

Sermon Outlines

Saving Faith That Works

Bible Reading:

Mark 10:46-52

An early traveller to the Holy Land reported that it was a common sight to see elderly people sitting by the roadside begging. A great many of them had problems with blindness and the traveller accredited the high rate of eye disease to lack of sanitation. Of course, eye-glasses were not available to people until the 13th century. See the following remark from Wikipedia:

The first eyeglasses were made in Northern Italy, most likely in Pisa, by about 1290: In a sermon delivered on 23 February 1306, the Dominican friar Giordano da Pisa (ca. 1255–1311) wrote "It is not yet twenty years since there was found the art of making eyeglasses, which make for good vision.

Perhaps among lepers, there was an even higher incidence of blindness. They, however, would not have been among the general population.

Bartimaeus' name is translated for us. He is the son of Timaeus. Perhaps he was from a family of some renown. Hard times, however, still befell him. His blindness reduced him to begging alongside many other beggars. There he sat along a highway, a place of higher traffic, to enhance his opportunity of receiving a little help to get through another day.

Baritimaeus' life was mightily changed after receiving the miracle of eyesight. That was a great day when he left the ranks of blind beggars to follow the Lord Jesus with new eyesight and new purpose of life. His case displays the power of faith at work. The Lord said to him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole" (v52).

We will look for Bartimaeus' faith at work.

1) By faith he was given the ability to believe that Jesus was more than the Jesus of Nazareth.

Compare the references to the Lord in v 47, and see how Bartimaeus considered Christ to be more than a native of Nazareth and more than a mere man, which was the general thinking of the day. He was able to apply to the Lord the Messianic name, "son of David."

We don't know how this knowledge came to him. How he understood this would depend on various factors, but it pleased the Spirit of God to open His mind to the reality of Jesus' Messianic mission. This faith required thinking and convictions about Jesus that made Him worthy of His crying out to the Lord for mercy. This is how saving faith begins in the soul. Views and convictions of the Lord Jesus grow into a cry for salvation. The Lord does not just help them who help themselves. The Lord helps those who cannot help themselves but recognise their need can be met by the Son of God.

2) By faith he recognized the Lord to be full of mercy. "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

As a beggar, he had little else to plead other than his poverty and distress in life. His pleas for mercy fell on the grace of the Lord and the mission of Christ to show mercy to needy souls.

This becomes our chief plea in prayer. Faith sees the Lord and behold's Him full of mercy. The fullness of mercy comes out of His infinite nature as God, but also as the mediator of the covenant of grace. All grace to sinners flows through Him. He is rich in mercy. He is the Lord and king of mercy. Mercy is His delight. There isn't an instance where the Lord was asked for mercy and He refused.

We need to fill our prayers with pleas for mercy. Christ gives to undeserving sinners what they never deserve - pardon, forgiveness and spiritual favour with God. To plead what we deserve would not be a prayer, but a death sentence.

3) By faith he responded with unstoppable hope.

There was significant opposition to his cries for help. Many charged him that he should hold his peace. Matthew's account states that they "rebuked him" and the sense is that they repeatedly opposed his cries to

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gain the Lord's attention. Through faith, hope filled this man's heart so that he could not be silent, therefore, "He cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me" (v48).

Faith gives clear views of Christ. Faith is a strong compulsion of what is right and true. Where gospel faith is granted unbelief is banished and man's opinions mean nothing. Faith rises above discouragement to grasp the hope of Christ. Faith cannot be silent. It will cry out seeking the Saviour for mercy.

That same spirit of hope should fill our hearts in the place of prayer. Let us go to the Lord in spite of all hindrances and oppositions and let our hope be stirred that the Lord is the One to answer our needs and solve our problems.

4) By faith his prayer was answered.

The Lord's heart was moved toward him to answer his request (v51 - 52). The request for eyesight was immediately granted and faith was attributed as the reason for His healing. The Lord loves to see that faith in the hearts of men. **Remarkably, in the scheme of grace God gives faith to individual souls and then he rewards their faith as their own.** He gives the ability to believe and pours out the blessings because we claim them in prayer.

Knowing that God rewards faith, we must stir ourselves to claim the promises of the Lord. When we engage in prayer with the conviction that God will honour His own word and honour His own great name, we learn to pray with power. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). With faith, it is impossible for God to deny us for "He cannot deny Himself" (2Ti_2:13).

5) By faith Bartimaeus went to work for His Lord and Saviour.

The conclusion of the matter was that Bartimaeus received his eyesight through the miraculous power of the Lord, but he did not go back to begging. He went on to use his new-found eyesight to follow the Lord, "in the way." He found the will of God for His life and he used his restored eyesight for the Lord's glory.

Faith doesn't stop looking unto Jesus and doesn't stop following the Lord. Where there is no interest in full discipleship for Christ there is no evidence of faith in the soul. Where grace abounds in the life, the life will abound in new works for the Lord.

J.C Ryle wrote, "Grace really experienced will make a man feel daily, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits..." The man who boasts of having an interest in Christ, while he does not follow Christ in his life, is a miserable self-deceiver, and is ruining his own soul."

These are times when men and women need clear views of what it means to believe the gospel and follow after the Lord for salvation. We take our stand on a sinner's justification by faith alone as the sole ground of our assurance for heaven. We also stand where the Bible commands us to take up our cross and follow Christ, or else we cannot be His disciple. As the apostle James would put it, where there is faith at work in the soul it is a faith that works.

Faith is the sole ground of justification; works is the man-ward evidence of faith at work in the believer's life. Bartimaeus is a wonderful example of true justifying faith at work.

. . . . Ian Goligher