

The Man Who Bore Jesus' Cross

Luke 23:26-33

Our text mentions the man who carried Jesus' cross. His name was Simon the Cyrenian—In addition to our text He is also mentioned in...



Matthew 27:32—A _____, _____ C _____,
: _____ *compelled* _____.

Mark 15:21—A _____ C _____,
_____, _____ A _____,

Cyrene was the capital city of Libya in North Africa. Cyrene is modern day Benghazi where the United States consulate was attacked by Islamic terrorists on September 11, 2012 killing four Americans including U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens.

Simon was **1,200 miles from home**. Why was he in Jerusalem? He was probably there to attend the Passover. He was part of the tens of thousands of people who thronged Jerusalem on this day.

➡ Simon is a **picture of every disciple**, bearing his cross.

I. His **COURSE** that was hindered.

➡ Simon just arrived _____ (Luke 23:26). He has already traveled a great distance.

A. The PROCESSION approaches.

1. On his way to Jerusalem that morning he saw a procession approaching down the street. He steps aside and waits for the crowd pass before continuing into the city.
2. He watches as the mob passes by and sees three prisoners each bearing a cross. **A soldier is carrying a large hammer and a sack of iron nails.**

B. The PRISONER appears.

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

wounds where He was scourged. **Weakened from the loss of blood** and exhaustion He struggles bearing the cross.

- The Scripture never says Jesus fell beneath the cross.
2. The soldiers order the prisoners to move faster, but Jesus struggles beneath the heavy cross. So they conscript another man to carry Christ's cross to speed up the procession.
 - Suddenly Simon feels the heavy hand of a soldier on his shoulder. He orders Simon, "**Shoulder that cross!**"

II. The **COMPELLING** that he heeded.

A. The RESISTANCE to the cross.

➔ Simon's plans are immediately interrupted! Simon was simply minding his own business when he was "pressed into duty." He had to lay aside his own agenda to carry Christ's cross.

1. Simon resists—"I don't deserve to have to carry that accursed tree. People will think I'm the one who is to be crucified!"
2. The soldier points his sword at Simon, "**Let's be quick about it!**" as he **lays hold** on Simon (Luke 23:26) and compels him to bear the cross onto his own shoulder.

B. The ROUTE of the cross. Cross-bearing means a **change in direction**.

➔ Once you take up your cross, where do you go from there? The answer is in Luke 23:26—"...
bear it after Jesus."

➔ Luke 9:23—

III. The **CROSS** that was heavy.

➔ The etymology of the word "suffering" means "to bear the weight." Simon literally bore the weight the cross to Calvary. He felt its weight... its offense... it's shame... and its pain.

➔ This is what Paul meant when he referred to

(Gal. 5:11) and

(Heb. 13:13). Bear-

ing Christ's cross is an offensive and reproach to the world.

- In 1693, Thomas Shepherd wrote a poem titled “Shall Simon Bear the Cross Alone?” 200 years later George Allen changed the title to *M J B C A* , and put it to music.

M J
A ?
N
A .

IV. The **CRIES of the heartbroken** (Luke 23:27-31).

- A. The WOMEN. Simon hears the lamenting cries of women along the way. He listens as Jesus speaks to these weeping women

— *D J* , , -
 , .”

1. These are women of *J* (not Galilee—Not Jesus’ mother Mary; Mary Magdalene; Mary of Bethany; Martha of Bethany; cf. v. 49). They are heartbroken as they see the One they adored so brutally beaten and abused.
2. Doesn’t it break your heart to see how the world profanes and mistreats the Lord you love?

- B. The WEEPING.

1. — “My death is not accidental. It is necessary that I lay my life down freely for your salvation.
 - Simon hears a calmness and compassion in Christ’s voice. He thinks, “This is not any ordinary criminal. There is no anger or bitterness. He is not concerned about His own sorrows, but for these women.”
2. , .” How many tears flow from the eyes of brokenhearted mothers and grandmothers for their children?

V. The **CONVERSATION that was heard**. Simon listen’s closely...

- A. The PROPHECY of Christ (vs. 28-30).

1. He tells these women they were living in a doomed city—Terrible days were coming. He foresaw Titus the Roman laying siege on Jerusalem in 70 AD (cf. Luke 13:34-35;

21:20-24). Josephus claimed over a million people were killed during this siege.

2. This would be a foretaste of the Jews suffering under the AntiChrist during the tribulation period (vs. 30).

B. The PROVERB of two trees (v. 31):

1. A *dry tree* is not easily set on fire. The dry tree is natural fuel for the fire. Christ is the *living tree*—Full of life. *The living tree*—No life, dead—pictures the enemies of Christ who crucified Him.
2. The proverb means: “If these sufferings come upon Me, being innocent, by My enemies, what must be in store for those who provoke the flames.”
 - Christ is alluding to the desolation coming upon Israel by the Romans in 70 AD: “If Israel sought to kill Me when I am innocent, how much greater desolation will come upon them who are guilty.”

VI. The CHANGE in his heart.

➡ When they reach Calvary, Simon lays the cross down on the ground, and Christ is crucified. [The rest is my conjecture, but not without a Scriptural basis—I believe Simon’s cross bearing experience changed his life. (How could it not?)]. Consider...

A. **What Simon saw:**

1. The soldiers lay the prisoner upon the cross. As the executioner drives the nails into the prisoner’s hands and feet, Simon hears Jesus say, *My Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (v. 34).
2. This is not like any prisoner Simon has ever seen of before. “**Who is this man?**” he wonders. His question is answered as saw a sign on the top of the cross, *HI I JE HE KING OF HE JE* (v. 38).

B. **What Simon heard:**

1. Simon hears the other two prisoner’s talking to each other, *Why are you striking one another?*

(v. 41). Simon wonders, “Did I carry the cross of an innocent man?”

2. He moves closer and hears a prisoner say to Jesus, *L* ,
L . Simon
 hears Jesus answer, *I* ,
 (vs. 42-43).

- ➔ **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.”
- C. **What Simon felt**—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.***
 - D. It is very possible after Simon returned home he told his household about what happened and they became Christians. Questions to ponder:
 1. Was Simon present on the Day of Pentecost and heard Peter’s sermon? It is very likely (see Acts 2:10). Perhaps he was one of the 3,000 souls who were saved on that day!?
 2. God never includes anything in His Word without a purpose (2 Tim. 3:16). Why does Mark’s gospel mention Simon’s sons by name—Alexander and Rufus (Mk. 15:21). It would be superfluous to mention them if Mark’s readers didn’t know about them. If they were not significant to other believers during Mark’s time, what’s the point in mentioning them?
 3. Also, Paul refers to a Rufus and his mother as *L* , in his Roman epistle (Rom. 16:13). Same man???

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

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** as 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 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...
- A son or daughter backslides into sin.
- Someone goes to work and finds out he's been laid off.

➡All of these things are unexpected.

It is not what happens to you, but how you respond to what happens to you. **How you 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.

➡Are you bearing your cross for Jesus?

➡Have you believed on Christ for your salvation?