

# Lessons on Cross Bearing

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Mt. 27:32; Mk. 15:21; Luke 23:26

Early one morning in 1968, Arthur Blissett was staring at the 12 foot cross on the wall of his building. The Scripture *“Take up your cross and follow me,”* began resonating in his mind. He did just that. For over 40 years he carried that cross 39,227 miles around the world. He crossed over 318 countries including nations who were at war at the time. He often stopped to pick up pieces of bodies that were blown up on the roadside and place them in a shallow grave out of respect. He was arrested 24 times for simply carrying the symbol of Christianity in non-Christian countries. He is listed in the *Guinness Book World Records* for the world's longest walk.

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Our text mentions another man who also carried a cross—Simon the Cyrenian didn't have to walk 39,227 miles, but carrying Christ's cross to Calvary must have seemed like the longest walk of his life. He is not in *Guinness Book of World Records*, but he is listed in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

Simon was just an **ordinary man** like all of us. He was simply going about his business when “pressed into duty.” He couldn't care less about the crowd that gathered that day to see some criminals crucified.

Simon was from the Roman colony Cyrene in North Africa. He was a **long way from home**. Perhaps he was in Jerusalem to attend the Passover.

On his way to Jerusalem that morning he heard the sounds of people shouting and jeering. He saw a crowd approaching down the street, so he decides to wait for the crowd pass before continuing to his destination. As the mob goes by he sees three prisoners bearing three crosses. **A soldier is carrying a large hammer and a sack of iron nails.**

**One of the prisoners is beaten almost beyond recognition.** Blood is flowing freely down His swollen face from the crown of thorns on his head. His **clothes are bloody** from wounds where He was scourged.

**Weakened from the lose of blood** and exhaustion He struggles under the weight of the cross.

The soldiers order the prisoners to move faster, but Christ staggers beneath the heavy cross on His shoulders.

Suddenly Simon feels the heavy hand of a soldier on his shoulder. He orders Simon, **“Take that man’s cross and bear it after him!”**

Simon thinks to himself, “What did I do to get into this mess. I don’t deserve to have to carry that accursed tree.”

The soldier points his sword at Simon, **“Let’s be quick about it!”**

Simon goes to where the bleeding Man stands holding the cross. He lifts the cross from off His shoulders and places it on his own.

**“Now let’s move on!”** the soldier barks. Simon follows after the prisoner bearing His cross.

When they **finally reach Calvary**, Simon is allowed to lay the cross down on the ground. He steps back and watches.

The soldiers lay the prisoner upon the cross. As the executioner drives the nails into the prisoner’s hands and feet, Simon hears the prisoner say, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*

This is not like any prisoner Simon has ever heard of before. **“Who is this?”** he wonders.

His question is answered as the soldiers place a sign on the top of the cross, **“THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**

“Jesus? King of the Jews? Some king!” Simon says under his breath.

Simon overhears the other two prisoner’s talking with each other, *“We receive the due reward for our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.”* Simon realizes **he carried the cross of an innocent man.**

He comes closer to the cross and hears one of the prisoners say to Jesus, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* Then Simon hears Jesus answer, *“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*

“Paradise?” Simon wonders. **Suddenly, the sky turns as black as midnight!** “What’s going on here. It is the middle of the day! Something is very strange here.”

After a few hours the **earth trembles as Jesus cries out, “It is finished!”** and gives up the ghost. Somewhat frightened Simon turns to leave as he hears a soldier say, **“Truly this man was the Son of God.”**

**One thing we can be reasonably sure about**—Simon never forgot that cross-bearing experience the rest of his life.

➡ Simon teaches **three cross bearing lessons:**

**I. There must be a PUTTING OFF of self.**

A. Simon had to lay aside all the things on his agenda to carry Christ’s cross. He could not carry his personal baggage and the cross also.

B. Personal rights... Comfort... Having your own way.

➡ Luke 9:23. *“if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”*

**II. There will be a PARTAKING of suffering.** Cross = suffering

In 1693, Thomas Shepherd wrote a poem titled *“Shall Simon Bear the Cross Alone?”* 200 years later George Allen took his poem, changed the title to *“Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone,”* and put it to music.

*Must Jesus bear the cross alone,  
And all the world go free?  
No— There’s a cross for everyone  
And there’s a cross for me.*

A. What went through Simon’s mind as he carried Christ’s cross up to Mount Calvary? Did he **struggle under the weight** of the 100+ pounds cross? Did he **cringe as he saw the drops of Christ’s blood** on the pavement as he followed behind, not knowing this was divine blood that would wash away sin?

B. The cross is an instrument of suffering and death—Suffering for Christ and dying to self.

### III. There must be a **PURSUING** of the Savior.

- Once you take up your cross, where do you go from there? The answer is in Luke 23:26—“... *on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it AFTER JESUS.*”
- A. Simon did not have to **suffer the stripes** at the whipping post. He didn't have to **wear a crown of thorns**. He didn't have to be **buffeted in the face** while blindfolded.
  - ➡ He simply had to bear Christ's cross and follow the bloody trail of Christ's footprints to Calvary.
- B. We bear the cross while Christ takes our place upon the cross.
- C. We bear the symbol— Christ bears the shame.
- D. We climb the hill—Christ climbs the tree.
- E. We leave our way, to follow His way. You die to your life so Christ and live His life through you.

**SUMMATION:** As we walk in the pathway of life, God will bless us in unexpected ways. But there is also a “flip side”—We may be called upon to bear an unexpected cross. Such was the case of Simon of Cyrene.

Simon had no idea when he woke up that morning, that before the day was over, he'd be bearing a cross! **He never expected** that within a few hours a cross would be laid upon his back.

So it is with all of us. Life is full of the unexpected crosses we must carry. Crosses will be laid upon us suddenly to bear, without warning.

- A doctor tells a patient they have cancer...
- A spouse announces they want a divorce...
- A loved one dies suddenly or is killed in a car accident...
- Someone goes to work and finds out he's been laid off.

➡ All of these things are unexpected.

It is not what happens to us, but how we respond to what happens to us that is most important. **How we deal with the unexpected becomes the issue.** Each unexpected cross is an opportunity for you to put off your own agenda... suffer for Christ's sake... and follow in His steps.

➡ Have you taken up your cross?