

# Humbly and on His Terms – The Only Way to Receive Christ!

Lk 18:31-43 (text)

28 July 2019, Reformed Church of Wainuiomata 10:30 am

(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

## Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

You will remember the name Augustine – Augustine of Hippo – that great pastor, theologian and church father who lived around the year 400 AD!<sup>1</sup>

Well, you may also remember that Augustine had not always been that godly man! Indeed, for about thirty years, his mother, Monica, was constantly praying for her son to receive Christ! You see, young Augustine was following the example of his pagan father – living the life of a hedonist (a pleasure-seeker) who indulged in eating, drinking and immorality! If that was not already shocking, he then also started clinging to pagan religions!<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully, and in the Lord's doing, when Augustine was thirty-two years old<sup>3</sup> and disgusted with his life and the pagan religions, he read Rm 13:13-14 which totally shook his soul.

This is what that Romans passage says: *“Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.”*<sup>4</sup>

Well, God used these words to change Augustine's life forever!

Cut to the heart, Augustine received Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord!

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo (/ɔːˈɡʌstɪn/; 13 November 354 – 28 August 430 AD) was a Roman African, early Christian theologian and philosopher from Numidia whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa and is viewed as one of the most important Church Fathers in Western Christianity for his writings in the Patristic Period. Among his most important works are The City of God, De doctrina Christiana, and Confessions. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine\\_of\\_Hippo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo)).

<sup>2</sup> Mainly Manichaeism. “Manichaeism (/ˌmæniˈkiːzəm/; ...founded by the Iranian prophet Mani (... c. AD 216–274) in the Sasanian Empire.

Manichaeism taught an elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness. Through an ongoing process that takes place in human history, light is gradually removed from the world of matter and returned to the world of light, whence it came. Its beliefs were based on local Mesopotamian religious movements and Gnosticism.

Manichaeism was quickly successful and spread far through the Aramaic-speaking regions. It thrived between the third and seventh centuries, and at its height was one of the most widespread religions in the world. Manichaean churches and scriptures existed as far east as China and as far west as the Roman Empire. It was briefly the main rival to Christianity before the spread of Islam in the competition to replace classical paganism. Manichaeism survived longer in the east than in the west, and it appears to have finally faded away after the 14th century in south China, contemporary to the decline of the Church of the East in Ming China. While most of Manichaeism's original writings have been lost, numerous translations and fragmentary texts have survived” ( <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manichaeism> ).

<sup>3</sup> In 386 AD

<sup>4</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Ro 13:13–14). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

And such was the peace that descended upon Augustine's soul, that, later on, in one of his prayers, he wrote, "*You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*"<sup>5</sup>

Do you see that? "...our hearts are restless until they rest in You!"

Peace! Absolute and ultimate peace! Peace that passes understanding! Peace that uplifts/upholds even in the midst of life's hardships & trials! Peace, because, in your heart & life, you have received the Prince of Peace – Jesus Christ!

Well, here's a question: With what heart attitude does one receive Jesus?

Here's the answer (and it's also the main message of our text): Humbly and on His Terms – *That's the Only Way to Receive Christ!*

Our text allows for us the following two points...

- Blinded
- Unblinded

### **Blinded (Blinded to God's Terms)**

My brother & sister, we are now in Luke chapter 18.

Well, since the events described in Luke 13,<sup>6</sup> Jesus and the twelve have been on their way from Galilee to Jerusalem where He will very soon suffer & be killed.

Yes, look, they're now getting near the end of their journey, for Jericho (the last stop before Jerusalem) is in their sight!

So, v.31 tells us that Jesus now takes the twelve aside and, at least for the third time,<sup>7</sup> He tells them in detail that the Jews will hand Him over to the Gentiles (Romans) who will mock Him, shame Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him!

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<sup>5</sup> From Augustine's work entitled, "Confessions" (Latin: "Confessiones"). "This work is an outpouring of thanksgiving and penitence. Although it is written as an account of his life, the *Confessions* also talks about the nature of time, causality, free will, and other important philosophical topics. The following is taken from that work:

Late have I loved Thee, O Lord; and behold,  
Thou wast within and I without, and there I sought Thee.  
Thou wast with me when I was not with Thee.  
Thou didst call, and cry, and burst my deafness.  
Thou didst gleam, and glow, and dispel my blindness.  
Thou didst touch me, and I burned for Thy peace.  
For Thyself Thou hast made us,  
And restless our hearts until in Thee they find their ease.  
Late have I loved Thee, Thou Beauty ever old and ever new"

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine\\_of\\_Hippo#Christian\\_conversion\\_and\\_priesthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo#Christian_conversion_and_priesthood) ).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lk 13:22 ***He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem*** (Emphasis mine).

Also cf. Lk 13:31-33 ***At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."*** <sup>32</sup> ***And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem'"*** (Emphasis mine).

<sup>7</sup> "Now comes the sixth prediction of Jesus' death in Luke, three more than Mark notes (Lk 9:22, 44; 12:50; 13:32-33; 17:25; the Markan parallels are in Lk 9 and here)" (Bock, D. L. (1994). *Luke* (Lk 18:18-43). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).

Also: "Luke 18:31-34 presents the sixth direct allusion to Jesus' death in this Gospel (5:35; 9:22, 44-45; 12:49-50; 13:32-33; 17:25). It is also the fourth passage to mention the Son of Man dying (9:22, 44; 17:25)" (Bock, D. L. (1996). *Luke* (pp. 472-478). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House).

Compare this with: "We generally speak of three main predictions of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection: (a) Luke 9:21-27; cf. Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1; (b) Luke 9:43b-45; cf. Matt. 17:22, 23; Mark

So, Messiah is about to suffer and die!

The twelve didn't understand/grasp this. "Messiah shouldn't suffer – shouldn't die!" "This is not supposed to happen!"

Well, if that's your thinking, then that's receiving Messiah on *man's* terms! Yes, then you have not studied the Scriptures well! For look: On God's terms, it has always been that Messiah would suffer! And that's why Jesus now tells the Twelve (in v.31) ***everything written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.***

You ask: "Which prophets said anything about Messiah's *suffering*?"

Well, apart from many verses in the Psalms,<sup>8</sup> here are a few heart-gripping words from Is 53 ...

*Surely, he took up our infirmities  
and carried our sorrows... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was  
crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon  
him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the  
iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his  
mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her  
shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth...  
...for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave  
with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no  
violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and  
cause him to suffer...<sup>9</sup>*

Indeed, our Lord Jesus tells His disciples the bad news!

But He also tells them the good news, which you would hope would overshadow for them the bad news: i.e. that on the third day after His death, He will rise from the dead!

Still, the disciples didn't like this – didn't know what to do with what Jesus said.

Why?

Because it was hidden from their eyes (v.34)!

Perhaps you ask, "But if this bad news was hidden from their eyes – and Jesus knew that *that* would be the case – why did He then tell them?"

Well, He told them for their own benefit later on, so that, after His resurrection, they would see that even the bad that happened to their Messiah-Saviour was planned by God, and that Christ, being close to the Father, knew all things up-front before they happened – and so that *that* knowledge would then strengthen their faith.<sup>10</sup>

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9:30-32; and (c) Luke 18:31-34; cf. Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34. Of these three, this is the third and last. If one wishes to include in the count every veiled or figurative reference to the approaching passion, etc., the number of predictions would be substantially increased. In Luke, for example, see also 5:35; 12:50; 13:32, 33; 17:25" (Hendriksen, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Book House. p.839).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. e.g. Ps 16:10 "...***because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.***"

Also cf. all of Ps 2 and all of Ps 22; also Ps 118 (especially vv.22-26)

<sup>9</sup> Excerpts from Is 53:4-10

<sup>10</sup> For a similar scenario, cf. Jn 16:4 in which Jesus explains why He has just told the disciples of their future suffering in His Name: "***I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.***"

But, at the moment of our text, the twelve were unable to receive Christ and His words on His terms!

In fact, we see that their ignorance or dullness is mentioned three times in one verse!!

The disciples had a spiritual blind spot – yes, they were blinded to receiving Christ on *His* terms, for, according to their calculations, if you have Messiah, there should be no suffering – not for Him, neither for you!

My brother & sister, are you & I not exactly the same? We don't want rocky roads!

Well, here's a story which I heard from an old friend of mine – a pastor from Zambia – a pastor called Friday Fumbilwa...

He says that in his village, every Saturday morning, there was a market. Then all the farmers from the surrounding area would come to sell their produce. Well, there were two potato farmers. The one was a bit wealthier, and he could afford buying a ute (utility wagon) on which he then loaded his potatoes. And he could sleep-in on a Saturday morning – at least till about 7 a.m. – then he could drive quickly to the market with the potatoes on the back of his ute already loaded the night before.

However, outside that same village there was also a poorer potato farmer. He didn't have a ute. Instead, he had a cart pulled by a donkey. And so, it took him much longer to reach the village. For that reason, he had to be up already by 4 a.m. on a Saturday morning, for his ride was much slower and *way bumpier* than that of the rich farmer with the ute.

Well, every Saturday morning, these two potato farmers arrived about simultaneously at that market!

But strangely enough, people would come and buy the poorer man's potatoes rather than the rich man's!

And so, after the second Saturday of things going that way, the man with the ute asked the man with the donkey cart, "How come your potatoes sell faster than mine?"

"Well," says the poor man, "because I bring my potatoes by donkey cart – and, over the 10km that I ride, my cart is slow and the dirt road is rocky." "Thus, the potatoes on my cart get shaken more heavily and for a longer time than they do on the back of your ute." "What's more, that shaking sorts out the potatoes in groups – the bigger ones altogether separated from the smaller ones." "And the buyers like that!" "They come and look for potatoes of similar size!"

My brother & sister, what an illustration also of our lives & attitudes.

You see, by nature, you & I cling tenaciously to the "good bits" in life. Like the disciples and the rich potato farmer, we prefer victory to agony! And just like the disciples, you & I often have that blind spot by which we can't see that, in the Christian life, *glory follows suffering!*

God's roads are not always most comfortable. But they lead to great blessings – even on the way and amidst hardship!

Well so far re point 1: "Blinded!" You see, the disciples had good eyesight, but their *hearts* were blinded from receiving Christ on God's terms and for His glory – which brings us to the last point...

### **Unblinded (Unblinded to God's Terms)**

Jesus now arrives at Jericho!

And if we put all information from Matthew, Mark and Luke together, then we see that, at the entrance to Jericho,<sup>11</sup> two blind men were sitting, begging! One's name was Bartimaeus.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew & Mark tell us that this incident happened as Jesus was leaving (not approaching) Jericho. It seems the obvious explanation for this "problem," would be to accept that Jesus was leaving Old-Testament Jericho and approaching New-Testament Jericho (which was somewhat south of Old-Testament Jericho). Of this, cf.

It's on him that Luke now focuses attention!

Children, imagine you were blind! Yes, imagine you were Bartimaeus! Total darkness when you wake up in the morning! And what about noon, when the sun shines at its brightest? Well, you still have total darkness!! How terribly sad!

You know what?

It's said that blind people's other senses compensate for their lack of sight! So, e.g. is it not abnormal for a blind person's *hearing* to be so much better than that of someone who can see. The same with a blind person's sense of *taste*, and of *smell* and of *touch*.

You see, some thirty years ago, while I was a Hebrew lecturer in South Africa, I had a blind student by the name of Abel (Abel Steyn). Abel was blind from birth. But, boy, did he have good senses and inter-personal skills!

Well, to be able to learn & read the Hebrew letters, Abel had a machine called an *Optacon*! This machine had a camera on the one end and, on the other end, it had a unit with many tiny upstanding metal rods that looked almost like pins (Thankfully not as sharp a pins)! So, as Abel with his right hand moved that little camera over the Hebrew text of the Bible, his left index finger would be on these pins all the time. And these pins would, of course, pop up under his finger in the exact shape of the Hebrew letters under the camera! So, Abel was able to feel the exact shape of every Hebrew letter!

And do you think that I was able to feel with my finger the shape of the Hebrew letters!? Not at all! Under my finger, those pins felt like just one big pin. But Abel could feel every jot and tittle of the Hebrew text!

And you know what? Out of about fifty students, Abel scored the highest grades in Hebrew in those years!

My brother & sister, having had the privilege of seeing Abel study, I'm convinced that a blind person's other senses can be sharper than those of people with eyesight! I would even go so far to say that their interpersonal skills – e.g. gauging different personalities, and working with different personalities, can also be better than those of people with eyesight! They're simply better tuned-in to “read between the lines!”

Well, blind Bartimaeus hears a commotion! He asks what's going on! And the people tell him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by!”

How did Bartimaeus know who Jesus was?

Well, I think it's safe to say that Bartimaeus would by now have been told! I mean, it's been three years already that Jesus of Nazareth has been healing the crippled, the lepers, the lame; healing the blind and raising the dead! The news would have spread!

Bartimaeus had probably been sitting & begging & thinking & wishing for a long time: “I so wish for the day that Jesus would pass by!”

Well, today is the day! People tell him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by!”

My brother & sister (Children), you know what? Today, as you & I hear this word preached, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by! Yes, not in His body, but in His Spirit, Jesus is here, right in this hour!

Question: Will He ever pass by this way again? Will you/I have Him come to us again at another time?

Put yourself in Bartimaeus' sandals!

Would Jesus ever pass by Bartimaeus again?

Very unlikely! Bartimaeus knew that!

So, Bartimaeus shouts!

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Hendriksen (ibid:842) and Sproul, RC. for his audio sermon on Lk 18:31-43, at <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/sermons/blind-man/>

And look! What he shouts is not what you'd expect him to shout! He doesn't at first say, "Please open my eyes!" No, he shouts (in v.38), "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**" My brother & sister, Bartimaeus' real need was different to his felt need!

You see, his felt need was that he would receive eyesight!

But what was his real need?

Well, was it not to find *total* healing from Jesus – yes, to also have his *sins forgiven* and be *spiritually* healed, and get that peace which Augustine talked about!

And look, are Bartimaeus' words not the exact same as those of David when he prayed in Ps 51:1, "**Have mercy on me, O God, ... according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions**"?<sup>12</sup>

How can we be so sure – yes, how can we be so sure that when Bartimaeus cried out, "...have mercy on me," that he was praying for more than eyesight?

Well, because of the way he addresses Jesus!

You see, Bartimaeus did not just say, "...have mercy on me!" No, he said, "**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**"<sup>13</sup>

What's so significant about that?

Well, that Bartimaeus knew and believed that Jesus was that long-promised Son of David, i.e. the Messiah/Christ!

In other words, although he was blind, yet by God's gracious doing, Bartimaeus' ears must have heard clearly all the news he had received about Jesus! Yes, although Bartimaeus' eyes were unable to see, his *heart* could!!

And so, Bartimaeus humbly trusted Jesus on God's terms!!

Those who could see – the twelve – struggled to receive Christ on His terms!

But he who is blind was able to! Was it because of his felt need? Was it because of his desperation? Was it because of his blindness that his spirit was more ready to reach out for full salvation in Jesus?

Well, Jesus came near. And what does Jesus do?

Well, He asks Bartimaeus the obvious question: "What do you want me to do for you?"

Why did Jesus do that? Was it not obvious that Bartimaeus wanted to see?

Well, this one thing we can say: Jesus' obvious question gave Bartimaeus the chance to publicly put his need in words and so to give proof of his humble faith!

So, Jesus says, "**Recover your sight!**"

Instantly, Bartimaeus received sight!

What else does Jesus say to him? "**Your faith has made you well!**"<sup>14</sup> But, in saying this, Jesus is deliberately using a pun,<sup>15</sup> for, you see, the Greek word here can also mean, "Your faith has *saved* you!"

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<sup>12</sup> NIV1984 (Emphasis mine)

<sup>13</sup> Verse 38 and very similar in v.39

<sup>14</sup> ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε

<sup>15</sup> I agree with Bock (1994:ibid) that Jesus gives him what he asks for and explains the secret of the man's success: "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." The Greek uses the verb "to save" (*sōzō*) to refer to the healing. The double entendre is intended. Faith is key, as in other texts (7:50; 8:48; 17:19). By commending the man's faith, which had demonstrated itself in his persistence, Jesus points to a lesson for all in the man's attitude. In addition, the healing shows the appropriateness of the title the blind man used to get Jesus' attention. It is the Son of David who heals. Messiah draws near to Jerusalem, and his authority is at work.

Meaning? Well, in calling Jesus “*Son of David*,” Bartimaeus revealed that He had received Jesus for who He is – the Son of God (Messiah/Christ). Yes, Blind Bartimaeus received Christ on God’s terms!

So, Bartimaeus received more than recovering of eyesight – indeed, he was *totally* unblinded – physically and spiritually!

Well, According to Mark,<sup>16</sup> Jesus now says to Bartimaeus, “*Go your way!*”

Now, imagine a friend, who overheard that, tells Bartimaeus, “Come, Bartimaeus, I have always wanted to show you the River Jordan here at Jericho – and that place where Joshua led our ancestors through the Jordan!” “Come, I’ll show you!”

Well, that’s not what Bartimaeus does! He does not go his own way! No, what better thing to do than to now follow his Saviour!!

Amazing that, although he was blind, Bartimaeus’s heart was able to see clearly!

Amazing that the disciples *who had eyesight* – their hearts could not see so well! Were there hearts distracted by sight?

And how beautiful: Bartimaeus, as he follows Christ, now glorifies God!!

And the people – yes, the disciples whose hearts were blinded to God’s terms with Messiah? Well, Bartimaeus’ joy is contagious! So, they all now start praising God!

Dear Wainui church family, what’s the message of this Bible passage for you & me?

Is it not that, at this very moment, Jesus is passing by –yes, He is in our midst?

Do you want healing for your soul? Do you want that healing (and the peace that it brings) to spread to your whole life – in you all you are & do? Children, do you want healing in your relationship between you and your parents – also between you & your brother/sister? Husbands/Wives, do you want healing in Christ that will spill over into your marriage with enormous peace?

Well, why not receive Jesus the way Bartimaeus did – in humble trust and on God’s terms!?

Look, is that not also how Augustine received Him?

And is that not how every true Christian through all the ages has received Him!?

My brother & sister, I pray that you & I – even if our road is rocky – will continue to receive Jesus Christ on His terms and for His glory!

AMEN (2,841 words excluding footnotes)

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<sup>16</sup> Mk 10:52, *And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way* (Emphasis mine).