

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 18 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As you look at Luke chapter 18 I think the best way to sum it up would be like this. In this chapter we see prayer, humility, worldliness, discipleship or lessons of faith, lessons on His death and resurrection, and ending with a man who was blind who can now see, both physically and spiritually.

And keep in mind that Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem, to celebrate Passover and to be the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world! He is going to Jerusalem to die on the cross of Calvary for our sins!

With that as our background, let's begin reading in Luke chapter 18 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

LUKE 18**VERSE 1**

Keep in mind that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning and Jesus is going to speak of a woman, a widow, in a courtroom with a judge and the focus is prayer!

For many, prayer is just asking God for what you need, and yes, we can do that but prayer is much more than just requesting things from God. Prayer is communion with God, communicating with God and thus, if we are communicating with God we need to also listen to what He is showing us!

Now in regards to prayer, remember what Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:17, “**pray without ceasing.**” Now some have a hard time with this. How can they pray all the time, without ceasing? They have jobs, things to do, it is just impossible!

That is a wrong perspective. Think of it this way. Police officers carry a gun with them even when they are off duty. Why is that? Because they are in a state of preparedness at all times in case a situation arises.

We too are to be ready with our spiritual weapon, prayer, at all times! Paul said in Ephesians 6:18, “**praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.**”

It is our heavenly artillery we can launch against the enemy. During World War II the bombing in London was so intense that a sign appeared in front of a church in London that read, “*If your knees knock together, kneel on them!*”

Pray without ceasing, praying always needs to become an attitude of our life, a natural response to what comes our way - **WE PRAY!** And if you think about it, if we did that more often it would keep us from a lot of pain and suffering for the things that we say and do apart from prayer!

VERSES 2-8

I think that is a powerful statement. This judge did not fear God which lead him to have a lack of respect towards man and thus, the way he treated men was cruel, self-serving, and-so-on. Because he did not fear God the way he lived out his life reflected that and thus, he was an unjust judge as well!

Please understand that this is true even for Christians! You see, once your relationship with the Lord is starting to slip, you will have no regard towards man, your actions towards man will reflect how distant you are from God! The only solution is to get your vertical axis with God in line and then your horizontal axis with your fellow man will be in line!

Now let's look at this parable. We have seen the unjust judge, the one who did not fear God. And now we are introduced to this poor widow who is being troubled by someone. Her solution to this problem is that she goes to this unjust judge for help. The problem is that he refuses to hear her, he ignores her request. Why did he refuse her? She was a woman, she had no money or possessions to bribe this wicked judge, she only wanted what was just, what was right.

But this woman is persistent to say the least. She comes to this judge day in and day out and finally he is tired of her and just wants to get rid of her. She not only is bothering him but she is tarnishing his reputation for the word "weary" speaks of this. In fact, the idea with this Greek word is to "Give me a black eye" So he gives in and deals with her case.

Now as you read that it is hard to imagine how this relates to praying always and not losing heart in our prayers, but Jesus makes this application in verses 7 and 8.

Jesus wants them to remember what the unjust judge did and then He says, "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

Now I do admit it is easy to come to the wrong conclusion here and many do that. You see, as some read this they feel that prayer is nothing more than badgering God, pestering Him, beating Him up to the point that He gets so tired, so frustrated with us that He just finally gives in and gives us what we want! He just gets tired of our persistence and gives us what we are praying for.

That is totally wrong as I have said. God is not an unjust judge but if this unjust judge will respond this way how much more God will respond to our hearts cry to Him, the Just Judge! And if we really think about it, we don't want our will to be given to us, we want His will because His will is what is best! May we remember that!

Now there are those who will go to the story of Jacob and when he wrestled with God and they say that this fits in with the story, you have to wrestle with God until He gives you what you want.

Listen to what took place with Jacob in Genesis 32:24-28, **“Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’ So He said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob.’ And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’”**

Now as you read that it does seem to be indicating that Jacob wrestled with God and would not let Him go until he was blessed by God, his prayers were answered you might say. But think about it. Do you think that man can truly wrestle with Almighty God and win? Of course not! So what is going on here?

I think Hosea 12:3-5 gives us some insight into what was going on here regarding Jacob. Hosea tells us, **“He took his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, And there He spoke to us - That is, the Lord God of hosts. The Lord is His memorable name.”** I like the way Warren Wiersbe expounds on this incident. He writes,

It is when we get alone with God that good things begin to happen. Christ came to wrestle with Jacob, and the struggle lasted all night. Keep in mind that Jacob was not wrestling to get a blessing from God; rather, he was defending himself and refusing to yield. The Lord wanted to break Jacob and bring him to the place where he would honestly say, “Not I, but Christ” (Gal 2:20). All night long, Jacob defended himself and refused to surrender or even admit that he had sinned. Then God weakened Jacob, and the wrestler could only cling! Now instead of scheming for a blessing or bargaining for a blessing, he asked God for the blessing- and he received it.

- Warren Wiersbe, Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament

You see, it was in his surrender to God that he actually won, that he received the blessing from God that God intended on giving him, He was just waiting for Jacob to come to the end of himself and look up, look to God and surrender! Yes, God does have to go to extremes at times to get our attention. Here we see Jacob crippled and he can’t run away, he can only surrender!

And the same is true with prayer. We desire God's will, not ours! But I do realize that at times it does seem that we have to overcome God's reluctance to give us what we want, what we are praying for. But keep in mind that what we see as unanswered prayer can be because of a few things.

First of all, God is conforming our will to His will in this situation. Maybe the timing is not right. Maybe it is something that He doesn't want you to have. Or maybe there is some sin in your life that you need to deal with before God will answer your prayers. The key, of course, pray always, don't lose heart!

And even though I might not always understand what God is doing, I know He has what is best for my life and thus, I walk by faith, I trust what He is doing, I don't lose heart!

Now here's the thing. As we look at what is going on in the world, it is easy to lose heart! We can be overwhelmed and I think that we are just beginning to see what is coming down the pike for us as Christians. The persecutions we will be facing. Let me show you what I mean. It is a story from March 2, 2017 of two evangelicals who were charged, tried and convicted in Great Britain, but for what? We are told,

Yesterday a Bristol Magistrates' Court in Great Britain convicted two men, Michael Overd and Michael Stockwell on "public order offences."

What did they do that resulted in their arrest and conviction?

Was it public indecency? Disturbing the peace? Inciting a riot? Sexual harassment? Discharging a firearm? Disorderly conduct?

No. It was none of the above. . . .

Overd and Stockwell are "street preachers." On June 6, 2016, they publicly proclaimed that Jesus is "the way, the truth and life" and that He is the only way to God, the Father.

According to ChristianConcern.com “during the four-day trial, prosecutor Ian Jackson, claimed: “To say to someone that Jesus is the only God is not a matter of truth. To the extent that they are saying that the only way to God is through Jesus, that cannot be a truth.”

Further the “prosecutor claimed that quoting parts of the King James Bible in the context of modern British society ‘must be considered to be abusive and is a criminal matter.’”

“The prosecutor had argued that free speech must yield to multicultural reality in modern Britain, and that there was a clear threat to violence due to the words of the preachers and the criticism of Islam.”

“The men were found guilty under Section 31 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, for using ‘threatening or abusive words or behavior or disorderly behavior within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be, caused harassment, alarm or distress, thereby, and the offence was religiously aggravated.’”

Michael Phillips, the attorney, representing the street preachers, said: “This prosecution is nothing more than a modern-day heresy trial – dressed up under the public order act.”

Mr Stockwell said: “Men should be able to proclaim the truth and have diverse differences in the public forum, agreeing to disagree without harm or repercussions. Truth today is the new hate” He charged that Islamists and other radical groups are trying to silence free speech.

Aside from British law, or other possible infractions not correctly reported, here is the Truth. Jesus proclaimed, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” . . .

Islamists may complain. Infidels may criticize. And courts may convict evangelists for preaching Christ. But the Bible is still true. Jesus is The Way. The Truth. The Life.

– Ken Weliever, The Preacherman,
<https://thepreachersword.com/2017/03/02/two-evangelists-charged-tried-convicted/>

Yes, I believe times will get tough for those who adhere to what the Bible says, those who speak forth the truth but instead of losing heart, understand that Jesus is coming back and He will avenge them speedily! You see, when judgment begins to come, it will come quickly, but for now, God is longsuffering as Peter tells us, **“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”** II Peter 3:9-10.

And as much as we might not like that, He was longsuffering for us and if He wasn't, we would not be here. There are still many more to come into the Kingdom before His judgment is poured out but when it begins it will come speedily!

Jesus then concludes this by saying **“... Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”** What does He mean by that? Jesus is looking for people who are praying without losing heart, that is the kind of faith He is looking for.

Now, during the Tribulation Period, the Church will be with the Lord during this time. But for those living during this time, the earth dwellers, things will get so bad that we are told in Luke 21:25-28, **“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”**

You see, if they refuse to receive Jesus during this time of judgment, their hearts will fail over what they are seeing, what they are going through. They are not praying to God, maybe to the Antichrist, but there is no help, they are losing heart but they still refuse to return.

If you doubt that, listen to what we are told in Revelation 6:12-17, **“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”** What a sad picture, refusing to receive Jesus and wanting to die rather than repent!

Now before we move on let me speak a little on this idea of losing heart when we don't see things happening like we think we should or our prayers not being answered like I think we should.

Yes, we are to pray but Jesus also tells us that we are not to lose heart in our prayers. The enemy knows how to do that by telling us God doesn't hear our prayers or we become discouraged when we don't see God answering our prayers so we stop praying, or we don't believe in the power of prayer leaving it as a last resort, a kind of last rights!

Prayer is not easy and the Devil knows the power of prayer, so he tries to stop us. Don't let him. You see, prayer is really an unselfish act of love as you intercede for people.

Paul, in Colossians 4:12 said this of one man, "**Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.**" You see, a labor of love, don't lose heart!

As we read on we move on to the next parable in verse 9.

VERSES 9-14

As you can clearly see, this parable is against the self-righteous, self-sufficient person who looks down upon others because they are poor, they are sick, or whatever misfortune may come their way. They are not as spiritual as they are!

In other words, they credit themselves for a supposed great and spiritual walk with God and then it is an easy thing to despise another for their supposed low and carnal walk with God. And I have recently seen this and it is not pretty and it really is destructive. And Jesus comes down hard on those who exalt themselves because when they do, they will despise or put down others!

So we see two men here and both men went to pray but, as you can see, their prayers are vastly different.

The first man, a Pharisee, had an “*I*” problem. In his short prayer of two verses he uses the word “*I*” five times! In other words, this Pharisee wasn’t praying to God, but to himself. He was impressing himself by how good he is. And notice that he only spoke of God once, as the prayer opened up, and then he focused on how great he was compared to others, and you always find someone less fortunate than you.

By the grace of God, you are what you are! But look at the heart of this Pharisee and I am sad to say, the heart of many today, and Jesus tells us how He feels about those that behave this way, and He rebukes this Pharisee for his self-righteous attitude.

And here in the twenty-first century, I don’t think we realize how accurate Jesus was in describing this Pharisee. This is what they truly believed. One ancient rabbi (Rabbi Simeon, the son of Jochai) was an example of this kind of Pharisaical pride when he said, “If there were only thirty righteous persons in the world, I and my son would make two of them; but if there were but twenty, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but *ten*, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but *five*, I and my son would be of the five; and if there were but *two*, I and my son would be those two; and if there were but *one*, myself should be that *one*.”
(Clarke)

That is this Pharisee and then we see the other man, this tax collector, this sinner. He does not approach God in his own righteousness, he knew he was unrighteous before a holy God. He did not ask for God's justice, for he deserved death.

And we are told that he "**beat his breast.**" According to Morris, the verb tense of "**beat his breast**" describes a continual action; he kept on doing it.

Spurgeon put it like this, "The original does not say that he smote upon his breast once, but he smote and smote again. It was a continuous act. He seemed to say – Oh, this wicked heart! He would smite it. Again and again he expressed his intense grief by this Oriental gesture, for he did not know how else to set forth his sorrow."

So he cries out for the mercy of God, not getting something he deserves! In fact, this man says, "**God, be merciful to me a sinner!**" The words "**be merciful**" is the Greek word HILASKOMAI, and, interestingly enough, it speaks of an atoning sacrifice, to make reconciliation.

The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is found in Hebrews 2:17 and it is translated "**propitiation.**" We read, "**Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**"

He is asking for God to forgive him his sins, he saw himself as totally unworthy and unable to rectify that problem. But he knew that God could! I guess you can say that this man was saying to Jesus. "***God, be my sacrifice, my atonement for my sins!***" And Jesus has!

Do you see the contrast of these two men? One is prideful, arrogant, self-sufficient, self-righteous, relying on how good he is.

The other man is saying, “**God, be merciful to me through your atoning sacrifice for sins, because I am a sinner!**”

And folks, that is what God is looking for today, humbly coming before Him and as James says, “**Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**” James 4:10.

You see, “**... ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’**” James 4:6. Don’t seek God’s justice for your life thinking you are so great that heaven deserves you. Seek God’s grace and mercy as you humble yourself before Him knowing you are a sinner separated from God and it is only by His grace and mercy that we can have that gift of eternal life that is only found in Jesus!

VERSES 15-17

Children loved to come to Jesus, which says a lot about His love. He wasn’t mean or sour looking. Here the parents brought their children to Jesus so He may bless them and what a great lesson for us as parents, that we don’t block our children from coming to Jesus, but we bring them to Jesus.

But the disciples of Jesus, trying to protect Him, give Him some rest, try to stop this, but Jesus never prevents people from coming to Him, not even children!

And then Jesus makes this application. He says, “**Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.**” Luke 18:17.

So the conclusion, that some come to, is that to become a Christian you have to turn off your brain, you have to have the intellect of a child because any smart person would know, scientifically speaking, that we came from nothing and evolved over millions of years! Okay, a little sarcasm there, not sure if you caught that!

Now as you think about the faith of a child, they just trust that their parents will care for them. I remember when my kids were young and they would jump off the sofa into my arms expecting me to catch them! That is trust.

I think that is what Jesus is speaking of here in regards to this child-like faith. Trusting that God will care for us, protect us, love us just as our parents have done and much, much more!

The problem is that as we get older we tend to get more cynical and as we get that way, it is harder to enter into the kingdom. We need to have more of that child-like faith that just trusts in God and receives His blessings by faith! And even as Christians we can become cynical and not believe that God is working. We need to have that child-like faith!

I think one writer summed it up nicely for us. He wrote, "Not only did Jesus welcome these little human beings as members of the kingdom of God; He also extolled them as model citizens of the same, because of their capacity to trust and love." (Pate) How true that is. May we not lose that child-like faith!

VERSES 18-19

Keep in mind that as we read this story Jesus is trying to draw out the faith of this young man. And we are told that this man was rich, he was young and he was a ruler. We don't know what he was over; be it politics, business or religious activity, but by the worlds standards, he had it all!

And again, Jesus is trying to stretch his faith. How do we know that? Because He called Jesus “**Good teacher**” and Jesus’ response is “**... ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.’**”

Make no mistake about it, they knew that only God was good and not man! In fact, “There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a rabbi being addressed as ‘Good Master’” (Plummer, cited in Geldenhuys). They insisted on calling God alone “good.”

Now Jesus is either saying “*Don’t call Me good, only God is good and I’m not!*” or “*Are you calling Me good because I am God?*” And as you read through the Scriptures you can clearly see that Jesus is Almighty God!

Now as you read through this, Jesus is trying to stretch this man’s faith, like I have said, make him think about what he has said, that Jesus is God! That is the point and if Jesus is God, and He is, then we must humble ourselves before Him and do as He is telling us.

But this man, like so many today, was looking for that eternal life. And they will do whatever it takes to obtain it except come to the true and living God!

As we read on listen to what Jesus tells this rich, young ruler.

VERSES 20-23

Keep in mind that Jesus is answering the question of this rich, young ruler. “**Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**” Do you see anything wrong with that question? I hope so because this man wants to know what he can do and that is the problem!

What is interesting to me is that Jesus goes to the second table of the Law, the first table dealt with man’s relationship with God, but the second table deals with man’s relationship with man.

And Jesus tells him to keep these things, and the man responds by saying, “**All these I have kept from my youth.**” Was that true? Well, yes and no. What I mean by that is that according to this man’s standards of what that meant, this outward observance, and even that he did not keep, but he did the best he could and felt he was doing okay! Again, it was a standard that he set that was attainable but it is not what God has said. And even with feeling this way, he still knew something was missing and that is why he questioned Jesus about eternal life.

People still do that today. “I am not perfect but God will accept me like I am. I am a good person!” And the reality is, you are not according to God’s standard of perfection. That is why so many look to their own standards because they are attainable and God’s are not!

In fact, when Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7 He showed them that it is not just the outward observance, but it is a matter of the heart.

And what Jesus is trying to do is to get him to look deeper within and he is still superficial in his thinking. So Jesus digs deeper and tells him that he needs to sell what he has and follow Him. And Mark 10:21 tells us that Jesus loved this man and yet, that love did not break through his hard heart!

So his riches kept him from heaven! His possessions, the things of this world! And as much as this man went away sorrowful, listen to the response of Jesus!

VERSES 24-27

Notice that Jesus did not stop this man from leaving sorrowful. Why? Because each of us have a choice to make, to either receive Jesus as Lord and Savior of our lives or to reject Him. God draws us but we must receive it by faith. And Jesus uses this man as an example showing how people can allow riches to get in their way of obtaining eternal life.

And not only was this man sorrowful but we are also told that Jesus was sorrowful at how this man turned down eternal life for nothing. In fact, the Bible says that the new heavens and the new earth will have streets of gold! (Revelation 21:21) So this man sold his eternal life for road pavement! And people do that today.

And then Jesus said, “**How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!**” Notice, not impossible, but it is difficult, it is hard because those things get in the way! And folk’s, we are all rich, we have so much in this country and that is the problem. And what we have seen is that people don’t need God, they don’t want God because they feel they have all that they need. And yet, they know something is missing, like with this man, and they keep searching and searching but apart from God, they will never fill that God-shaped void in their heart. What is tragic here with this man is that he left as he came, lacking eternal life and holding onto his riches.

I wonder how he feels now, refusing Jesus, and losing everything? What is on the throne of your heart keeping you from Jesus, you need to let it go and allow Him to rule and reign in your life.

This man wanted to know what he could do to obtain eternal life, what work, what cost, and Jesus tells him you must receive it by faith. Jesus makes a very interesting point in John 6:29 when He said, “. . . **‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’**” You see, it is not my work, it is not what I have done but what Jesus has done, His finished work!

And all I must do is receive and believe! All I must do is repent and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of my life. What is keeping you from entering in? A very important question if you have not been born again or come to that saving faith.

And to drive this point home on how hard it is to let possessions go and come to saving faith, Jesus uses this illustration of camel going through the eye of a needle. He tells us that this is much easier than for a rich man to enter into eternal life for his riches, his god, gets in his way from entering in.

Now some have said that this eye of the needle is speaking of a small gate into the city that you would have to take the camels pack off and push and shove and you would be able to get him through. It is difficult, but it can be done! That is just plain foolishness for if it was possible, then why did those around Him say, **“Who then can be saved?”**

First of all, the word **“needle”** in the Greek is BELONES and it speaks of a sewing needle! Thus, it is impossible for a camel to pass through a sewing needle just as it is impossible for man, by his own efforts, his good works, to enter into eternal life.

In Galatians 3:21-22 Paul tells us, **“Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”**

In other words, the Law can't make you righteous, it can only show how far short you come to perfection, what God requires of you! The Law has no power to give life and if it could then Paul says that righteousness would have come by the Law, through our good works. But it can't and thus, it is by the shed blood of Jesus applied to our lives by faith that we receive the righteousness of Christ into our lives!

Paul said in Galatians 2:21, **“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”** And that should sum it up for us. If we could be saved by doing good then what was the purpose of God becoming flesh, dwelling among us, and going to the cross of Calvary? It would make no sense unless the Law or our good works, our efforts could not save us and that is the case as we have seen!

But, what may be impossible by our efforts, is very possible by God’s effort, the work that He has done.

It is as Peter said in Acts 4:12, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Also, Paul tells us regarding good works in Romans 4:2-5, **“For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”** You see, it is a salvation by grace through faith, not of works!

And as impossible as this may seem, I love the words of Jesus here, **“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”**

VERSES 28-30

Here's the thing. You can't out give God. What you give to Him He will give back to you. It is as Psalm 62:10 says, "**. . . if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.**" Use what God has entrusted to you for His glory, His Kingdom, don't set your heart upon them or trust in riches because they can disappear very quickly. And it truly is a matter of the heart in our giving.

I think Paul explained this very well when he wrote in II Corinthians 9:6-8, "**But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**"

When you give to God don't give because you feel you have to, that someone is making you, but out of a cheerful heart or a hilarious heart! And God will honor that kind of giving and bless you in your giving be it in your time, or money or any other resource you use for Him! He is a debtor to no man!

VERSES 31-34

Keep in mind that way back in Luke chapter 9 we see Jesus come down from the Mount of Transfiguration there on Mount Hermon in Caesarea Philippi, and from there He is beginning His journey southward to Jerusalem, to the cross of Calvary, to be the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world.

And as we are going to see, He is in Jericho, ready to make the final ascent up to Jerusalem. There was going to be death before glory. For the apostles, it went right over their heads. Why? Because they were thinking Kingdom now and that was not going to be the case, in fact, this is the third time that is recorded that Jesus spoke of these things, of His death and they still refused to listen.

And we are also told that, “**... this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.**” Why was this hidden from them? Maybe they could not have grasped the totality of it all and it would have short-circuited their brains!

Many times, as we read of the things the apostles did, we think they were a bunch of goofballs! Now, before we are too hard on them, I think there is a lesson here for us.

Is it possible to have our minds so set upon something that when someone speaks something contrary, we just don't hear it? I believe it is. God will speak to us through His Word, through others at times, in His still small voice that speaks to our hearts, and if we don't like it, we shut Him off, tune Him out, making us no different than these men.

Be careful, God is speaking things to you for your betterment not to hurt you! They may be hard to take, it may cause you to change something you are doing or believing, but remember
- FATHER KNOWS BEST!

VERSES 35-39

Keep in mind that one of the most traveled roads from Galilee to Jerusalem went through Jericho. When Jesus came to this ancient city, He was not far from Jerusalem and the fate waiting for Him there. Remember what we read in Luke 9:51, **“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”** The cross was getting closer, the work He came to do will be fulfilled shortly!

Now Matthew 20:29-34 tells us that Jesus was departing Jericho and there were two blind men. Mark 10:46-52 tells us Jesus was going out of Jericho and there was only one blind man.

And here in Luke 18:35-43 we are told that He was coming near Jericho and there was one blind man. What is up with this? Which one is right? Is this a Bible error? So many questions, so little time! No, not really, these are important questions.

What amazes me is that people will discredit the Bible without really looking into these things. If God is who He says He is, and He is, then I think He knows what He is talking about. Therefore, either I am not understanding what is going on or I am misreading what is taking place. There is a solution if we would only look for it and I believe that is true with what we see here.

First of all, there was the old city of Jericho that fell at the time of Joshua and the new city of Jericho about 3 miles away. Thus, Jesus could have been leaving the old city of Jericho and entering the new city. I think that is what is going on here.

Some feel that since the new city of Jericho was divided into an upper and lower section, a wealthy and a poor section, Jesus was leaving one and going to the other. I don't think so, but it is a possibility. In either case, the Bible is not contradicting itself.

Secondly, why does Matthew tell us there were two blind men while Mark and Luke only one? It is possible that Mark and Luke focused on the more vocal of the two men, Bartimaeus, while Matthew spoke of the two blind men who were there. Same story, just reported with a different focus. No contradiction!

So here is blind Bartimaeus begging on the side of the road. And as he is there he hears all kinds of noise, more than usual, and he asks those around him what is going on. Remember, he was blind, not deaf!

And the crowd responds by saying Jesus is in town! At that point this man with no hope had the fires of hope rekindled! He recognized Jesus could heal his blind eyes so that he could see again.

So he cries out to Jesus and the crowds basically tell him to be quiet, shut up, which only causes him to yell out more. Why? He didn't want this opportunity to pass him by so he was willing to go against the voices in the crowds to be healed!

It is hard to come against the crowds of people. Let me show you what I mean with this story. We are told,

I remember doing something like this [like blind Bartimaeus] at the 1962 Rose Parade. UCLA was playing in the Rose Bowl, and as their float came by, I saw that an old high school friend was one of the Bruin cheerleaders. I began to shout, "Hey, Patti, it's me! Remember me? Kent Hughes!" And then I saw that all the Bruin cheerleaders, and people on both sides of Colorado Boulevard, were looking at me! Should I keep yelling or just shut up?

- R. Kent Hughes, Luke Volume Two, p. 214

Lots of pressure for poor blind Bartimaeus to just be quiet but this may be the last time he has an encounter with Jesus, and it would be for Jesus was going to the cross to pay in full the penalty for our sins. It was his last chance and he was not going to let the crowds of people who were telling him to be quiet to stop him from shouting, “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! . . . Son of David, have mercy on me!**”

What happened next? What did Jesus do? Let’s read on and see!

VERSES 40-43

Keep in mind where Jesus is going. He is on His way to Jerusalem to die on the cross of Calvary for our sins. Nothing was going to stop Him from accomplishing this task, and yet, we are told that “**Jesus stood still.**”

Why did He stand still? Why did he stop this journey to Jerusalem? Because there was a man calling out for mercy and Jesus does not blow him off or ignore him. No, Jesus asks this man what he wants!

That is interesting. Didn’t Jesus know what he wanted? I mean, if you think about it, all the people there knew he was blind. So why did Jesus ask this man this question?

Because He was stretching this man’s faith. He wants him to speak forth what he desires. And his answer is simple, “**Lord, that I may receive my sight.**”

So Jesus touches this man, (Matthew 20:34) and now, blind Bartimaeus can see! He has 20/20 vision!

What was the response of this man who was blind and now he can see? Not only did this man give glory to God but so did the crowds that were there! This blind man could not only see physically but spiritually also, he was saved and followed Jesus!

As I close this evening let me leave you with this thought. Have you noticed that when we come to God are we afraid to ask Him for the impossible? Blind Bartimaeus wasn't!

God is in the business of taking the impossible and making it very possible! Trust in Him, believe by faith and see the mighty work that God can do in you and through you!

A couple of verses I want to leave you with this evening to think about. The first is found in Philippians 4:13, where Paul says, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**" I like that. It is not about me but the Lord and all I must do is take those steps of faith!

Secondly, in Romans 11:29 Paul tells us, "**For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**"

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, "**For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn; he will never go back on his promises.**" Thus, walk by faith. Have the faith of a child believing that God can do all things!

And don't forget to give thanks to God no matter what you are going through because He is worthy of our praise, our thanksgiving!