

BARTIMAEUS, THE BLIND BEGGAR (Mk. 10:46-52)

⁴⁶ And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁸ And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ⁴⁹ And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. ⁵⁰ And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. ⁵² And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Previously Jesus had asked James and John, **Mk. 10:36** What would ye that I should do for you? On that occasion, they told Him how they would like to occupy the two special thrones on either side of Him when He inaugurated His Messianic Kingdom, ³⁷ Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

The same question is repeated when He spoke with Bartimaeus, ⁵¹ And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? ... And the reply He received was from a humble man, who was not interested in self-exaltation, but he simply wanted to see.

Jesus did not directly meet the request of James and John. Instead, He told them they would have to wait for the seats to be allocated by His Father. However, Jesus did respond to Bartimaeus ... and apart from the cursing of the fig tree, this is the final miracle Jesus performed. ... The first miracle was at the wedding in Cana of Galilee ... and this is now His last recorded miracle, before He went to the cross. ... His ministry began in the north of the country, and took Him to the south, and many places in-between, **Jn. 6:38** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ... And what was His Father's will? ... His Father's will was made known in the name He gave His Son, **Mt. 1:21** thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Since He began His itinerant ministry, - almost three-and-a-half years earlier, - He had been displaying His power over disease, demons, death, and nature. He also, - to the disgust of some, - showed His authority over many issues which were sacred to the Jews, such as the Sabbath.

Very soon, the Jewish leaders would be given the opportunity to confront and condemn Him ... when He would complete His journey up from Jericho to Jerusalem. The appointed time of His death was approaching. All the events were quickly coming together ... as prophesied in the Old Testament, - His

triumphal entrance into Jerusalem, His grieving over the city, His Last Supper with the disciples, His betrayal, His judgment leading to the sentence of death upon Him ... It was rapidly all coming together, as God had planned it.

Before all that took place, He is surrounded by the multitudes of disciples, - His own Twelve, and many more who had joined Him along the way. There was an air of anticipation. The excitement was contagious ... There wasn't much longer to go before He entered Jerusalem ... Notice how Mark introduced what was about to happen, ⁴⁶ [And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho](#). This was the last time, - the final opportunity, - Bartimaeus would have in meeting Jesus, and crying out to Him for healing. If Bartimaeus would have allowed Jesus to pass by Him, and not have said a word ... his life would *never* have been changed.

Many people think they can call upon Jesus whenever they choose, but no, that is not the way salvation works. Salvation is of the Lord, and it is on His terms, for His Word makes it very clear, [Is. 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near](#). ... Anyone can run to a church, - you can choose when you want to go and when you don't ... but when it comes to seeking the Lord, you must seek Him while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near because there could come a time when the offer of salvation has been rescinded.

Salvation is a gift which is extended to all ... and there is none who can say I never had the opportunity to believe. With all the resources we have at our disposal, the Gospel is available more than ever ... so that *none* are without excuse. ... And the Gospel is simply this ... It doesn't matter who you are, or what you are ... how you were brought up, or what church you went to, or what religion you espouse ... All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death, - eternal separation from God in a lost eternity in Hell, - ... and the only way to avoid such a destination, - here is the Gospel, the Good News, - is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ to take away your sin, to become your Saviour, and you serve Him faithfully as your Lord, [Is. 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near](#).

And the beggar, blind Bartimaeus did exactly that, - he sought the Lord, and was found. ... Here is another beautiful thought ... Bartimaeus was only one of many sitting along the roadside. Often they congregated in groups. There

were many others like Bartimaeus, but his was the voice that realised *Jesus*, and he called out to the Saviour, **47 Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.** ... And you notice too, how personal his call was ... “Jesus” and “me”.

By the way, Jericho, - ‘the place of fragrance’, ‘the City of Palms, - was the first city in Canaan to be conquered after the Israelites came out of the wilderness, after the forty years during which they had been led by Moses. When the Lord initially met with Moses from out of the burning bush, He told him, **Ex. 3:7** I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; **8** And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with mil and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ... And that was a promise God repeated *often* throughout the wanderings in the wilderness. ... And God, in His sovereign grace, continued with them even though they often disobeyed Him ... but because He loved them, - and they were His people and nation, - He brought them into the Promised Land of Canaan. The city of Jericho was foreboding. It had high and thick walls which seemed impenetrable ... but something happened in Joshua to change all that.

Joshua had taken over from Moses, and just before the battle was to begin ... **Joshua 5:13** And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood **a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand:** and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? **14** And he said, Nay; but as **captain of the host of the LORD** am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? **15** And **the captain of the LORD'S host** said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. ... This was the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ (a ‘Christophany’), - Jesus Christ in the Old Testament! ... He had come to tell Joshua, as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.

And here Jesus is again in Jericho. He is at the head of a large multitude of people. In Joshua’s day, the pre-incarnate Christ was leading the people of Israel to conquer the Promised Land ... and now He is leading them through Jericho once again ... but this time, on the way to the cross.

We all have our thoughts when we revisit somewhere that is precious in our memories ... and when Jesus visited this ancient city, what precious memories He would have had!

On His way in, He had met with Zacchaeus, whom He called down from out of the sycamore tree and went to his home. ... Now, He is on His way out of the city, and He is at the head of a great multitude. He had come through Jericho, and out the other end. Then ... up the road, through the hills, and about a six-hour walk would take them to their destination ... Jerusalem, in good time for the Passover. ... So, that is where Bartimaeus was, - on the outskirts of the city of Jericho, - ... and filing past him was a seemingly never-ending 'sea' of people (... remember he was blind, but he heard all that was taking place). Bartimaeus, by the way means *bar*, 'son of' ... and *Timaeus*, can either mean 'unclean' or 'highly-prized'. On the face of it, they seem to mean two opposites, but when we put them together in this context we shall see how indeed the *unclean* man was *highly-prized* by Jesus.

Bartimaeus heard the multitude coming towards him, - lots of excitement, plenty of noise, the Jericho people running about and trying to get a good place to see Jesus, - ... *and Bartimaeus*, sitting there in the darkness of the blind beggar's condition. ... Who? ... Nobody noticed Bartimaeus ... And yet, he is the focus of this part of the story, - a blind beggar sitting at the side of the Jericho to Jerusalem road. ... If you want to be a successful beggar, you go where the people are ... Obviously, he didn't know Jesus was coming, and he had not planned for it. He was on the outskirts, where you don't usually tend to get as many people as he would have done if he had been in the centre of Jericho. ... That sounds as if he was a man who wasn't expecting anything out of life. ... He had well-nigh given up. ... Besides, why was he a beggar? ... This is how the people would have worked it out, - either he or his parents had done something terrible, and this was the punishment. ... So, all-in-all, Bartimaeus was 'a hopeless case'. He had nothing going for him, and everything was against him.

Nevertheless, when you have nothing to lose, there is no point trying to hide your shame so he started to shout out 'at the top of his voice, - it would have been a deep, sandy, gritty voice you could hardly have made out, ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ... and he couldn't be stopped, ⁴⁸ And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more *a great deal*, Thou Son of

David, have mercy on me. ... In his rough beggar's style, they could not keep him quiet!

Yes, but notice ... Luke tells us, **Lk. 18:36** *And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. ³⁷ And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. ... They told him it was the pilgrim called Jesus, from Nazareth, away up in the north ... Pilgrims passed through there every year ... many of them from the north, and from Galilee ... but do you see how Bartimaeus responded ... He didn't shout out, "Hi, you pilgrim from away up north, come over here!" No, he didn't say that ... Instead, **Mk. 10:47** *And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David [i.e. he recognises Jesus as the Messiah], have mercy on me.**

To many in the crowd, Jesus was just another pilgrim ... but to the blind man Bartimaeus, He was Jesus, the Son of David, *the promised Messiah!* ... Now, *how* could he have known that? ... He could not see ... and yet he could 'see' far more than many in the multitudes could see ... for, by the grace of God, the blind and poor beggar sitting at the side of the road, ... it was made known to Him, - and he could 'see', - *this* was Jesus, the One the prophets promised!

He could not have 'seen' this any other way, apart from the understanding given to him by God. That is the way salvation works, though, for none of us would have recognised and realised Jesus as Saviour, apart from God making it known to us. ... To many, Jesus was just another man ... but to the blind beggar, Jesus was the Son of David, and therefore, the Messiah.

And he shouts and screams, - the word is κρᾶζω, and it means you shout so loud until you hardly have a voice left! ... He wanted to be heard ... he *had* to be heard, otherwise Jesus would pass through Jericho and Bartimaeus would never have the opportunity again. ... It would be it gone! ... Jesus Who had healed so many ... and He would have healed me if I had called out to Him.

Salvation is for those who 'call out'. It must come from a spiritual *need* deep inside the heart to be made right with God, knowing you cannot do anything of yourself for the removal of your sin depends upon the sovereign application of His grace. ... And you 'call out' because God in His wonderful plan of redemption, - from before the foundation of the world, - has *called you* out ...

He called me long before I heard,
Before my sinful heart was stirred,

But when I took Him at His word,
Forgiven, He lifted me.

My hardened heart was touched;
Thy pardoning voice I heard;
And joy and peace came in
While listening to Thy word.

Long before you ever thought of Jesus, in the intimacy of the holy council of our Triune God, He had already thought and planned for you ... so that those Who call upon Him for salvation are those whom He has already called in eternity, through grace, **Ps. 33:12** Blessed is ... the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. ... And here is this poor lost blind sinful beggar, - the crowd told him to keep quiet (v.48), ... everyone looked down on him and wouldn't 'give the time of day', - and yet, he is the kind of person Jesus came to save, **I Cor. 1:27** God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

And he called out to Jesus for His time and for His attention, **Mk. 10:49** And Jesus stood still, - there is the power of prayer! It has the Saviour listening! ... His people know Who He is, **Jn. 10:3** the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. The hymn writer put it, "He speaks, and the sound of His voice ... And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own" ... **40** And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him ... An audience into the presence of the King of kings. ... King David was the greatest, but even King David said of Christ, **Ps. 110:1** The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. ...

... **Mk. 10:49** And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. ... The call of God, - effectual and eternal. ... And up Bartimaeus got from off the ground and, - in his darkness, he came to Jesus. Remember, he could not see ... no one would help him for he was a beggar, - he was unclean, and if anyone touched him they would become unclean also, ... but Bartimaeus could hear the voice of Jesus ... and through the darkness, He made his way to the Saviour.

The saving process had begun to work in him for he was already believing because he had cast away his old garments (v.50) ... Already he believed he no longer had any need for the garments of a blind beggar for he was going to meet the Master, the Saviour and to become a new creature in Christ. ... He was throwing off the old filthy rags (**Is. 64:6** *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*) ... What a story! What a testimony to God's grace for through the man's darkness He heard the Saviour say, **51** *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* ... With that question, Jesus becomes the blind man's servant. ... The blind man had witnessed the true Light that had come into the world (Jn. 1:9).

Mercy is a quality we do not deserve, - that is the word Bartimaeus pleaded for with Jesus, **47** ... *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.* **48** ... *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. ... Jesus, help me ...*

Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me ...

And he said to Jesus, *Lord* [$\rho\alpha\beta\beta\omicron\nu\acute{\iota}$, *Master*], *that I might receive my sight.* ... The truth is though, - even as a blind man, - he was already seeing more than the perfectly-sighted people for in vv. 47,48 he recognised Jesus as *the* Son of David, and he also recognised He was able to heal and save him from out of his predicament.

Then, Matthew tells us Jesus reached over and touched his eyes (Mt. 20:34) ... and Luke also adds, **18:42** *Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight* ... And immediately he was healed. He didn't look back for his old garments, - he left them where he had discarded them for he no longer had any use for the clothes of a beggar. He had a new life because of Jesus Christ. ... It wasn't simply his blindness he was healed from, but his faith had made him *whole*. He was *saved*, and he was a completely new creation in Christ, - the old had gone away, and all things had become new ... **52** *And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.*

Such a beautiful statement. He followed Jesus in the way. Firstly, he followed Jesus on *the way* to Jerusalem ... and secondly, before they were called Christians, the followers of Jesus were known as the followers of *The Way* (**Acts 9:1** *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the*

synagogues, that if he found any of *this way*, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.) ... I wonder if the reason Mark mentioned Bartimaeus by name, - for Matthew and Luke only refer to him as a blind man, - was because he went on to become well-known in the early church.

Something else Matthew mentions, - which neither Mark nor Luke mentions, - is that there were *two* men sitting by the way side (Mt. 20:30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. ³¹ And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. ³² And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? ³³ They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.) ... Two men in the same predicament came to Jesus together ... ³⁴ So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him. ... Luke adds, Lk. 18:43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

It is the testimony of amazing grace for these men would have remained in darkness if they had not called out as Jesus had passed by. They followed Jesus ... Bartimaeus followed Jesus ... Again, I wonder if he was one of the 120 who met in the upper room, prior to Pentecost? ... I wonder if he was among those more than five hundred brethren who met Jesus after His resurrection (I Cor. 15:6)?

Jericho was almost as low in this earth as it was possible for Jesus to go, - 850 feet below sea level ... but Jesus went there to save a blind beggar ... and then He took him up into Jerusalem. Bartimaeus would have been following Jesus when the Saviour made His triumphal entrance into the City of David.

It is the Gospel ... that Jesus came to where we were. We were at the side of the road in spiritual depravation and spiritual desperation ... in our spiritual blindness. And then as He approached and was passing by, our hearts were 'strangely warmed', - as John Wesley put it, describing his own conversion, - and we were awakened to cry out to Him. And He heard us confess our sin and He graciously granted us salvation.

What did his name mean again? Bartimaeus can have two meanings, - *bar* means 'son of' ... and *Timaeus* means either 'unclean' or 'highly-prized'. At

the beginning of our story he was ‘unclean’ ... but at the conclusion he was *highly-prized*.

Oh, what a Saviour that He died for me!
From condemnation He hath made me free;
“He that believeth on the Son,” said He,
“Hath everlasting life.”