

Beneath the Cross

Good Friday Service

By Dr. Jerry Bilkes

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Bible Text: Mark 15:21

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Free Reformed Church of Pompton Plains

160 West Parkway

Pompton Plains, NJ 07444

Website: <http://www.frcpp.org/>

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/frcpomptonplains>

God's word this evening comes to us from the Gospel according to Mark, the 15th chapter. We will begin reading at verse 15. Mark 15:15, reading until verse 25.

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. 16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. 21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. 22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. 23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. 24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Thus far God's word.

Dear congregation, David tells us in Psalm 60, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." A banner, children, is something that proclaims to a people, to an institution, to soldiers, their identity, their hopes, their victory and for God's people such a banner is the cross of Jesus Christ. No, not the physical symbol as so many in our day are holding up or wearing, but instead it's the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, of the cross of Christ of which Paul said that he would boast in nothing save the cross. Elsewhere he says even he would know nothing save the cross of Christ. So it is the cross, the preaching of the cross, the Gospel of the cross that is the church's banner and this must be lifted up high in order that we might see it and see it from God's word.

We hope to see it tonight from our text which we have in Mark 15:21, these words, "And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross." Our theme for this evening is "Beneath the Cross." Our first point is: resisted by Simon. Secondly, instructive for Simon. Thirdly, blessed to Simon. So beneath the cross: resisted by Simon; instructive for Simon; and blessed to Simon.

First of all: resisted by Simon. Our text this evening, dear congregation, brings us to a scene from which we would be inclined to turn away. There is a band of Romans soldiers who have been charged with the most gruesome task, executing 3 convicted criminals: 2 thieves, 2 malefactors and Jesus. It's just about 8 o'clock in the morning on the day when the Passover celebration would have begun officially and in earnest in Jerusalem. The trial before Pontius Pilate had come to an abrupt end. You know the story. Pilate felt that he had done his best and yet finally he gave Jesus up to be crucified, releasing Barabbas, scourging Jesus and giving him over to the death of the cross. So after the soldiers had mocked him with a crown of thorns and smiting him and pretending to worship him, they led him away. You can read of it in the Gospel according to John. There we read, "And he bearing his cross went forth."

So first of all, Jesus was bearing his own cross. They had forced this heavy wooden cross on the back of Jesus, Jesus who had already become weak from the loss of blood and all the suffering he had endured. There moves this company of 2 malefactors and Jesus together with these soldiers. What a scene this must have been. Dirt. Dust. Blood. Swords and spears and helmets glittering in the sun while this band of soldiers was taking these condemned criminals and Jesus through the streets. Crosses were the preferred punishment by the Romans. A tree would be cut and 2 beams would be taken and attached to each other, a vertical one and a horizontal one, and usually the condemned criminal would take his own cross through the city. It was far below anyone else to do that and so here, too, Jesus and the malefactors were carrying their cross. The Romans would use crosses for the punishment of slaves who had rebelled against their masters or those who had revolted and rebelled against the government. It was a shameful death. It was a painful death. We read about this death already in the Old Testament where God prophesied in his word in Deuteronomy 21:22, "He that is hanged from a tree is accursed of God."

So this Passover morning as the sun is still relatively low on the horizon, the air is still semi-cool, about 8, 8:15 in the morning, everyone in this small company is going to meet death. Three of them will die. Actually, 2 of them will die and one of them will lay down his life and the rest, they'll ensure that they die. What a scene of sin, of violence and of death. "Adam, do you see what your sin has done?"

All of a sudden, the company stops. We're not told why but the soldiers decide that someone else has to carry Jesus' cross. Some have thought that Jesus was too weak, perhaps even stumbled; we don't read of it. Perhaps the soldiers thought it was taking too long but at any rate, someone else must bear this cross. And who is going to do it? Would one of the soldiers take this cross of Jesus and carry it the rest of the way? No, to bear a

criminal's cross, as I said, would have been a great shame and contempt. How about one of the Jewish leaders? Do you think they would bear this cross? They who wanted Jesus crucified? No, never. Was there no kind-hearted bystander? No kind of good Samaritan of whom Jesus had spoken in his parables? Someone who would help Jesus now in Jesus' need? No, there was no such one. After all, it's the Passover today and to take a criminal's cross, probably spattered with blood, and to carry it? You would be defiled and barred from the Passover, excluded from all the festivities. Well, how about one of the disciples? Didn't Peter say, "Lord, I am ready to die with thee"? Where is Peter now? Or how about Thomas who said in John 11, "Let us also go that we may die with him"? No, Peter and Thomas and none of the disciples are there to carry Jesus' cross. As the prophecy had said, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered."

Jesus is all alone with respect to his cross. He could have sung the words of Psalm 142:4 in this experience, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." But at this very moment, a man passes by. That's what we read in our passage. He passes by just like we pass by so many things every day. We see them out of the corner of our eyes: people, situations, we passed them by. So too this one. He was traveling from the opposite direction of the company who were leaving the city and he was coming into the city. He had been out in the country and he was coming into the city of Jerusalem. As he came closer, he must have seen this band of soldiers first far off in the distance, perhaps the glittering in the sun and then as he came closer, something said, "Ah-ha. That is a Roman band taking men to be executed."

This must have been seen from time-to-time and so for this passerby, it wouldn't have not been the first time, likely, that he had seen this. After all, Rome ruled Palestine, Israel, with a heavy fist, with an iron fist. Crosses. Three crosses moving diagonally out of that city. What wretched, what cruel instruments of death. Would you not have shimmered and kept your distance from such a solemn procession?

Well, who is this passerby? We don't know a lot but we're told 3 things. First of all, we know his name is Simon or Simeon which is the same name, a Jewish name. It means "God hears." Somehow someone has kept a record of this man's name. He's not like so many in the Scriptures of whom we never hear their name. They come on the scene and they leave the scene and no one ever knows their name. Yes, he may have come on the scene as a passerby but somehow his name has been written down as Simon or Simeon. In fact, we know more than just his name, we know the names of his sons. Did you notice that as we read? It says, "Simon, the father of Rufus and Alexander." Imagine that? His son's names are recorded. "Simon, the father of Rufus and Alexander." We'll soon learn why his son's names were recorded.

So that's the first thing: we know his name; we know the name of his sons. But secondly, we know that he was a foreigner, a Gentile. He was from Cyrene, a place in north Africa. It's where Libya is today, west of Egypt. From his name, Simon or Simeon, we most likely gather that he was a proselyte. That means he was a Gentile but he had somehow heard of the God of Israel and he had received this name Simon or Simeon and here he is

nearby Jerusalem on his way to Jerusalem. We know that there were quite a few from Cyrene who had come to Jerusalem. In fact, in Acts 6:9 we read of a synagogue just for Cyrenians, the synagogue of the Cyrenian's. So that must have been a synagogue where people who were from Cyrene worshiped God, the synagogue of the Cyrenian's. So there were more from Cyrene than just this Simon. He was a Gentile. It's emphasized here in the text, "one Simon a Cyrenian." Very likely, he was from the descendents of Ham and he would've had very likely dark skin as we shall later find out.

So that's the second thing we know about this Simon. First of all, we know his name, the name of his children; we know that he was a foreigner and the third thing we're told about this man is that he was coming up from the country. Actually, literally it says that he was coming out of the fields and the words that are used there mean very likely that this man was in the fields working. In the fields. Maybe he had moved to Jerusalem to be close to the temple and the ordinances, to be part of this synagogue of Cyrene, and yet, in order to maintain his household, maybe he was a laborer and today, too, he was working the fields perhaps in the sweat of his brow. Even though it was Passover, it would have been customary to get a few hours of work in before coming to the city and getting all the preparations in order before the Passover actually started at dusk.

So that's what we know about this Simon of Cyrene. We know little. We don't know exactly his purpose for being at this place at this time but we do know God's purpose for him being at this place at this time. God, after all, ordains everyone's steps. Also yours. Also mine. And he knows where to bring us. "You there, carry this cross." One of these Roman soldiers must have pointed at Simon and singled him out and made clear to him that he was now to carry this cross. But Simon doesn't want to. We read, "they compel him." They forced him against his will. You can understand that, don't you? We don't like being forced against our will. We don't like being compelled. "Why do I have to do that? Why me?" What these soldiers are really doing is they are drafting Simon. We understand the draft, don't we? We haven't had it in our country recently but in the past we've had it and when the government drafts you to go into the Army or whatever it is, you cannot resist without punishment. It's called the right of requisition. And so Rome was drafting this Gentile, this Cyrenian, to carry Jesus' cross.

But every fiber in Simon's being resisted. We can read in Luke that they actually had to arrest him. They needed to take hold of him physically and bring him down and put him under that cross so that finally that cross would come upon his shoulders. He resisted it to the very end. He must have seen Jesus, this one who had been carrying the cross, this weak man. And you know, we can know this about Simon, he would have despised Jesus just like you and I would have despised Jesus. As the prophet said, "He was despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and we hid, as it were, our faces from him." There was no beauty in this Jesus that Simon by nature would have desired him. So often you hear especially in the Roman Catholic tradition that they make this Simon of Cyrene to be this goodhearted man who somehow saw Jesus, had compassion on him and started as a good work to bear this cross. The exact opposite is the case. They had to compel Simon. Simon resisted it. He didn't want to have anything to do with it.

But the Romans will not take no for an answer. Do you see how Simon is really adding to Christ's suffering? It wasn't that long ago when the people spread out their coats and their cloaks for Jesus as he was riding upon the colt of an ass there down the road into Jerusalem. They had cried, "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" They were willing to give up their coats, their garments for Jesus. Even that man who had had that colt, "The Master hath need of him," and it was given to Jesus. But think of the upper room. Jesus needed this upper room and it was freely given to him. But now on the way to the cross, Jesus has nothing given to him. Nothing freely given to him. And that while Jesus, what had Jesus done all the days of his life? When people came to him with their burdens, with their misery, with their weakness and their infirmities? Did not Jesus take everyone who came to him? He touched the leper becoming unclean himself. "He himself bore our griefs and carried our sorrows," the prophet said. And how did Jesus say it that one day in his ministry? He said, "Come unto me all ye that are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

But now that Jesus is burdened with this cross upon his shoulder, there is not a single person who will relieve Jesus' burden willingly. Dear congregation, you and I would have done nothing different, I'm afraid that day outside the gates of Jerusalem. How do I know? Well, how is it when God brings a little cross in your life? Something you didn't expect? You were going through your day doing your work out there in the fields, so to speak, like Simon and all of a sudden something crosses you that you didn't choose and it involves shame and it involves heaviness and it involves uncleanness and yet the Lord brings you to bear some or other cross. Do you freely submit to it? With joy in your heart right away? No, by nature we reject all these things and even after grace, how many times has the Lord not come and said to us, "Take up your cross and follow me"? But like Simon, we resist it, don't we? At least by nature. And especially this cross. I mean, these crosses that God gives us and gives his people in this life, these afflictions that's one thing, but this cross, this curse, this shame. Oh, every one of us cringes and we all by nature want to have that cross far from us. Contact with the cross, we resist it, don't we? We reject it just like Simon did.

That was our first point: Simon resisting this cross. But secondly, we want to see how beneath this cross is instructive for Simon. Instructive for Simon. The procession starts up again. Now Simon is carrying the cross. He was put there underneath that cross and we don't know how long this took. From the geography and the chronology we can figure out, it was probably, 15, 20 minutes. No more likely than 30 minutes at most. But there he is, under that heavy beam, walking there with that company of criminals and of soldiers and Jesus going ahead. It says in the Gospel according to Luke that he carried his cross after Jesus. Those 20 minutes, those 30 minutes, would have been memorable for Simon all his days. And really, when you start to think about what that was like to carry that cross even for 20, 30 minutes after Jesus, let me put it like this: it was like a sermon, like a good Friday sermon for Simon.

We don't know if he heard it but let's look at what this experience is telling us in the light of the Scriptures. There are really 3 points to this sermon that Simon is being given here

under the cross, beneath the cross. The first point of the sermon is: "Simon, here is the curse. Simon, here is the curse." You know, if he had been working there in the field earlier that day in the sweat of his brow, he would have been experiencing something of the curse that God gave man as a result of his sin, "In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat bread." But that was nothing compared to this curse, this accursed tree. This cursed death. This shame. This disgrace. He was carrying the instrument whereby Christ would die the accursed death. And our catechism says it so particularly when it asks, "Is there anything more in his being crucified than if he had died some other death?" This is the answer: "Yes, there is, for thereby I am assured that he took on him the curse which lay upon me."

So this cross that Simon was carrying speaks of curse and if Simon had been asking as undoubtedly many of us would have said if we had carried this cross, "Do I deserve this?" The real answer is: "Yes Simon, you do deserve this." You know, if God had taken Simon as he was coming out of the field there and put this cross on Simon and not only did Simon have to bear the cross but if he had to die on the cross, the Lord would do no injustice because Simon, by his sin and you and I by our sins, we deserve exactly this. We deserve this tree. We deserve this cross. We deserve this death of the cross because of our sins.

Listen to how the malefactor said it when the Lord began working in his soul, he said, "We indeed justly for we deserve the due reward of our deeds." You see, this man came to see that this curse that he was suffering there on the cross was something that he deserved. And so this cross on Simon's back and shoulder is preaching to him, "Simon, this is what you deserve." But the second point of this 20 or 30 minutes sermon would have been this: "Simon, not only is this the curse but this is mercy. It's mercy because you only, Simon, need to carry it. In God's forbearance, you will not now have to die on this accursed tree. You will only carry it for just a few minutes." And that is the forbearance of God. "God is dealing with you in mercy, Simon." Think about that. See it. "Not only that, but this cross, Simon, that you are carrying, do you know, Simon, that this cross will procure mercy for thousands? For a countless number who must be saved? Simon, this curse which you are resisting, this tree which you are resisting, is actually God's mercy to lost sinners like yourself. You don't recognize it. You don't see it just like the countless around you. Just like the rulers of this world," Paul said, "None of the rulers of this world knew what God was doing when Christ died on the cross."

Think too of Jesus walking there in front of Simon and we know from the Gospel of Luke that Jesus wasn't silent in those 20 minutes. He actually spoke. Do you know what he said? He saw the women who were weeping for him and this is what he said and Simon would have heard it, "Weep not for me but weep for yourselves and for your children." You wonder if it came into Simon's mind and heart, "Who is this person. Weep not for me? Why is he saying that?" And of course, you know why Jesus is saying that, don't you? He says, "Don't weep for me because I didn't deserve it but I'm taking it. And don't weep for me, I have come to bear this cross and to bear it away for all my people. Don't weep for me, Simon. Weep for yourself. Weep for those children, for that Rufus and

Alexander back home wherever they are. Weep, Simon. Weep because of your sins. Weep, Simon, but weep not for me."

So this sermon preaches to Simon, first of all: here is the curse. But secondly: here is mercy. Thirdly, it preaches this: "Here Simon, is substitution." We read in Luke 23:33, "And when they," including Simon, "were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him," Jesus. You know, Simon carried this cross for 20, 30 minutes but the time came when the cross was lifted from his shoulder and there was someone else, Jesus. And they didn't have to compel Jesus. They didn't have to arrest Jesus. They didn't have to physically force Jesus. Jesus came willingly, didn't he? He said it from eternity past, "Lo, I come in the volume of the book, it is written of me. I come to do thy will." And here too, on the cross, he hangs there willingly.

You wonder if Simon saw this. Just 20 minutes ago, they had to take him and bring him down and here's this man, this man who says, "Weep not for me," and he goes willingly. Willingly to this cross. He bears it, beloved, willingly. This is substitution. We don't have any record of Jesus saying anything to Simon but, you know, his actions speak louder than words. It's like this: "Simon, you can go now. You're not compelled to stay any longer. I have come and I will bear this cross and I will hang on this cross and I will hang on there until every last one of my people is saved. Simon, you can go now. Yes, you were compelled to taste this for just 20 minutes. But now you are free. Simon, you're free. I will take this cross that is mine and I will bear it to the very end."

Beloved, we don't know if Simon stayed. You know, part of me thinks: how could you not but stay? I mean, here you've carried this cross for 20, 30 minutes and this mysterious man is bearing this cross. Wouldn't you have stayed and heard this one say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"? Part of me thinks too that if you would have left the scene immediately, I would have understood it. I mean, what has just happened here? Here he is defiled, shamed. No more Passover for Simon. No more ceremony for Simon. He had to go home and tell Rufus and Alexander, "This year, children, no Passover. I can't explain it to you but this year, no Passover. Your father is defiled."

Well, this was the sermon that Simon could have heard if he had been listening. We don't know if he heard it, at least not at this point but I ask you, have you heard it? I mean, you've heard this much more, much longer than 20 minutes, haven't you? Some of you have heard this all your lifelong, hour upon hour about, "Here is the curse that you and I deserve." But here is mercy, friends. Here is substitution. Here is the substitute for sinners who bears this cross so willingly. What a contrast between Simon who had to be compelled and Jesus who says, "Here am I. If you seek me, let these go their way." I ask you, have you heard this with the eyes and with the ears of faith? Here is the curse. Here is mercy. Here is the substitute. These are the 3 things that must be known and these are the things that Scripture sets forth before us today on Good Friday.

This cross and coming under the cross was instructive for Simon, but in the third point we want to see how it was blessed to Simon. Like I said, we don't have a lot that is given

to us about Simon after that one verse there in Mark 15 but the Bible does tell us a number of things about Simon that help us to understand what exactly the Lord had in view for Simon. It gives us 3 important dots which we can connect and realize that something amazing happened as a result of what the Lord was doing this day. First of all, I already mentioned that the Bible tells us the name of his children. Simon was the father of Rufus and Alexander and the reason why those names have been included here is because the people who read the Gospel of Mark early on would have known Rufus and Alexander. How do we know? Well, these were important leaders in the Christian church when Mark was writing his Gospel and so what he's saying here is, "As you're reading this and you read about this Simon, the father of Rufus and Alexander and you know Rufus and Alexander. They are leaders in the church. They are missionaries bringing the Gospel even to Rome. This was their father, Simon."

So we can learn that Rufus and Alexander were converted. God had had dealings with them and they became well known Christians beyond their time. But secondly, we learn from the Scriptures that when Paul writes to Rome, he writes in Romans 16:13 these words, "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." And Bible scholars believe this has to be the same Rufus. Just from all we know we know about the name Rufus, it was very unfamiliar at this time and in the Scriptures, we have no other instance of Rufus. This has got to be the same Rufus and so what Paul is saying here is not only was Rufus converted but Rufus's mother was converted. In fact, Paul speaks so highly about this woman that he says, "She is my spiritual mother."

So Simon's children were converted, Simon's wife was converted but what about Simon himself? We read in Acts 11:20 that there were some men from Cyrene that went to preach in Antioch and bring the Gospel to the nations there, to the Greeks that were there in Antioch. They had a burden for souls and they had to preach there where Christ's name had not yet come, there in Antioch in the north. But then in Acts 13:1, we're told one of the names of those men from Cyrene. Listen carefully, one of them is called Simeon Niger. Niger means "the black man." Simeon Niger together with Lucius of Cyrene, were missionaries involved in the separation of Paul and Silas to the ministry of the Gospel. So we have very good reason and Bible interpreters believe that this must be that Simon Niger, the black man, who was there that day. Just a passerby who resisted the cross at that time and yet whom God had had dealings with his soul and he became a missionary, bringing the Gospel throughout the regions where Christ's name had not been brought. Just think of that. This descendent of Ham that day of Christ's death.

You know, so often we think that Jesus could not bear that cross any longer because he was weak but I think the real story is this: that Christ wanted to draw also from Ham and bring into the Gospel that even on his dying day. And so Simon had to be compelled, not just by the Romans but ultimately by that higher hand of the Father who draws every one of God's people there to the cross. And though physical blood would have dripped on Simon undoubtedly as he was carrying that cross there for those 20, 30 minutes, what really counted was the blood of the everlasting covenant that dripped not only on his shoulders but dripped on his conscience and on his heart and made him a new man which

blotted out his transgressions, forgave all his sins, gave him blessing instead of the curse which he deserved.

We don't know exactly when it was that the Lord reached down into the heart of Simon and converted him. Was it this day already here at Calvary? We don't know. It could also be and some believe it happened on the day of Pentecost where we read in Acts 2:7 that there were people there, Parthians, Medes, people from Elam and also people from Cyrene. They all heard the wonderful works of God. Was Simon there among the crowd whom Peter was addressing? Was he among the men who were crying out, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" Was he among those who were cut to the heart? And who had the Spirit poured out upon them and who had learned to weep as Jesus had said, for their sins and also for their children?

Was Simon among them? Well, we don't know exactly how the Lord converted Simon but ultimately what matters most is that the Lord converted Simon. Let me ask you this this night: has God had dealings with your soul? I'm not asking how and when but has he? Has the blood of the everlasting covenant also by the Holy Spirit reached you? Has it reached your conscience and your heart? Has this Gospel of the cross reached you and set forth before you the curse which you deserve by nature? But that there is a substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, Simon must have thought that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time but he came to know that actually he was in the right place at the right time. Have you ever come to know that as well? Maybe your parents compelled you to come under the preaching of the cross. Maybe you resisted it with every fiber in your being as we all do by nature. But when the Lord sanctifies that, then you see how blessed it is, especially you who would resist your own well-being until the bitter end unless there was that irresistible work of God through the cross of Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of Christ from heaven. You know, we need an experimental acquaintance with the cross of Christ. And we don't just need what Simon had; we don't need a physical cross put upon our shoulders. What we need is we need to come face-to-face and heart-to-heart with the message of the cross. We need to see there that it was our sins that nailed this Jesus to the tree. We also need to see that it is mercy of the most high that is proclaimed there on the cross of Christ, that this is the substitute and that we will love this cross.

Beloved, Simon initially must have been disappointed that he couldn't celebrate the Passover. I mean, after all, we delight in these ceremonies, don't we? But, you know, if you lose your ceremonies and you gain the Passover, Jesus Christ, and his blood and his righteousness, isn't that everything? Isn't that eternity? We must come to a point in our life in which we say with Paul, "In the cross of Christ is all my glory." You know, I resisted it all my life. I would have nothing to do with it. I didn't want to be saved by the cross of Christ, by the curse, by this wood that speaks of God's judgment and the wrath which I deserved. And yet to come under the cross and to embrace it and to say like Paul did, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the one who loved me and gave himself for me."

Beloved, tonight we are at the cross in the Spirit. The cross is set forth in the Gospel. Each one of us in a certain sense has been exposed to the message of the cross. Are you resisting it? Are you wanting to rush away from it and not have anything to do with it anymore? I beg you, stay and look past this cross to the substitute upon the cross and say, "Lord, teach me my need of this crucified Redeemer and teach me the blessing. Give me this blessing, Lord. Do not let me go unless I have the blessing of the cross of Christ." And the Spirit will teach you to embrace it and to love this cross above everything else in this world and to make you say, "I will cling to the old rugged cross because there my Savior died and there my guilt was put away in the sea of everlasting forgetfulness and now I have blessing and no curse for evermore because of this crucified Redeemer. To him be all the praise, the honor and thanksgiving. Amen."

O Almighty and blessed Savior, we pray thee that thy blood would be more precious to us than when we came in, that thou wouldst work irresistibly and effectually in all of our hearts by thy Holy Spirit, that the cross which we all would put away from us by nature so entirely and so forcefully just like Simon did, would become the most precious thing in all the world to us. Lord, we pray thee that thou wouldst teach us for the first time or by renewal how we deserve this cross ourselves but how there is another who willingly, so graciously, so meekly bore this cross to the very end, thereby to procure full atonement for all manner of sin.

Lord, we pray thee that thy blood would drip even today through thy word and Holy Spirit and that sinners here whose consciences are still so stained by sin that they would cry out for that blood, that they would learn to weep for themselves and for their children and that thou wouldst have mercy on many a soul. Lord, we realize that we do not deserve the least of these blessings but hast thou not promised to him that cometh unto thee thou shalt in no wise cast out? Lord, do with them for thine own name's sake, for thy glory's sake and continue with us through the night, we pray. Watch over us, bring us back on thy Sabbath to hear of how this Jesus was not only crucified but rose again for justification. We pray thee that thou wouldst remain with us. Save us, we pray, from an unprepared death and bring us, we pray, by thy power where we need to come, to thy praise and to thy glory alone. In Jesus' name alone we ask it. Amen.