

• Streams of Grace Part 1: Connecting With Jesus

INTRODUCTION:

1. It used to be that to talk about a stream meant you were talking about water, generally a creek, but not necessarily so today.
 - A. When you mention a stream today, especially to the younger people, they might as likely think of a video they can watch on their phone or TV.
 - B. No matter whether it is a water or a video stream, to talk about a **stream** is to talk about something that **flows from one place to another**, as water moves from its source through the countryside, or a video moves through the internet from a server to your media device.
2. So, when I speak of the streams of God's grace, I am referring to the means by which **God's grace can flow into our lives**, which is a very important for those seeking salvation by grace!
3. The thing about a stream, however, is that its value is directly related to one's proximity to it.
 - A. That is why those who settled this country sought land where streams of water were readily accessible, where they could easily access it.
 - B. For, if livestock are to benefit from a **stream of water**, they must make contact with it, be able to **drink it**, just as to benefit from a **video** requires one to **view it**.
- 4. What I want to talk about today is how the streams of God's grace begin to flow into our lives when we connect with Jesus.
 - A. To do that I want to consider two men, Bartimaeus and Zaccheus, who shared the need to connect, to intersect, with God's streams of grace that comes through Jesus.
 - B. I want to look at their differences and similarities and what we can learn from them.
5. Hopefully this lesson will motivate one:
 - A. Who is **lost** to seek contact with Jesus that God's stream of grace might begin to flow into their life.
 - B. Who is **saved** to have a greater appreciation for God's grace and a stronger desire to immerse him/herself in His streams of grace as they live out their life in service to Him.

BODY:

I. Two men—Bartimaeus and Zaccheus:

- A. Luke's gospel records what we know of these men's lives and does so consecutively.
 1. Parallel accounts of Bartimaeus can be found in Matthew's and Mark's gospel, with Mark being the only one to give us his name (Mk. 10:46).
 2. Luke, however, is the only gospel that records the event from Zachaeus' life. So, we are going to focus our attention on Luke's gospel.
 3. As we read these accounts I want you to think about why these might be of value to you and me concerning God's streams of grace coming into our lives.
- B. **Bartimaeus (Luke 18:35-43)** – “As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” ³⁸ And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹ And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” ⁴² And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” ⁴³ And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.”).
- C. **Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10)** – “He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. ³ Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” ⁶ And he hurried and came down and

received Him gladly. ⁷ When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”).

D. So, you have what God has told us about these men, and now let’s see what they can tell us about having God’s streams of grace flow into our lives.

• II. Their differences:

• A. Physical differences:

- 1. **Bartimaeus**: was **blind**, unable to see (Lk. 18:35).
 - a. I truly struggle to relate to this handicap, seeing the Lord has blessed me with good eyesight, even without my glasses.
 - b. This man lived in a world of **darkness**, being **unable to see**:
 - i. The sunrise in the morning or the sunset in the evening, unable to enjoy the colors of the seasons or the beauty of God’s creation that we so often take for granted.
 - ii. Jesus in the flesh, or anyone else for that matter, coming down the road toward him, and needed someone else to tell him who it was, that it was Jesus.
- 2. **Zaccheus**: was **small in stature**, and **unable to see** Jesus **because of the crowd** (Lk. 19:3).
 - a. Being only 5’8”, I can relate to Zachaeus’ limitations more than Bartimaeus’.
 - b. Yet, Zachaeus was so short that a crowd of people could completely block his view of Jesus.

• B. Socio-economic differences:

- 1. **Bartimaeus**: forced to be a **beggar** (Lk. 18:35).
 - a. Being blind meant that Bartimaeus was **poor**, he had to **beg**, being dependent on the generosity of others to get by.
 - b. There were no welfare checks, no government or social programs that provided food and housing or trained the blind in certain skills so they could be gainfully employed.
 - c. And, that he **sat by the road begging** likely indicates he was a **constant distraction**, even a source of **irritation** (i.e., we grow weary of begging), for those who passed by.
- 2. **Zaccheus**: a **chief tax collector** and was **rich** (Lk. 19:2). This meant:
 - a. He worked collecting taxes for the **Roman government** from his fellow Jews.
 - b. He was the **chief**, the **boss tax collector**, one who **employed** and **oversaw** others in their work of extracting taxes from his brethren, making him the **ultimate villain**.
 - c. He was likely despised and hated by the Jewish populace, being perceived as:
 - i. Crooked, which in this case appears to be justified.
 - ii. A traitor, seeing he was made wealthy by making Rome wealthy at the expense of his Jewish brethren.

• C. Despite their physical, social, and economic differences, both sought contact with Jesus and were received by Him and experienced God’s stream of mercy and grace!

1. Bartimaeus’ persistent **cry for mercy** resulted in:

- a. This **blind** man gaining an **audience with Jesus** and **receiving his sight** (Lk. 18:38-43).
- b. A beggar, a distraction, a daily irritation, a liability for his Jewish brethren experiencing the fulfillment of God’s great **stream of grace promised by the prophets** (Isa. 35:1-2, 5-6 – “The wilderness and the dry land shall be **glad**; the desert shall **rejoice** and blossom like the crocus; ² it shall blossom abundantly and **rejoice** with **joy** and **singing**. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. **They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God...** ⁵ Then the **eyes of the blind shall be opened**, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For **waters** break forth in the wilderness, and **streams** in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a **pool**, and the thirsty ground

springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.”).

2. Zaccheus’ determination to see Jesus resulted in:
 - a. **Gaining an audience** with Jesus (Lk. 19:5 – “When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, **for today I must stay at your house.**”).
 - i. Do not miss that Jesus said this visit with Zaccheus was **necessary** to fulfill His divine mission (i.e., “today I **must** stay at your house”).
 - ii. And Zaccheus was so bad, or at least perceived to be so bad, that the Jews **grumbled in disbelief** that Jesus was willing to go with such a sinner (Lk. 19:7)!
 - iii. Yet, despite all of this we are assured concerning God’s desire to save sinners. For, the text said Jesus **had to go** to this sinner’s house!
 - b. **Salvation** coming to Zaccheus’ house (Lk. 19:9-10 – “And Jesus said to him, “Today **salvation has come to this house**, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the **Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**”).
3. From these events we learn that despite physical, social, and economic differences, despite the individual challenges one may face, **all can gain an audience** with Jesus resulting in **healing and salvation**!
 - a. Matt. 11:28-30 – “Come to Me, **all who are weary and heavy-laden**, and I will give you **rest.** ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
 - b. 1 Tim. 2:3-6 – “This is **good**, and it is **pleasing in the sight of God** our Savior, ⁴ **who desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ **who gave himself as a ransom for all**, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”).

• III. Their similarities:

- A. Their **limitations** did not keep them from Jesus.
 1. **Bartimaeus**:
 - a. He was **blind** and **sitting by the roadside** amidst a crowd of people, which meant intersecting and interacting with Jesus would have been no easy matter!
 - b. Yet, when he learned it was Jesus he **did what he could do** to connect with Him—“**he cried out**, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Lk. 18:38).
 2. Though **Zaccheus** was **short in stature** and could not see Jesus because of the crowd, he **did what he could do** and **climbed a tree** (Lk. 19:4 – “So he ran on ahead and **climbed up into a sycamore tree** in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.”).
 3. So, we see that their **desire** to see Jesus **trumped all other issues** standing in their way!
 - a. There was no self-pity expressed, nor excuses given for remaining in the dark, for being hindered from seeing Jesus, or for not contacting the mercy they needed from Him.
 - b. When they learned **Jesus was near**, they **did what they had to do** to connect with Him.
 4. When we seek out Jesus with the same desire and determination, we too will see Jesus and experience the flow of God’s healing and saving grace in our lives (Mt. 5:6 – “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”)!
- B. There was **urgency** in their efforts to connect with Jesus.
 1. **Bartimaeus**: Luke 18:39 says that “those who were in front **rebuked him**, telling him to be silent. But **he cried out all the more**, “Son of David, have **mercy** on me!”
 2. **Zaccheus**: Luke 19:4 says that when the crowd had blocked his view of Jesus, “he **ran** on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for He was about to pass through that way” and 19:6 says that when Jesus called for Zaccheus “he **hurried** and came down and received Him gladly.”
 3. There were no second thoughts, no looking back at what they might be leaving behind.

4. If we want God's grace through Jesus to flow into our lives, we need to seek Jesus with the **same urgency!**
 - a. When we are **convicted of sin** by the gospel, there should be true **urgency** in our response. We see this in...
 - i. The Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38, 41 – “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus **whom you crucified.**”³⁷ Now when they **heard this** they were **cut to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “**Brothers, what shall we do?**”³⁸ And Peter said to them, “**Repent and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...⁴¹ So those who received his word **were baptized**, and there were **added that day** about three thousand souls.”).
 - ii. Ananias' words to Saul (Acts 22:16 – “And now **why do you wait?** Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”).
 - b. We need this same **urgency** in our response to God's call to holiness (Rom. 13:11-14 – “Do this, knowing the time, that it is **already the hour for you to awaken from sleep**; for **now** salvation is **nearer to us than when we believed.**”¹² The **night is almost gone**, and **the day is near**. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”)!
 5. God's flow of grace through Jesus is offered now, today, with no promise of its flow into your life tomorrow. So, it is **urgent** that you respond to it today!
- C. They showed true humility in seeking Jesus.
 1. **Bartimaeus** showed humility in seeking Jesus' **mercy** (Lk. 18:38-41).
 - a. He approached Jesus with no pretense of his own worth or deserving nature, but only that Jesus would show mercy, or pity, compassion, gracious favor to Him.
 - b. For though he sought only his **sight**, something which most everyone had but he had been denied, he knew such a **gift was not deserved** and could only be received by **mercy**.
 2. **Zaccheus** showed humility in his **penitence** (Lk. 19:8 – “Zaccheus **stopped** and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions **I will give to the poor**, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, **I will give back four times as much.**’”).
 - a. Note how **stopped** on the way to his house to tell Jesus of his desire for restitution.
 - b. This restitution **went far beyond the demands of the law** (Lev. 5:4; Num. 5:7).
 - c. Zaccheus' response was not about “checking off the boxes” but came from the humble realization of his own sinfulness thrust upon him by the presence of Jesus the Christ!
 3. If we will approach Jesus with the same humility, the same lack of pretense, the same realization of our sinfulness and unworthiness that was seen in these two men, God's stream of grace will flow into our lives as well.
 - D. As a result of their desire, urgency, and humility, they experienced the flow of God's grace!
 1. **Bartimaeus** (Luke 18:42-43 – “Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”⁴³ Immediately **he regained his sight** and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.”).
 - a. This blind man received grace and his eyes were opened—he **saw Jesus!**
 - b. He responded righteously to that grace. He did not run off, but immediately began to **follow Jesus and glorify God!**
 - c. That should be our response as well to God's grace in our life!
 2. **Zaccheus** (Lk. 19:9-10 – “Jesus said to him, “Today **salvation has come to this house**, because he, too, is a **son of Abraham.**”¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”).
 - a. Zaccheus is a man who has lived as an despised and hated outsider in Israel!

- b. Yet, his state as a traitor, sinner, and reject among God's people had now been removed. He now stood as a son of Abraham, a man of faith, a saved child of God!
3. The same grace that transformed Bartimaeus' and Zaccheus' life can transform yours and mine as well (Eph. 2:1-7 – "And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly **walked according to the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all **formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh**, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in **mercy**, because of His **great love** with which He **loved us**, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**, ⁶ and **raised us up with Him**, and **seated us with Him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.")!

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope, whether you have sin that needs to be addressed by coming to Jesus and being cleansed by His blood or are a Christian and see your need for more grace, that you have been encouraged and prodded to seek out Jesus that you might experience God's streams of grace in your life.
2. So, as I often ask, what will you do with Jesus today? How will you answer, and your response if your answer, Jesus' call to grace and salvation today?
3. Will you come to Jesus today, right now, in F-R-C-Bp?