



Bold, Persevering Faith

Luke 18:1-8, 35-43

Study Helps and Application

Discussion 1: Coming to Christ--The Bartimaeus Encounter

Sometimes it is helpful to put yourselves (individually and corporately) into these scenarios.

- ***How did Bartimaeus relate to Jesus? (and how did he demonstrate that relation?)***
 - *Was Jesus his “buddy” or “homeboy”? [Note the significance of “Son of David” title--Messianic (2 Sam 7:8-17)--Recognition of who Jesus is (Matt 16:16-17).]*
 - *Discuss his initial cry “have mercy on me” How is it like/unlike these similar sounding cries? [circumstances, to whom addressed? in humility? ...]*
 - *Luke 18:13 [in broken humility ... went away justified! Recognized his spiritual neediness (was likely rich)]*
 - *Psalm 51:1 [David broken in contrition before God---his repentance becomes more famous than his sin... and is remembered as “a man after God’s heart.”]*
 - *Luke 16:24 [rich man still giving orders... and looking for pity after a life of self indulgence and rejecting God...]*
- ***How did the crowd “those in front” relate to Bartimaeus? [Some at least told him that Jesus was passing by... but others rebuked him...]***
 - *Do you see any similarities to Luke 18:15-17? [helpless ones being brought to Jesus... rebuked for it ... Jesus receives them...]*
 - *Why do you think people consider children and blind beggars “beneath” Jesus? [Could it be our pride? We see them as beneath us... so surely they are beneath Jesus ...]*
 - *Are you a help or a hindrance to the helpless around you in coming to Jesus? [Discuss this corporately ... use lots of “we” and “us.” Are we willing to tell the blind beggars around us that Jesus of Nazareth is “passing by” (near... available ...)? Are we easily offended or inconvenienced by the needy? What does it mean to be needy? ... (not just materially?) ...]*

- *When Jesus called for him--How does he respond?*

[In faith-- Mark 10:50 records that he threw off his cloak and went to him... Was his request selfish? (inappropriately so?) or beneath Jesus? Was this child-like faith?]

- *Review, discuss, and make sure everyone grasps:*

"His blindness, need, faith, healing, worship and following story is a picture into every conversion story."

- *Do you recognize your blind helplessness (if trusting Christ, can you look back and clearly see that you ... couldn't see?)*
- *Has he done this in you?*
 - If not pray for it. Keep looking at Christ until you see him able and glorious.
 - If he has done that in you, rejoice - nothing is greater - not even miracles (Luke 10:20).
 - Don't stop rejoicing in that. In fact, rejoice all the more - increasingly so.
 - Never tire from this.
 - And "follow him" like this former blind beggar did.
 - "Christian, you're not blind anymore, so act like it!"*
 - Fight for more sight. Fight to see him--to behold him. Go to his Word. You once were blind, but...

2 Corinthians 3:18 *...with unveiled face, [we're] beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...*

Discussion 2: Sticking With Christ--The Persistent Widow

More than just a shallow parable that contrasts God with an unjust judge, but a lesson in perseverance and justice.

- *Review and discuss the aims that Jesus has in this parable and how we can encourage one another in these areas.* [emphasize the importance of "one anothering" in perseverance... How much harder is it to "hang in there" when you think you are alone?]

1. We must not give up on God. Jesus is giving a call to perseverance.
 2. Despite how much it seems like God doesn't hear or doesn't care, we must not doubt that he hears and cares and loves and wants to hear from us (*ref. Psalms "how long?" & "does he hear?" ...*)
 3. All answers will come in his wise timing – not our own.
 4. Justice will come. But it may not come until the end of time (Rev 6:10ff)
 5. So we should never forget to be praying for our own perseverance and for his return (Rev 22)
- ♥ *Share, discuss and pray for one another's perseverance.* [lead out leaders!]
- *In what area are you struggling to persevere?*
 - *Are there areas where you have given up?* [Confess, repent, and believe!]

Memory Verse

Jesus to Paul at his conversion/commissioning:

^{ESV} **Acts 26:18** [I am sending you] ^ato open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from ^bthe power of Satan to God, that they may receive ^cforgiveness of sins and ^da place among those who are sanctified ^eby faith in me.'



Bold, Persevering Faith

Luke 18:1-8, 35-43

I. Coming to Christ: The Story of Blind Bartimaeus (35-43)

Real Story: Mark's account (ch 10) tells us just in passing, this was Bartimaeus, "who was Timaeus' son" (46).

He is blind

- Describe cultural context of a blind beggar
- He understands helplessness, need, asking – similar to a child/infant (15-17)

He is bold -- His cry must have inordinately or even obnoxiously loud. The crowd tells him to shut up. But he persists – even cries out "all the more" (39).

- **He is bold because he knows who Jesus is** -- Notice how loaded with meaning his short cry is. V 38 – "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"
- **He is bold because he is desperate**

He is full of faith

- Mark 10:50--He "throws aside his outer garment and springs up and goes to Jesus". That shows expectancy about being healed. A blind guy doesn't throw things down – how would he find it?...

He is not only healed, but he praised God and followed Jesus (Luke 18:43)

His blindness, need, faith, healing, worship and following story is a picture into every conversion story.

- "Blind eyes" and "hard hearts" go together in a few OT passages to describe the natural spiritual condition
- We're like the idols we worship – and Scripture says idols are blind and deaf (Dt 4:28).
- **2 Cor 4:4** – *Satan has blinded the mind of unbelievers*
- In the gospels, more than once, Jesus called the Pharisees **blind hypocrites**.
- We see the same in the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18ff) who, being rich, was blind to his need.
- Paul was sent to the Gentiles so that God would (**Acts 26:18**) "...open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins..."

Do you see your sp need to be as desperate as blind Bart's?

- Will you **cry out** to him?

- You say, "*I can't believe.*" And of course **you can't** – not on your own.

- That's what this passage is all about. God must do the miraculous of giving you spiritual sight.
- It's impossible for you and I to see our need – it's like a camel getting through the eye of a needle (25). But, with God, the impossible is possible (27).
- So here's what we're asking him to do...

2 Cor 4:4 ...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...

2 Cor 4:6 [But] the God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

II. Sticking with Christ: The Parable of the Widow (1-8)

Many of us think this passage's primary message is to teach us persistence in prayer – to keep asking for the same thing over and over.

It is not right to think that persistence is powerful, and eventually God can get swayed by my persistence.

This parable is more about perseverance in general than it is about the cumulative power of repetition in prayer requests. Yes, I think we can and should keep praying for something that we're praying for his glory, but I do think most of us emphasize the wrong thing in a passage like this in Luke 18.

Interpretive Keys:

- Notice how it ends (v. 8)– "will the son of man find faith when he returns?"
- Notice how it begins (v 1).

The parable clearly is about prayer, but I think prayer is just the specific example of an overall relationship to God. The goal is that Christians "not lose heart."

Notice how much the theme of *justice* is emphasized (5-7)

It's similar to Luke 11:5-13--We're told to keep knocking, keep asking, but the earlier verses show the aim of our prayers: *His name being hallowed and his kingdom coming.*

It's not that persistence is powerful; it's that we should trust a powerful God, who will do what is best.

Jesus' point is to ask, as he does elsewhere: "if this sort of thing (in the parable) is common in human affairs, how much more should it be true of spiritual affairs?"

The parable isn't so much an explanation of how things work with God. In fact, maybe more accurately, it is a description of how things don't work with God. The passage is, in a way, commending the widow's persistence, but perhaps even more so it is contrasting the wicked judge with God. God is not like this. He is not bothered to hear our requests. He does not only finally give in to our cries when we've bothered him sufficiently. He does not give us what we ask for so that we'll shut up.

...God is completely different from this unjust judge. The judge thinks of people's complaints and cries for justice as bothersome interruptions, whereas God delights in listening to his beloved people. The judge listens to the widow only because he does not want to have to keep hearing her demands... God, in contrast, does not need to be worn down by our constant requests. The unjust judge has to be manipulated by the widow. We are not, by our own prayers, twisting God's arm; nor are we causing him to stop being reluctant to us... We are praying to a God who hears us gladly; when we come to him with our troubles, we can be sure that he will hear us with immediate sympathy; we are promised that our heavenly Father has the will and the power to act quickly on behalf of his beloved people. [*The Heart of Prayer*, Jerram Barrs pp 74-75]

So Jesus' aim in this parable is:

1. We must not give up on God. Jesus is giving a call to perseverance.
2. Despite how much it seems like God doesn't hear or care, we must not doubt He hears, cares, loves, and wants to hear from us (*Psalms: "how long?" or "does he hear?"*)
3. All answers will come in his wise timing - not our own.
4. Justice will come. But it may not come until the end of time (Rev 6:10ff)
5. So we should never forget to be praying for our own perseverance and for his return (Rev 22 - come quickly, Lord Jesus!)

Next Week's Text

Luke 19:1-27



Bold, Persevering Faith

Luke 18:1-8, 35-43

Discussion 1: Coming to Christ--The Bartimaeus Encounter

- ***How did Bartimaeus relate to Jesus? (and how did he demonstrate that relation?)***
 - *Was Jesus his “buddy” or “homeboy”?*
 - *Discuss his initial cry “have mercy on me” How is it like/unlike these similar sounding cries?*
 - *Luke 18:13*
 - *Psalm 51:1*
 - *Luke 16:24*
- ***How did the crowd “those in front” relate to Bartimaeus?***
 - *Do you see any similarities to Luke 18:15-17?*
 - *Why do you think people consider children and blind beggars “beneath” Jesus?*
 - *Are you a help or a hindrance to the helpless around you in coming to Jesus?*
- ***When Jesus called for him--How does he respond?***
- ***Review, discuss, and make sure everyone grasps:***

“His blindness, need, faith, healing, worship and following story is a picture into every conversion story.”

 - *Do you recognize your blind helplessness (if trusting Christ, can you look back and clearly see that you ... couldn't see?)*
 - *Has he done this in you?*

Discussion 2: Sticking With Christ--The Persistent Widow

- ***Review and discuss the aims that Jesus has in this parable and how we can encourage one another in these areas***
 1. We must not give up on God. Jesus is giving a call to perseverance.

2. Despite how much it seems like God doesn't hear or doesn't care, we must not doubt that he hears and cares and loves and wants to hear from us (*ref. Psalms "how long?" & "does he hear?" ...*)
 3. All answers will come in his wise timing – not our own.
 4. Justice will come. But it may not come until the end of time (Rev 6:10ff)
 5. So we should never forget to be praying for our own perseverance and for his return (Rev 22)
- ♥ *Share, discuss and pray for one another's perseverance.*
- *In what area are you struggling to persevere?*
 - *Are there areas where you have given up?*

Memory Verse

Jesus to Paul at his conversion/commissioning:

^{ESV} **Acts 26:18** [I am sending you] ^ato open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from ^bthe power of Satan to God, that they may receive ^cforgiveness of sins and ^da place among those who are sanctified ^eby faith in me.'