

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Jesus Ministered to Their Needs – 20-26 August 2016

Christ ministered to the needs of the people and continues through us to help those in need. Of Jesus Christ, the work He did, it is recorded: “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (Matthew 9:35). We focus on Jesus ministering to their needs in healing blind Bartimaeus – Mark 10:46-52.

All the miracles that Jesus did are written “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:31). Every one of them illustrates some feature of the great work of salvation from sin and death. This miracle is one of the most striking, since the blind beggar so aptly represents all unconverted persons, in the church as well as outside. It is to the church that Christ says: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:17-18). All who are not in Christ are but blind beggars, wretched and miserable, and at the best clothed only in filthy rags (Isaiah 44:6). Of this miracle we are to learn that the acts of kindness and mercy that Jesus exhibited for the poor, blind beggar, He is ready and anxious to perform for all. God hath chosen the poor of this world, and there are more promises specially to the poor than to any other class.

The first thing to note is, that the blind beggar was conscious of his condition. Most people like to think that they are well off, even if they are not. They will not listen to any correction or take any reproof, for their pride resents it. They may even pray for the Holy Spirit, but when He comes as a convincer of sin, as He always does at first, He is rejected. So they go on blindly in the way that seems right to them, and the end thereof is death. To be keenly conscious of one’s lost condition is one of the greatest blessings. One is never nearer salvation than when confessing sin. Says John, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

But the one who seeks salvation will often find many who try to discourage him. Even professed Christians often hinder sinners from coming to Jesus. And here we find that the people near Bartimaeus rebuked him, telling him not to make so much noise. ‘What would the great Teacher, who had thousands following Him, and hanging on every word, care for a poor, insignificant, blind beggar?’ So many a poor soul is told: ‘You have committed the unpardonable sin;’ or, ‘You are not one of the called; you are not of the elect;’ or, ‘The Lord cannot be bothered with so unimportant a person as you.’ Many such doubts will be put to souls by the devil personally, or by some of his agents; for be it known that every soul who utters a single word of doubt or discouragement to any other soul is doing the devil’s work.

This poor man was not discouraged. The more the people tried to keep him from Jesus, the more determined he was to attract His attention. “He cried out the more a great deal.” He had of course never seen Jesus, and had never known personally of any of His wonderful works; but he had heard of Him; he recognised an opportunity now that Jesus was passing by. He believed in the power of Jesus, and hoped in His mercy. Let him be your example in perseverance, and let rebuffs and discouragements only strengthen your courage and faith.

“Jesus stood still” at the call of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:49). Everything in heaven waits on the faintest cry for help! He who listens when the ravens cry, and sustains every living thing, will never ignore the cry of suffering humanity. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” He “is gracious and merciful. He will ever be mindful of His covenant” (Psalms 103:13; 111:4-5). No matter what the Lord is doing, He will stop “to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death” (Psalm 102:20).

Jesus “commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man” (Mark 10:49). The word that Jesus made by men is just as valid as the word that sounded from His own lips from the mountain top, in tones that shook the earth. He “confirmeth the word of His servant” (Isaiah 44:26). To us the Lord has committed the ministry of reconciliation, and He has put the word of reconciliation into us. Therefore the word which the Lord speaks by the mouth of any of

His servants is as sure and as steadfast as though He used no human agent. We have not, therefore, to distinguish between the writers of the Bible, and to say that this is from Moses, and this is from Isaiah, and this is from Paul. No; all is from God as delivered through Christ.

They that were sent said to the blind man, "Be of good cheer, rise, He calleth thee." How many doubt that they have been called. 'If I only knew for certain that I was one of the called, I should be happy,' you may think. Be assured the Lord has called you; but you repeat, 'O, if I only could know it.' Well, how did blind Bartimaeus know that the Lord had called him? The Lord did not lift up His voice, and He had not directed a single word to him. All the assurance he had was the statement of those who did hear Him. Suppose Bartimaeus had not believed them? Perhaps Jesus might have come to him, and called him personally, He is wondrously kind and longsuffering; but such a manifestation of doubt would have only been to tempt the Lord. Then "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" (Hebrews 2:3).

Has God really called us? Yes; He has "chosen us" in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), and "the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). For the Lord has called "all that are afar off." This means everybody. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God sent the word of salvation unto His people, "preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (He is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36). Note the statement "He is Lord of all," in connection with the fact that God was preaching peace by Jesus Christ; it indicates that He preaches peace to all. So we read: "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him" (Isaiah 57:19). All, both near and far, are called. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 14:22). When one comes to another with the words of the Lord, and that other refuses to believe that he has been called, he is as unreasonable as Bartimaeus would have been if he had demanded that Jesus come to him in person, instead of sending messengers.

"Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation" (Romans 12:12), so Bartimaeus was still blind when he was told to be of good cheer. He was not told to be cheerful because he had been healed, or received a legacy, but simply because Jesus had called him. That was enough. Some of the sweetest songs and the most joyful testimonies have come from poor, blind cripples whose hearts were aglow with the thought of God's unbounded and impartial love.

"Casting away his garment" (Mark 10:50), Bartimaeus arose and hurried, 'sprung up,' to go to Jesus. He was a beggar, and wanted clothing, but that did not make him keep what he had, when Jesus called him. He was going to an audience with the King, and the more needy he was, the more he could expect to receive. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; yet we try to cling to our filthy rags, trying to make them appear as clean garments. This is when we try to minimise our faults, or even to make out that they are virtues. Better far to acknowledge them, and cast them away, that Jesus may give us an entire new suit of white raiment. Yes, even though some of our clothing were not so bad, it is better to give all up, for "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11); if we get back anything from His hands we are sure that it is right.

Bartimaeus had called to Jesus, and made haste to go as soon as the word of the Lord came to him. Many bemoan their condition, separate from the Lord, and make requests to Him, and then timidly shrink back when they get the assurance that they are called. Thus they cast doubt upon their sincerity in calling. If they did not believe that Jesus would give them what they needed, why did they call on Him? Jesus asked what Bartimaeus wished Him to do – not that Jesus did not know – but a thing that is worth having is worth asking for. He knows we have need of food before we ask Him, yet He tells us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." Asking for a specific thing fixes our attention on it, and thus causes us to recognise the Lord's gift in response. The request was simple and direct: "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" and the answer came, "Go thy way; thy faith hath saved thee" (Mark 10:51-52). He was told to go away while he was still blind, just as the ten lepers were told to go show themselves to the priest. Immediately he received his sight. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*" (Mark 11:24).