heard reports of His preaching and of His miraculous works. And he believed the reports about Him. Belief had already been stirred up in his heart.

He had never seen Jesus. He had never been around Jesus. He had not witnessed any of the Lord's miracles - dead people raised with a word and lepers healed by a touch. Of all these privileges, his blindness completely deprived him. He only knew the testimonies people were sharing and hearing them, he had believed. As soon as he heard that Jesus was coming, he began to shout because he knew who He was. This very Jesus was the Son of David, the Messiah of whom prophets had prophesied long ago. So when the Lord drew near, he cried, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*

For the first time in his life, hope swelled up in him. He knew there was a possibility that he might be healed from his blindness. From the very first day that he had heard about Jesus, he had hoped and longed for the chance when Jesus might pass by. And now, despite the fact that he could not see, the opportunity of his life stared him right in the face. This is the promised Savior who will be able to heal him.

So the point to note is this: Bartimaeus had already believed the report that the Messiah had come.

### **Need acknowledged**

The second aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he acknowledged his need.

Bartimaeus was a man with great need. He had been blind for years, maybe for life, with no hope of ever seeing. The only places he could go were the places where people led him. He was doomed to live in total darkness, never to see anything as long as he lived. He knew that he could never be normal, never fit in, and never be fully accepted by normal people.

He was also extremely poor. He had to beg to survive. There was no one to care for him. He was left on his own, and each day was a struggle for survival. How many times he must have gone to bed with an empty stomach. He was desperately needful, and he knew it.

But in spite of his condition, when he heard that Jesus was near him, he instantly began shouting to attract Jesus, making as much noise as possible.

Notice this: Bartimaeus acknowledged his need, and he confessed it publicly. He did not approach Jesus secretly or quietly by asking someone nearby to appeal to Jesus in his behalf. He had a desperate need and he accepted it. He wanted the help of Jesus no matter what.

## **Persistence**

The third aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he had a persistence that would not quit.

Many among the crowd rebuked the blind man. They tried to stop him from crying out to the Lord. It was only natural for the people, even Jesus' disciples, to try to shield Jesus from being harassed by beggars. From Bartimaeus' perspective, we can say that he had every reason to be discouraged. He was blind and could not see to make his way through the crowd. All he could do was to shout out, which seemed so useless. I think most people in his situation would have given up. But not Bartimaeus. He would not be silenced. The more the crowd tried to stop him, the louder he shouted. We read in v. 48 that *he cried out all the more*. He cried out even louder and repeated his request to the Son of David to show him mercy.

The point is that Bartimaeus persevered. He had a desperate need, and he would not stop seeking to have his need met. When Jesus came, he really believed that the Lord could help him. His faith stood against all the voices of discouragement and against the feelings of most people that it was useless. He had a persistent faith.

Like the widow faced with a recalcitrant judge in the parable (Luke 18:1-8), Bartimaeus refused to act according to role. Rather than behaving himself as the hopeless in the face of opposition from those of superior status, he persisted in his cries for help, even increasing the volume of his plea. Such was his confidence in Jesus.

## **Eagerness**

The fourth aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he was eager to meet Jesus.

Bartimaeus' persistence caused Jesus to stop and to stand still (v. 49). Imagine the scene. Jesus heard the cry and its sound of desperation. He stopped and looked about. 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Son of David, have mercy on me.' Jesus, then, told the crowd to call the man who was shouting. Now notice the vigor of the response. Verse 50: *And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus*. Bartimaeus jumped up and threw away his mantle. Everything that might have slowed him down was out of the way. And he ran as fast as he could toward Jesus.

That is an interesting reaction. Bartimaeus did not want anything to hinder him from reaching Jesus as quickly as he could. In one motion, he cast aside the hindrances, sprang to his feet, and rushed

to the Lord. The emphasis is on his eagerness to reach Jesus, an eagerness that allowed nothing to prevent him.

Genuine faith is often evidenced by a joyful extravagance and recklessness of response, when a person's heart becomes suddenly responsive to the call of Jesus.

## **Boldness**

The fifth aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he had the boldness to ask great things of God.

As Bartimaeus reaches Jesus, he is asked what he wants. *What do you want Me to do for you*, Jesus says. So far, he had simply requested mercy. But mercy might take several directions. When a beggar asks for mercy, we tend to think immediately that he wants money. It was not the case for Bartimaeus. He is going to ask for a much greater thing to be done. 'Master,' he says, 'I want to see again!'

Imagine, being completely blind and asking a man standing there in the middle of a crowd to heal your eyes! An unbelievable thing, yet Bartimaeus believed. He believed in the One who stood before him, that this Jesus was the Messiah who possessed the very power of God. So he asked for the greatest need in his life - to be able to see. It was a time for courage, the kind of courage that asks great things of God, even if they seem impossible.

Here the Lord wants us to understand that God's power is available for those who have faith. In response to Bartimaeus, Jesus said, *Go your way; your faith has made you well*. This does not mean that faith created the cure, but that it was the means by which healing could take place. We need to understand that there is nothing magical about faith. It is God's power that is released into our life through faith. Faith is what opens or shuts the door of God's power. When we open the door through faith, God's power can come into our life and accomplish amazing things. But none of the power of God will be available for us if we close the door through unbelief.

## **Gratefulness**

The sixth aspect of Bartimaeus' faith is that he had the appreciation to glorify God.

A final observation about faith is found in the response of those who are touched by God. Notice what Jesus told Bartimaeus. 'Go your way.' But Bartimaeus did not go, not after recovering his sight. He clung to Jesus. We are told that *he followed Jesus on the road* (v. 52). Luke adds that he glorified God (Luke 18:43).

We see in these words a lively illustration of the effect that the grace of God ought to have on everyone who tastes it. It should make him a grateful follower of Christ. Freely forgiven, he ought to give himself freely and willingly to God's service. For grace genuinely experienced will make a man ponder daily, 'What shall I do to glorify God for my salvation?' The apostle Paul speaks of 'the love of Christ that constrains us' in 2Corinthians 5:14.

Bartimaeus stands in contrast to the rich young ruler who was presented earlier in the same chapter (Mark 10). The rich young man ended up with nothing from Jesus. He walked away from Jesus sad, because of his wealth. Now Bartimaeus, a blind and poor man, walks with Jesus praising God because of the joy of sight and salvation.

## Conclusion

As I mentioned at the beginning of the lesson, this account should be viewed in parallel to the disciples' absence of understanding. The disciples were blind with regard to God's plan, just as Bartimaeus was physically blind. But there is a big difference. Although Bartimaeus was blind in body, he was not blind in soul. The eyes of his spiritual understanding were open. He saw things which the scribes and Pharisees, and most Jews could not see. He saw that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of David, the Messiah of whom prophets had prophesied.

And so when the Lord drew near, he seized the opportunity and cried, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' Noting his attitude, Jesus commended his faith publicly. *Your faith has made you well. Your faith has saved you*, we read in Luke (Luke 18:42). It was Bartimaeus' faith that had saved him, and that same faith made him a follower of Jesus.

Let us strive and pray that we have a faith like that of Bartimaeus. Like him, we do not have the possibility to see Jesus with our physical eyes. But we have the report of His power, grace and desire to save men, in the gospels. We have extraordinary promises from His own lips, written down for our encouragement. Let us trust those promises and commit ourselves to follow Christ wholeheartedly.