

Jim Martin  
P.O. Box 291962  
Dayton, Ohio 45429  
jmmgrace.com PastorJimGCC@gmail.com

### May 2024 “Restored Like Bartimaeus”

Dear Friend,

Because of Adam’s transgression against God in Genesis chapter three, we live in a fallen world. Since the day of his rebellious act, lives have been filled with challenges and disappointments. Some people tend to blame God for the bad events in their lives, even though He is not the source of hardships. In fact, I find it very interesting that many Christians blame God for their sufferings instead of blaming Satan or the Genesis chapter three conditions in which we all live.

Furthermore, there are those who almost seem shocked that something bad could happen in their lives, having an attitude that almost says, “I’m a Christian, a child of God. I thought God was supposed to watch over me!” But even Jesus said in John 16:33, “In this world ye shall have tribulation.” The word “tribulation” comes from the Greek word “thlipsis,” and it means “trouble, affliction, to crush, press, squeeze, to break.” In essence, the tribulation Jesus is speaking of refers to external events which have an impact on our mental state and emotions. How we respond to these events determines whether or not we walk in victory or distress. No one is exempt from these tribulations.

Years ago, the Holy Spirit used the story in the Bible about a man named Bartimaeus as an example of how we can have victory in any adverse situation if we keep our focus on Jesus.

***<sup>46</sup>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. <sup>47</sup>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. <sup>48</sup>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. <sup>49</sup>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. <sup>50</sup>And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>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. <sup>52</sup>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. [Mark 10:46-52 (also in Matthew 20 and Luke 18)]***

Bartimaeus was living with a devastating physical condition. Unlike the man in John chapter nine who was born blind, scripture does not indicate in this passage nor in Matthew 20 or Luke 18 how Bartimaeus became blind. Thus, it would not be wrong to assume that at one time he had vision. Not only was he living with the daily challenges of blindness, but he also had to deal with the emotional trauma, anxiety, and depression of being unable to see and relegated to begging just to have food. Then, the day came when he heard that Jesus was passing by. All the stories about Jesus healing every form of sickness, infirmity and affliction had impacted his heart to the point that he knew Jesus was his only hope for full restoration; not just healing of blindness, but of all the emotional anguish associated with his condition.

We all encounter situations which impact us physically and/or emotionally. But do we accept the truth that Jesus is the only One who can truly bring about complete restoration? People can offer kind words of support and encouragement and even prayers. But kind words are like a temporary bandage on a wound: they don't change our condition. The prayers of others can help, but our faith cannot be in those praying or in their prayers; our faith must be in the One who answers prayers. God is available to help, even if our battle is something we have brought on ourselves. He alone can bring about permanent change.

***I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. (Psalm 3:4)***

***O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. (Hosea 13:9)***

***Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. (Psalm 33:20)***

***Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.  
(Psalm 94:17)***

***Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isaiah 41:10)***

As soon as Jesus heard Bartimaeus calling for Him, He responded by commanding that Bartimaeus be brought to Him. Too many Christians want Jesus to help them, but they do not truly go to Him for the help they seek. It required physical effort for Bartimaeus to get up and go to Jesus in his blind condition, yet he arose and sought for Him. No matter what our battle, we must make the effort to go to Jesus; trust me, He is calling for you even now.

***Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. (1Chronicles 16:11)***

***Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord. (Psalm 31:24)***

***He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.  
(Psalm 112:7)***

***Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)***

In responding to Jesus' command for him to come, Scripture reveals two actions Bartimaeus took: 1) he cast away his garment and 2) he rose. I, like many others, have taught that the garment he cast away was a beggar's cloak, an official license to beg. However, that seems to be more tradition than documented historical fact. Even so, that garment was extremely needful for a blind beggar as it was used as a coat, as a blanket, as protection from blazing sunlight, rolled up to be used as a pillow and more. By casting away his garment and rising, Bartimaeus was saying he was no longer depending on how he had been getting by, but was instead anticipating a major change in his life. Remember, he was still blind when he did this.

As Christians, if we want to receive full restoration from the Lord, we must act like we're going to receive that restoration. Though medication, physical therapy, and even pastoral counseling may be helpful and needful for the present, we cannot view them as the permanent solution. If

we're trusting Jesus for full restoration, we cannot "carry our garment" with us to His throne of grace. That does NOT mean we throw away our medication and hope for the best. It means we thank God that the medication is helping and not causing adverse complications, but we continually praise Jesus for being our Healer, thank God for sending His Word and healing us, and call our healing and emotional recovery a completed work.

*<sup>1</sup>Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
(Matthew 11:28)*

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:7)*

When Bartimaeus arrived where Jesus was standing, something strange happened. Though Bartimaeus was clearly blind, Jesus asked him what he wanted. I'm guessing that the apostles and others nearby wondered why Jesus was asking such a question since the answer would obviously be that he wanted his sight. But Jesus wanted Bartimaeus to verbally declare what he wanted Jesus to do for him. It was then that Jesus restored his sight.

This same principle is still true today: God wants us to tell Him what we want to receive. When we go to a restaurant, the server is fairly confident we came in to eat but won't know what food we want until we place our order. Likewise, God wants us to use our authority on Earth to declare what we want done. He then responds out of His power. We cannot just sit back and expect God to read our minds, we must communicate with Him.

*<sup>6</sup>But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. <sup>7</sup>But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. <sup>8</sup>Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (Matthew 6:6-8)*

*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.  
(Matthew 21:22)*

*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:13)*

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (Philippians 4:6)*

*<sup>14</sup>And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: <sup>15</sup>And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (1John 5:15)*

The above passage in Mark tells us that after Bartimaeus received his sight he followed Jesus. But this same story in Luke provides more information.

***And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God. (Luke 18:43)***

Bartimaeus not only followed Jesus, but he was glorifying God as he went. This word “glorifying” is from the Greek word “doxázō,” and it means “recognize, honor, praise, give esteem; to celebrate (what God has done) with praise, worship, and adoration.” He was so happy to be restored that he didn’t care who saw him, he was going to lift up his voice in mighty praise and worship unto God.

I have learned that praise and worship is one of the greatest blessings in which we as Christians can participate. Praising God before a battle, during a battle, and after the victory is a key to seeing God move in tremendous fashion. Worshiping Him helps keep our attention on our Deliverer and off the circumstances. The more we praise, the less emotional upheaval we experience. I have also discovered that the more I praise Him, the more I enjoy praising Him and pouring out my worship to Him. Christians who feel praise and worship is boring have never – and I do mean *never* – truly pressed into His presence with worship. Praising God is a choice, not an action forced upon us by the Holy Spirit.

***Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. (Psalm 42:11)***

***<sup>3</sup>What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. <sup>4</sup>In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. (Psalm 56:3-4)***

***<sup>17</sup>Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: <sup>18</sup>Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup>The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (Habakkuk 3:17-19)***

***<sup>25</sup>And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. <sup>26</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. (Acts 16:25-26)***

Earlier I mentioned how we all face times of tribulation which can impact us physically, emotionally, and mentally. No one is exempt from this type of adversity. I’ll share with you two such events from my own life.

Around 5:00 in the morning on Friday, May 12, 1989, I was awakened by a phone call. My sister informed me that our father discovered that our mother had passed away. She was only 63 years old. Her passing was a shock, totally unexpected. Compounding this was the fact that Mother’s Day was Sunday, May 14, two days later. The cards and gifts we had all planned to give her and the time we had planned to spend with her were never going to take place. It was the most difficult Mother’s Day I have ever experienced.

Then, early in the morning on Saturday, December 21, 2002, I received a phone call that my father had passed away. This, too, was very challenging as his passing took place only four days before Christmas. Though we still celebrated Christmas with family gatherings, there was an empty feeling inside knowing dad was gone and the cards and gifts we had planned to give him would never be received. It was the most difficult Christmas I have ever experienced.

Both mom and dad were Christians and there was great comfort in knowing where they are and that I will see them again. Even so, there was still a great sense of loss. Both events were a tribulation, situations impacting my mental state and emotions. I had a choice: yield to the troubling, afflicting, and crushing emotions; or keep my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. I chose the latter and fought the emotions that would have dragged me into a pit of great despair and anguish. Yes, I still miss my parents, but I was restored and walk daily in the victory Jesus has given me.

Do you want to walk in that victory? Do you want full restoration like Bartimaeus? If so, make the decision to follow the pattern we've learned from his story. Jesus is faithful and He will always walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death, loss, affliction, infirmity, betrayal, or anything else we face in this fallen world.

In His Grace,

*Jim*

P.S. – If you would like more teaching about overcoming adversity and afflicting emotions, use the form below to order a CD of my sermon, *Depression or Deliverance: It's Your Choice*.

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www.jmmgrace.com • PastorJimGCC@gmail.com