

Lesson # 31

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## What Does the Bible Say About Infirmities?

One evening, I watched a *60 Minutes* segment regarding a man with no arms or legs, who had become a motivational speaker. He is changing the lives of many in his country, Australia .

When I think of the disabled, overcoming great obstacles, I cannot help but think of *Stephen Hawkings*, a famous theoretical physicist. Stephen has been confined to a wheelchair for most of his life. Yet, he has made startling revelations regarding our planet, in relation to the universe. His most famous revelation in terms of black holes emitting radiation, which has been declared "*Hawking Radiation*".

*Stevland Hardaway Judkins* (born May 13, 1950), name later changed to *Stevland Hardaway Morris*, and better known by his stage name *Stevie Wonder*, is an American singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, record producer and activist.

Blind nearly from birth, Wonder signed with *Motown Records'* *Tamla* label at the age of eleven, and continues to perform and record for *Motown* to this day.

Wonder is also noted for his work as an activist for political causes, including his 1980 campaign to make *Martin Luther King, Jr.'s* birthday a holiday in the United States. In 2009, Wonder was named a *United Nations Messengers of Peace*.

These extraordinary men, living with infirmities, did not allow their disability to handicap their contributions to society or the impact on the lives they touched and inspired.

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### **Book of Mark CHAPTERS 8-11: THE CONTEXT**

In these chapters, we have two stories of the healing of blind men ([8:22-26](#))

<sup>22</sup>*And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.*

<sup>23</sup>*And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought.*

<sup>24</sup>*And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.*

<sup>25</sup>*After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.*

Lesson # 31

---

<sup>26</sup>*And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.*

and [10:46-52](#)

<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.)*

Between these two stories, Jesus travels with the disciples toward Jerusalem. On the way, he tells the disciples three times of his coming death ([8:31-33](#))

<sup>31</sup>*And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*

<sup>32</sup>*And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.*

<sup>33</sup>*But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.*

[9:30-32](#) –

<sup>30</sup>*And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.*

<sup>31</sup>*For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.*

Lesson # 31

---

<sup>32</sup>*But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.*

10:32-34

<sup>32</sup>*And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,*

<sup>33</sup>*Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:*

<sup>34</sup>*And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

but they respond to each of these predictions inappropriately, showing that they are blind to the future that Jesus is seeking to reveal to them. Mark uses these two stories of blind men to bracket a series of stories about disciples who are spiritually blind.

**VERSE 46: A BLIND BEGGAR SITTING BY THE ROADSIDE**

<sup>46</sup>*They came to Jericho. As he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus (Greek: [ho huios timaiou](#), the son of Timaeus), Bartimaeus (Aramaic: [bar](#) means son of), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road (Greek: *ten hodon* — the road, the way).*

"**They came to Jericho**" (v. 46a). Fifteen mountainous miles downhill from Jerusalem, Jericho is one of the world's oldest continuously occupied cities.

"**As he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude**" (v. 46b). The streets would be filled with pilgrims coming from everywhere and heading for the Holy City. Jesus' reputation precedes him, and people hope to catch a glimpse of the man whom some think to be the Messiah. Jericho is the home of many priests and Levites who serve at the temple in Jerusalem.

"**the son of Timaeus** ([ho huios timaiou](#)), **Bartimaeus** (*bar* means son of)" (v. 46c). *Bar* means *son of* in Aramaic, a language similar to Hebrew and the common language of Palestinian Jews in Jesus' day. Mark gives the Aramaic name and translates into Greek for Gentile readers. *Timao* ([Greek](#)) means *to honor*, so Bartimaeus can mean *son of honor*.

"**a blind beggar**" (v. 46d). Most blind men would be beggars, and begging is regarded charitably.

"**was sitting by the road**" (v. 46e). The roadside is a place for marginal people.

Lesson # 31

---

**VERSES 47-48: "SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME"**

**47** *When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene (Greek: ho Nazarenos — the Nazarene), he began to cry out, and say, "Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me!"* **48** *Many rebuked him, that he should be quiet, but he cried out much more, "You son of David, have mercy on me!"*

"**Jesus the Nazarene**" (v. 47a) — literally "Jesus the Nazarene" — not *Iesus apo Nazaret* (Jesus of Nazareth) as in 1:9.

"**Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me**" (v. 47b). Mark includes no genealogy, so he may intend this title, "Son of David," to establish Jesus' Davidic descent — his royal blood.

Until now, Jesus has tried to keep talk of his *messiahship* at a minimum — scholars talk of the "messianic secret." But Jesus does not rebuke Bartimaeus for calling him, "Son of David," a title that can be understood *messianically*. The reason is quite simple. Before now, his time had not come, but now it has. He is ready to enter Jerusalem — ready to confront the religious establishment — ready to die.

"**Many rebuked him, that he should be quiet.**" (v. 48a). The crowd is trying to enjoy the parade. Bartimaeus disturbs their fun, so they order him to be quiet — but Bartimaeus will not be stilled. Never has he had such hope!

"**but he cried out much more, 'You son of David, have mercy on me'**" (v. 48b). Bartimaeus will not be quiet just to please this crowd. His future — his life — is at stake.

**VERSES 49-50: JESUS SAID, "CALL HIM HERE"**

<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.*

**49** *Jesus stood still, and said, "Call him."*

*They called the blind man, saying to him, "Cheer up! Get up. He is calling you!"*

**50** *He, casting away (Greek: apobalon — casting aside — abandoning) his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.*

"**Jesus stood still**" (v. 49a). Amidst the noise of the crowd, Jesus hears the cry of this beggar, and stops in his tracks. Jesus' ears are attuned to hear the marginal person: The woman with a hemorrhage (*Veronica*) (5:25-34) — the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20) — the

Lesson # 31

---

sick in Gennesaret (6:53-56) — the **Sy-ro-phoenician** (*an inhabitant of the Phoenician part of Syria*) woman (7:24-30) — the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-25) — the boy with a spirit (9:14-29) — little children (10:13-16) — and now this blind man who sits beside the road.

Jesus does not address the blind man directly, but orders the crowd to "**call him**" (v. 49b) — commands them to stop obstructing and to start enabling — turns stiff arms into helping hands.

**"He (Bartimaeus), casting away** (*apobalon* — casting aside — abandoning) **his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus**" (v. 50). Beggars typically sit with their cloak spread on the ground before them to catch coins tossed by passersby. This man's cloak is as important to his livelihood as boats are to a fisherman or a booth to a tax collector.

**VERSE 51:** "WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?"

*51* Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?"

*The blind man said to him, "Rabboni (Greek: Rabbouni), that I may see again."*

**"What do you want me to do for you?"** (v. 51a). Jesus has brought this man to center stage. Now he further dignifies him by asking what he wants. He asks the same question that he asked of James and John (10:36 - <sup>36</sup>*And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?*) in the incident immediately preceding this story.

**"Rabboni (*Rabbouni*)"** (v. 51b). In the New Testament, we see this word *Rabbouni* only here and when Mary recognizes the risen Christ outside the tomb (*John 20:16 - <sup>16</sup>Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*). It is a reverent form of Rabbi.

**"that I may see again"** (v. 51b). The blind man's petition is very different from that of James and John. He asks not to be seen, but to see — not for honor, but for vision — not to be superior to ordinary people, but to become ordinary himself.

**VERSE 52:** HE REGAINED HIS SIGHT AND FOLLOWED HIM ON THE WAY

*52* Jesus said to him, "Go your way. Your faith has made you well (Greek: *sesoken se* — healed or saved you)." *Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way* (Greek: *hodo*).

**"Go your way. Your faith has made you well (*sesoken*)"** (v. 52a). The word *sesoken* (root word *sozo*) has a happy ambiguity. It can mean healed, made whole, or saved. In this man's case, all three are true.

Lesson # 31

---

"Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way (*hodo*)" (v. 52b). At the beginning of this story, we found Bartimaeus "sitting by the roadside (*hodon* — used as a geographical reference)" (v. 46). Now, at the end of the story, we find him following Jesus "on the way" (*hodo* — used as a discipleship reference).

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**GIVING SIGHT TO THE MAN BORN BLIND**  
(Scripture Portion: John 9:1-41)

In his Gospel, John records the seven "I AMs" of our Lord –

*John 6:35 - I am the bread of life;*  
*8:12 - I am the light of the world*  
*10:7 - I am the door of the sheep.*  
*11 - I am the good shepherd*  
*11:25 - I am the resurrection, and the life*  
*14:6 - I am the way, the truth, and the life*  
*15:1 - I am the true vine*

and the important thing to notice is that Jesus substantiated His claims and verified His statements. When He said, "*I am the Bread of life*", He demonstrated the truth of His word by feeding the 5000 (*John 6:2-13*); when He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life*", He raised Lazarus (*John 11:43-44*)

<sup>43</sup>*And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

<sup>44</sup>*And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

and when He made the statements in *John 8:12 - Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* and *9:5, - As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* He opened the eyes of a man who had been born blind. Let us see how the Lord dealt with this man and how the man reacted.

Lesson # 31

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## 1. THE DARKNESS THAT OVERSHADOWED HIM

This man had been blind from birth and he was a beggar. Now it is a fundamental teaching of the Word of God that by nature we are all spiritually blind and that we were born that way – look up [John 3:19-21](#)

<sup>19</sup>And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

<sup>20</sup>For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

<sup>21</sup>But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

[1 Corinthians 2:14](#) - *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* ;

[2 Corinthians 4:4](#) - *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* ;

[Ephesians 4:18](#) - *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:* , and compare

[1 Peter 2:9](#) - *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;* and see the marvelous thing that happens when the Lord saves us.

Try to describe an object to a blind man and he will reply, “*I can’t see it!*” That is what the unregenerate man says when you speak to him of the things of God. No-one can see and understand God’s truth until his eyes are opened by the Lord. Then he can say what the blind man said – verse [25](#) – (*He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*). Many people around us are spiritually blind; they are overshadowed by a great **pall** (*become less interesting or attractive*) of darkness.

## 2. THE SPECULATION THAT SURROUNDED HIM

In [verse 2](#), the disciples asked a remarkable question. *What did it mean?* Were they referring to some theory of pre-existence, of the **transmigration** (*the passing of a soul into another body after death*) of souls? How could this man sin prior to his birth? Well, many of the Jews believed that even a child in the womb could sin – look up [Genesis 25:26](#) and [Hosea 12:3](#). Our Lord’s answer to this puzzling question, however, is indicated in [verses 3-5](#).

Blindness, as well as all disease and death itself, is the *result* of sin, and sometimes the result of *personal sin*, though it was not so in this case. Dr Campbell Morgan has suggested that [verses 3](#) and [4](#) should read: “*Neither did this man sin, nor his parents.* But that the work of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day.”

Lesson # 31

---

Remember the day started in darkness. In [Gen. 1:5](#) – “*And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*” God did not call darkness “**Evil**” – He called it “**Night**”.

### 3. THE MIRACLE THAT CURED HIM

We get this in verses 6 and 7, where we should note three things:-

1. **What Jesus did – verse 6.** Why did He place mud on the man’s eyes? Was there a symbolic value in this act? Maybe the mud was a type of the defilement of sin and needed to be cleansed away; perhaps it was to indicate that healing could only come from the Lord Himself; or, maybe it was a picture of the minds of men that were darkened by the things of earth.
2. **What Jesus said – verse 7 (first part).** Have you ever noticed how often Jesus said, “Go...” before He said, “Come...”? For example, **the woman of Samaria** ([John 4:16](#)); **the rich young ruler** ([Matthew 19:21](#)); **the ten lepers** ([Luke 17:14](#)); **the nobleman** ([John 4:50](#)). Here is the obedience of faith. The Lord alone can perform the miracle and open blind eyes, but He does it through the channel of faith in Him, and faith is simply taking Him at His word.
3. **What the man did – verse 7 (second part).** Here was complete obedience, for as he “went and washed”, he “came home seeing”. As he obeyed, he saw. What a miracle this was – [verse 32](#)!

### 4. THE OPPOSITION THAT ASSAILED HIM

This is an amazing thing. Here is a poor blind fellow whose eyes have just been opened by a miracle, but everyone seems to be so disturbed and distressed about it that in the end he is excommunicated from the synagogue! But is it not always so? When the Lord Jesus came from Heaven He was crucified; and prophets, apostles and martyrs can all add their testimony concerning the opposition that comes to the man who is determined to stand for God and to go through with Him. No-one ever becomes a Christian without experiencing some opposition. What exactly did this man have to face?

1. **First, he had to face his neighbours**, as [verses 8-12](#) tell us. They saw the change that had been wrought in him, and they were sceptical. What a gem [verse 9](#) is!
2. **Then, the Pharisees openly opposed him**, as [verses 13-18](#) tell us. How pathetic it is to see religious leaders so blind! Frequently when people are converted, the greatest opposition they experience comes from the dead professors of religion.
3. **Finally, his parents were called on to the scene**, as [verses 18-23](#) tell us, but they were too terrified to stand by their son, though inwardly they must have been overjoyed that he had been so wonderfully cured.



Lesson # 31

---

Most of all, however, it was the Pharisees who became infuriated about the miracle which our Lord had performed on the Sabbath Day – and we are told that “they hurled insults at” the one who had been cured ([verse 28](#)), and in spite of his wonderful courage (read [verses 30-33](#) carefully), they excommunicated him ([verse 34](#)). Now read on to [verse 35](#), and compare [Matthew 5:10-12](#).

<sup>10</sup>*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>11</sup>*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*

<sup>12</sup>*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

## 5. THE ASSURANCE THAT GRIPPED HIM

[Verse 25](#) - (*He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*) tells us of the man's testimony concerning his physical healing, but in [verses 35-38](#) we have the record of a far greater blessing that came to him, when the Light of the world shone within him – look up [2 Corinthians 4:6](#) – (*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*) . Notice how he progressed in his knowledge of the Lord. In [verse 11](#)- (*He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*) he speaks of Him as “a man”; in [verse 17](#)- (*They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*) as “a prophet”; in [verse 27](#)- (*He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?)* as one who is worthy of having disciples; in [verse 33](#)- (*If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*) as one upon whom the blessing of God was resting; and in [verse 35](#) – (*Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?)* as “[the Son of Man](#)”. Look up the seven questions asked in this incident, and look at them *in the following order*:

- (1) [verse 10](#); - *Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?*
- (2) [verse 36](#): - *He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*
- (3) [verse 26](#); - *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?*
- (4) [verse 12](#); - *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.*
- (5) [verse 17](#); -*They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*
- (6) [verse 35](#); - *Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*

*and what is your answer to (7) [verse 40](#)- And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?*