

SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

SUBJECT: MUST JESUS BEAR HIS CROSS ALONE

SCRIPTURE: MARK 15:15-16

SERMON NO. 31

Introduction

These verses give us the events surrounding the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can read in the Gospel account of the pain and agony our Lord endured for us that night and day in which He suffered for the sins of humanity. Often, we read this account and our hearts are stirred to think of what He did for us that day. Yet, too often we read these words and fail to catch the small details that make this story come alive for us. In this passage, one of those small details presents itself for us to look at this evening.

In verse 21, we read of a man named Simon the Cyrenian. He is mentioned here and Matthew and Luke. He appears on the pages of our Bible out of nowhere and just as quickly as he appears, he is gone again, however, while he appears in our vision, he teaches us a valuable lesson about the love of God and about a man's love for the Savior. This man did for our Savior what even His closest disciples were unable to do. That is, he eased our Lord's suffering during one of the darkest hours of His earthly ministry. You see, it was Simon Peter who had said, "***Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.***" Luke 22:33. Yet, when the time came to follow Jesus unto death, Peter, like the rest of the disciples forsook Him and fled, Mark 14:50.

We shall look into this account of Simon the Cyrenian and ask ourselves the question, *Must Jesus Bear His Cross Alone?* I wonder if we are willing to bear the cross behind our Savior as Simon did. Let's examine this story in its details this evening.

I. WE SEE OUR SAVIOR CONDEMNED (26). And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

1. His Crime. He claimed to be the King of the Jews. He was condemned because He taught men the truth about worshiping and serving God. The only crime that Jesus was guilty of was the crime of loving sinners and showing them the way to come to God.

2. His Condemnation (15-20). Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabas 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 called together the whole band. 17 And they clothed him with purple, and plaited 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 yheir knees worshiped 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. Yet, Jesus endured all these things without uttering a word, Isa. 53:7.

Jesus endured all that He did because He did not want you and me going to Hell. He endured the worst punishment that man could do to Him and He suffered it all because He loved us more than He loved His own life! **What a glorious demonstration of the love of God for sinners (Rom. 5:8) God commendeth his love**

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

3. His Crucifixion (22-25) And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of the 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.

After they had abused our Lord and after He had endured an entire night of brutal treatment, they lead Him away to be crucified. Our minds cannot comprehend the brutality of the death that Jesus endured for us. The death of the cross was a death so harsh and so terrible that it was reserved for the lowest of slaves. In fact, a Roman citizen could not be crucified, except by direct decree of Caesar himself. Therefore, we see that Jesus Christ, a man who "did no sin", who harmed no one, but helped all who came to Him was condemned to die the death of the vilest and most hated slave.

Imagine the agony of having nails driven through hands and feet. Imagine the agony as His body is wracked with spasms that slam His lacerated back against the cross. Imagine the swelling of His head from the thorns that were driven into His head. Imagine Him having to push against the nails in His feet, while He pulled against the nails in His hands just to get a breath of air. Imagine the thirst! Imagine the shame of His nakedness. Imagine the loneliness of His death, as His disciples, with the exception of John were gone and even His own Father turned away from Him. All this happened because He loved you and wanted to make a way for you to be saved. Imagine that kind of love!

We have caught a glimpse of the suffering Savior, now, let's notice this man named Simon.

II. WE SEE SIMON COMPELLED (21). They compelled one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

1. Simons Situation. We do not know much about this man named Simon. All we know about him is that he was from Cyrene which was located in Africa. We know that he was in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, so it stands to reason that he must have been a Jewish proselyte. If this were the case, he was probably traveling with his family and was in this place to worship. He now comes face to face with the Son of God!

2. Simons Selection. The Word of God says that they "*compelled*" Simon to carry the Lord's Cross. This word compelled means to "*press into public service*". Roman soldiers could enlist civilians to do certain tasks for them. People were required by Roman law to obey, or they could be put to death.

3. Simons Shame. Cyrene was a city on the northern coast of Africa. Perhaps one of the reasons the soldiers pressed Simon into this service was the color of his skin. It was considered the most degrading act imaginable to carry the cross of a condemned man. No soldier would want to do that and the soldiers probably would not have chosen anyone who was obviously Jewish to do on the eve of the Passover. To have carried this cross would have branded that person as ceremonially unclean. From the moment Simon touched that cross, he was a marked man for the cross meant shame!

Jesus tells us in Matt. 16:24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. This

passage makes it clear that those who follow Jesus must be willing to deny themselves, take up that cross and follow Him. Folks, let us not miss the point: the steps of Jesus led Him to death before they led Him to glory!

The born again believer must bear the cross of Christ, which is self-denial, to show the world that we are now submissive to the rule of the One that we formerly rebelled against. This may mean that we have to walk out of step with the world. Certainly it will mean that we must be different from the world in our thinking, our manner of life, in the forms of entertainment we use, in how we conduct ourselves in our interpersonal relationships, etc. Part of the shame of Christ is our learning to be like Him instead of like the world! Don't even pretend to be carrying your cross unless you have surrendered every area of life to the will of God.

Is God pleased with everything you do? Could you invite Jesus to listen to your music? Could you invite Him to watch TV with you? Could you take Him along on a date? Could Jesus join you in everything you do? If not, then some changes need to be made, to be like Him.

III. WE SEE A SINNER CONVERTED.(21).They compelled one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

1. The Providence Of God. It was no accident that Simon and his family were passing through Jerusalem at that precise moment. I can't understand all the workings of our Lord, but I do know that He has a way of bringing people to Him that need to be saved. God used this event to bring about the salvation of Simon. It was no accident that you were brought to Him! It was the providence and grace of God!

2. The Power of God. Mark mentions Alexander and Rufus.

These names must have been familiar to the Christians to which he was writing. It is evident that something happened in the hearts of Simon and his family as they watched the Lord dying at Calvary that day. Whatever took place, God used this event to change Simon and his family forever! What a picture of the grace of God!

You and I never saw Jesus die on the cross. We were not pressed into service to carry His cross that day. However, if you are saved, there came a day when you, just like Simon, came face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. You may not have seen Him dying, but you knew that you needed what He had to give. When you believed in Him by faith, you were changed just like Simon and his family. What a difference Jesus makes in our lives!

Conclusion:

I need to ask you this question: Are you saved? Are you trusting in Jesus, and Jesus alone for your salvation? Like Simon, are you bearing the Lord's cross and following Him through life, gladly bearing the shame and reproach of His great Name? If you are lost, you can be saved. If you are saved, but you have allowed things to creep into your life that are not pleasing to the Lord, you can be cleaned up. If you would be totally honest and admit that you aren't really bearing the cross. You are just kind of sliding through life and really aren't living for Jesus in a serious, heart commitment, well, there's hope for you too. Whatever your need, I invite you to come to Jesus and get it settled forever. Must Jesus bear His cross alone? Not if you and I will fall in with Him and join Him in a life that is totally committed and sold out to Him.