

Subject: *Bearing His Cross*

Scripture: *Luke 23:26-33*

The gospels according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross to Calvary. This incident is important for three reasons:

1. AN EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD'S TIMING

God brought Simon to the right place at the right time for the purpose of carrying the cross. This was no accident or thing of chance. It was the grace of God that brought him there. Verse 26 says that Simon was coming out of the country. Mark 15:21 says "he was coming out of the country and passing by." Matthew 27:32 adds another detail: "They compelled Simon to bear Jesus' cross."

All of this indicates that His man was just going about his day, minding his own business, when the Lord had something special planned for him. These Roman soldiers rearranged his schedule, but what a blessed interruption!

This man was Cyrene, a city in North Africa. He had traveled several hundred miles to Jerusalem. He may have been a Jew or a Jewish proselyte who traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. We read in Acts 2:10 of people who were in Jerusalem from Cyrene on the day of Pentecost. This much is sure. God brought him there at that place at that time.

As you read the Bible it's a blessing to see God's perfect timing in people's lives and the stories that unfold. It's an even greater blessing to see timing in your own life. God brought you here today for a reason.

2. A REMINDER OF OUR LORD'S SUFFERING

Simon carried the cross because Jesus was too weak to carry it any further. A condemned prisoner was humiliated as they forced him to carry his own cross through the city to the place where he was executed. Since His arrest the night before, Jesus had suffered so much even before His crucifixion: the trial, the beating, the scourging, and the thorns pressed down on his head. All of this took its toll and He was exhausted.

3. A PICTURE OF OUR LORD'S CALLING

Jesus taught that anyone who wants to be His disciple must do three things:

- A disciple must confess Jesus as Lord (Master)
- A disciple must give Jesus first place in his life (forsake family, etc.)
- A disciple must take up his cross daily (die to self)

- ***Luke 9:23** And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Jesus stated it positively.)*

- ***Luke 14:27** And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (Jesus stated it negatively.)*

Let's remember some things about this picture of Simon as he carried Jesus' cross because it should be a picture of you and me.

- We bear the cross for His sake – It is His cross. We are identified with Him and we share His suffering. ***Galatians 2:20** I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* As a Christian we are crucified with Christ and we are raised with Christ.

- We bear the cross as we follow Him – A disciple is a follower. Our path is marked out by Him. **Hebrews 13:13** *Let us go forth therefore unto him without (outside) the camp, bearing his reproach (shame).* I remember a memorial service for a Bristol firefighter. Several people gave testimonies. One man had served with him and they answered many fire calls. He said that his partner was always behind him on the fire hose. He never had a doubt. He would always be there backing him up.
- We bear the cross only a little while – Simon carried the cross for a while and then laid it down. We suffer with Christ now, but suffering will eventually be over. **Romans 8:18** *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*
- We have the privilege of bearing His cross – Can you imagine the jeering and taunting of the crowd as Simon carried the cross behind Jesus all the way to Calvary? He may have wondered, “How did I ever get involved with this?” But then later on he realized what an honor he had to carry the cross for Jesus. Taking up the cross and following Jesus is the hardest job you’ll ever love.

As I read this story about Simon from Cyrene, I thought about another Simon. Where was Simon Peter? Just think, Simon Peter could have been the one to carry Jesus’ cross, but he missed the opportunity.

Just like Simon, the Lord gives us the privilege to carry the cross and follow Him. There is nothing any harder, but there’s nothing any better. There is no higher honor. Take up the cross now. It will be worth every step of the way. Think about these words to B. B. McKinney’s old song, “Wherever He Leads I’ll Go.”

Wherever He Leads I’ll Go

“Take up thy cross and follow Me,” I heard my Master say:
“I gave My life to ransom thee, surrender your all today.”

My heart, my life, my all I bring, to Christ who loves me so;
He is my Master, Lord, and King, wherever He leads I’ll go.

Wherever He leads I’ll go, wherever He leads I’ll go;
I’ll follow my Christ who loves me so, wherever He leads I’ll go.