The Desperate Man

It is a glorious thing to be desperate after God always! I am oftentimes ashamed of the lack of desperation after my God in my own life. Indeed, greater by far than the cry, "God, help me!" is the plea, "God, I want You!" There *is* a difference. I ask the reader to read the account of blind Bartimaeus as related in Mark 10:46-52:

"And they came to Jericho: and as He [Jesus] *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. 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. 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. 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. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 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. 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."*

I do not read in this true story that Bartimaeus "whispered," *"Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"* Nor do I read that he approached the Savior with a dignified, stilted demeanor about himself. Bartimaeus is in great need! He's blind! He's a poor beggar! He's desperate! He has a problem and he knows the only one with an answer to that problem is the Savior. A man who is truly desperate is not concerned about what others might think about him. He needs rescue and knows it. *"And hide not Thy face from Thy servant,"* said David, *"for I am in trouble: hear me speedily"* (Psa. 69:17).

The singlemindedness after God, the laying aside of all hindrances in order to reach Him, the unconcern for all obstacles that stand between the one in need and the One there to rescue him, the contrition of spirit, the humility of mind, the openness before Him – all of this that comes to one in desperate need of rescue is a glorious thing! How wonderful for sinner and saint alike to be desperate before God. It is only that man who comes begging for deliverance and salvation to whom the Lord responds. *"…but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word"* (Isa. 66:2).

What a wonderful thing it is to be a beggar before God! The flesh doesn't like that idea. It winces at the thought. It is true we are *"children of God," "heirs to the Throne," "the elect," "saints," "Christians."* But "beggars"? But how wonderful to stand before God and confess without guile, without hypocrisy, our great need. We are a needy people!

The first Beatitude spoken by our Lord in Matthew 5:3 is, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* In a message he preached a number of years ago, John MacArthur commented on this verse. *"'Poor in spirit,'"* he said, "is a recognition that we have nothing and that we are nothing and that we can do nothing and it results in our being a beggar who has no resource, no capacity to help himself. What our Lord is saying in verse 3 is 'Happy

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is the man who, absolutely destitute spiritually, is nothing but a beggar who has to plead for mercy and grace because it is that kind of man who gets the kingdom of heaven.'"

MacArthur goes on to say that if you are a child of God, this sense of spiritual bankruptcy will always be with you. (From John MacArthur's sermon "Happy Are the Sad," Kingdom Life Series, 1978.) Dear believer, never be ashamed to be a beggar before your God. Never be afraid to admit your need before Him. Never hesitate to call upon Him. *"The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth"* (Psa. 145:18).

Only the man who needs rescue and knows it, who is sincerely desperate after God, moves a listening, watching, sovereign God. God hears only those who mean business when calling on Him, those who need rescue and know it, and admit it. *"Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God"* (Psa. 69:1-3). That's desperation! He means business with God.

Desperation removes the mask. Desperation produces genuine boldness, a shameless pursuit of God that ignores everything and anything that stands in the way of reaching Him, a holy disregard for what others may think or say as that child of God runs after his God. O, how this dear man Bartimaeus, in our text, demonstrates all this.

Look at the reaction of blind Bartimaeus when rebuked by the crowd that he might be silent. The text tells us that he *"cried the more a great deal."* Their warning to him stimulated him to greater intensity toward seeking the Savior. This man intends to have the Lord Jesus. He intends to be blessed. He will not take "no" for an answer. This faithful man means business with God.

Our text states that there was a great number of people present during the entire incident between Bartimaeus and Jesus. There were those who rebuked Bartimaeus for shouting out to the Lord. In that huge crowd no one apparently was motivated to pursue the Savior in order to fulfill a need in his or her life as did Bartimaeus. The great difference between all of them and Bartimaeus was that he saw his need and was not ashamed to boldly approach Jesus with his need.

Whenever a man or woman is dead serious about pursuing their God, whenever he or she is desperate after reaching their Lord, whenever he or she is sincere and *"without guile"* as Nathanael during his confrontation with Jesus in John chapter one, it is most likely that that Christian will be obnoxious to some. It is very likely he'll be labeled "fanatical," "overbearing," "too bold in his 'religion.'" But God loves desperate people. God loves the man or woman who comes to Him totally desperate, fully aware of his or her own frailty and inability to rescue himself or herself. God loves and always responds to the one who comes to Him seeking His mercy and deliverance.

There is abundant evidence that Bartimaeus knew and believed that Jesus was God. His actions make this clear. He addressed Him as "Son of David," a term reserved exclusively for the Son of God. He was absolutely serious as he approached the Savior with his request to be healed. He sincerely believed with all his heart that Jesus could heal him.

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Jesus Stood Still

"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." "And Jesus stood still," – the reward for desperation. Here is a poor man in much need physically and materially crying out to the Lord Jesus, resisted by many, says the Word. It is very likely his voice was drowned out by the mass of people. But his cry did not escape the ear of the Savior. He heard him, and He *"stood still."* How glorious!

Bartimaeus has sought the Lord with all his heart. He has been desperate after the Son of David. God has seen his desperation, his genuine desire and eagerness after Jesus. And Jesus stands still and gives His undivided attention to Bartimaeus, and He calls him to Himself.

"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). When the Father gives a man to Christ Jesus, the Savior stands still. He receives that one as a precious gift from the Father. And the Savior knows those who are His. Paul assured Timothy of this: *"The Lord knoweth them that are His"* (2 Tim. 2:19).

Believer, God assures you of this: when you are desperate after Him, you will find Him! You will find Him in your need. And He will stand still and minister to all your needs.

The Church Needs Desperate Saints!

How the contemporary Christian Church in America stands in need of desperate saints! I am convinced that the great need of the 21st Century Church in our nation is to see her great need. She is in this hour a copy of the Church at Laodicea. Of her Jesus Christ said, *"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…"* (Rev. 3:17). The Church in our day is poor and blind like Bartimaeus. But her spiritual poverty, that is, her "poorness," her "blindness," has come upon her of her own choosing, choosing to pursue the ways of the ungodly, from whom she is indistinguishable. She has chosen pleasure, entertainment in the church, ungodly music, "party time" in the church, amusement time.

The Church in nearly the past half century now has chosen to mingle with the heathen as Israel of old, and she is now beginning to pay the price for her great compromise. Psalm 106:35-36, speaking of Israel, tells us that *"…they were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols, which were a snare unto them."* The writer of the Book of Judges said, "*And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger"* (Judges 2:12). What an accurate description this is of the 21st Century Church in the United States!

Desperate Christians are a gift to the Church. They are *not* an impediment to the Church. Desperate Christians are genuine. They are trustworthy. They are desperate after God. Believer, God assures us of this: when we are desperate after Him, we will find Him! We will find Him in our need. And He will stand still and minister to all our needs.

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"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7).

– J. N. J.

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