

SIMON OF CYRENE: THE CROSS OF OBEDIENCE

(Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26)

(2011 Congregational Theme: Daily Disciples: Obedience)

[Over the next two weeks we want to look at a couple of men who became disciples of Jesus Christ. The lessons will go along with our congregation theme for the year: “Daily Discipleship”. Daily disciples are obedient, even in the most stringent or demanding of situations.

This morning we want to look at a man named Simon.]

A. **Matthew tells us** the Roman soldiers “found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear [Jesus’] cross” to Golgotha’s Hill: Place of a Skull (Matt 27:32).

1. The word “compelled” is a military term meaning *to press into service; force, coerce, constrain*.
2. Mark adds that Simon was “coming out of the country [or into the city] & passing by” (Mark 15:21).

3. Luke states that the soldiers “laid hold” of Simon “and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus” (Luke 23:26).

B. **Cyrene**, a district of North Africa, like much of the world, was under Roman rule; & their happened to be a large Jewish population in that region.

1. The Cyrenian Jews & proselytes had a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).
2. They were present to hear Peter & the other apostles preach on Pentecost (Acts 2:10).
3. Those who became Christians later carried the gospel to the Hellenists in Antioch (Acts 11:20).

C. **Why did Simon** happen to be at that particular place at that opportune (or inopportune) moment in time?

1. For one thing, he was on his way to Jerusalem for the Passover (remember, the Jews wanted Jesus crucified before the great feast).

2. But more than that, **God** provided for that opportunity to occur - both FOR Simon & FOR those of us who would be Jesus' disciples.
 - a. Because in this event there are important lessons for anyone who is or who is considering following Jesus.
3. It appears that Simon became a disciple; Mark gives the names of his sons: Alexander & Rufus.
 - a. And why mention the names unless there would be some significance to them later; it is probable that they all became Christians (**Acts 13:1; Rom 16:13, 21; Acts 19:33** – Lucius [Simon], Rufus, Alexander).

[But whatever the case, Simon was the first in a long line of cross bearers who would endure some of the pain & shame of Jesus' cross (**Heb 13:10-14**).]

I. THE EVENT

- A. **For Jesus**, the sentence of death had been passed; **Barrabas**, an insurrectionist & murderer, had been chosen for release over the meek, lowly & innocent One.
 1. Jesus was led from Pilates' hall to a place where He was scourged. He was led back into the Praetorium where He was stripped, reclined with a scarlet robe, crowned with a ring of thorns, mocked, spit upon & struck on the head.
 2. The robe was removed & He was led to Calvary's hill & made to carry his cross while being guarded by soldiers & surrounded by a large crowd.
 3. He had not eaten nor slept for many hours – His spirit was afflicted by the agony in garden – His tortured body was weakened by loss of blood.
 4. As you would expect of any man under those conditions, He sank beneath the weight of His cross & staggered wearily along the rough & hilly streets of the city.

5. He could have called 10,000 angels to His aid; He could have brought His physical body back to full strength again, but He chose rather to fulfill the words of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53:3-5).

B. At that point Simon was “compelled” to help Jesus bear His cross. Why was Simon chosen?

1. From the guards point of view, Simon was a foreigner with no special feelings about Jesus.
 - a. He also may have appeared strong enough for the task, & he may have even looked sympathetic towards Jesus’ plight.
2. Whatever the reason, Simon was the only one alive at that moment who shared the burden & shame that Jesus had taken on Himself.
3. You say, “Yes, but Simon was *compelled*.”

a. We can learn from the parable of the Great Supper that being *compelled* doesn’t always imply acting against one’s will (Luke 14:16-24).

C. Let’s also keep in mind that Jesus was carrying out the eternal plan of His Father (John 10:17-18).

1. Did Jesus know that He would need some assistance in getting His cross to Calvary?
 - a. Of course He did; He got everything else right that He said would happen to Him at the end of His life (Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31, 33; 24:6-7, 44).
 - b. This event is a lesson for US, about what is entailed in bearing His cross & following Him.
 - c. Simon is for US a visual aid given to teach us [and him] about the cost of discipleship.

2. We have no doubt but that the soldiers could see that Jesus wouldn't make it to Calvary.

a. But Simon was singled out from among all the spectators—not just to help the soldiers finish their job—but to help Jesus complete His task, which was to bring eternal redemption to humanity.

b. And I ask you, isn't that our task too? And we do that by bringing the gospel to the lost.

[But even at His weakest hour, physically, Jesus proved to be omniscient—to know the hearts of men—Simon was compelled by the soldiers to take Jesus' cross, but Simon was chosen by God to bear the cross with Jesus.]

II. LEARNING FROM SIMON: THE CROSS OF OBEDIENCE

A. **From the moment** we became Christians we agreed to do something that Jesus said we must do to follow Him.

1. We agreed to “take up His cross”, just as He took up His cross, & just as Simon bore that cross.
You know the words...

Luke 9:23 – Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny himself**, & take up his **cross** daily, & follow Me. **Matt 10:38** – And he who does not take his **cross** & follow after Me is not **worthy of Me**. **Luke 14:27, 33** – And whoever does not bear his **cross** & come after Me cannot be **My disciple**. 33 So likewise, **whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple**.

B. **But what is this cross?** A cross is a difficult duty, a burden or a hardship.

1. All people share similar burdens: *work, debt, illness, family problems, drought, war*.

2. But Christians carry a cross that is distinct to them; *it is the cross of OBEDIENCE to Christ*.

Heb 5:8-9 – though He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience** by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, **He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him**” (**Acts 3:22-23; John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31**).

3. Obedience can sometimes seem as difficult as carrying an actual cross, but Jesus promised to make it light ([Matt 11:28-30](#)).

C. [How did Simon](#) demonstrate the cross of obedience?

1. It is an unexpected DUTY. Don't you think Simon had other plans? Being compelled to carry Jesus' cross was an unexpected duty.
 - a. And like Simon, maybe you had other plans when the gospel called & compelled you to carry Jesus' cross. Maybe you had dreams of a career instead of a spiritual family.
 - b. And like Simon, maybe you felt so compelled that you realized those plans must be set aside to follow the Lord.

c. If that's what you felt when you became a Christian, it was the first blunt awakening of what it truly means to follow Jesus Christ.

d. But now that we are bearing His cross, we need to realize that there will be many other unexpected duties.

- For those of you going back to school in a few days, it will take awhile to get back into the swing of things, but those unexpected moments to do what Jesus would do will appear from day one.
- But going back to school or not, we must all expect the unexpected duties.

{[What is this cross?](#)}

2. It is an unforeseen BURDEN. Do you think Simon could have known that he would be carrying someone's cross? Being compelled to carry Jesus' cross was an unforeseen burden laid upon Simon's shoulders.

a. Have you faced any unforeseen burdens since you became a Christian? Any great inconveniences or hardships?

b. If you haven't, then you haven't truly taken up His cross.

c. If you have, could you have foreseen them? No, not anymore than Simon could have foreseen his. But you carry it, because it's Jesus' burden too, & He is out in front of you (Luke 23:26).

{What is this cross?}

3. It is an unanticipated REPROACH. Do you suppose that Simon was mocked & jeered right along with Jesus as they walked down the street together? Being compelled to carry Jesus' cross was, for Simon, an unanticipated reproach.

a. The word reproach means to criticize, to shame or disgrace.

b. And like Simon, when we begin to carry Jesus's cross, the reproaches & criticisms will come from those who do not (2 Tim 3:12).

[This all sounds very troubling doesn't it? Well, don't let it trouble you. Just as with Simon, Jesus bears the brunt of the duty, the burden & the reproach.

Simon dropped the cross off at the hill & went about his business, but Jesus bore that cross as far as any one could take it.

There is one thing that will help to lighten the burden of this cross for us, & that is to keep in mind that Jesus is sharing the burden; we are yoked to Him & He is Omnipotent (1 Pet 5:7; Matt 11:29-30).]

CLOSING

- A. **The Lord's kingdom** doesn't work the way Rome's did, no one will forcefully compel you into service.

Rev 22:17 – And the Spirit & the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires**, let him take the water of life freely.

Matt 11:28 – Come to Me, **all you who labor & are heavy laden**, & I will give you rest.

1. God does, however, present a compelling case:

1 Pet 2:24 – **Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed.

Rom 4:25 – Who was **delivered for our offences**, &...**raised again for our justification**.

Rom 5:6, 8-9 – For **when we were still without strength**, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**...But **God demonstrated His own love toward us**, in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us**. **MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM WRATH THROUGH HIM**.

- a. How *insensitive* it is to be unmoved by His love for us!
- b. How *wonderful* is the reward for bearing His cross.
- c. How *horrific* are the consequences of not doing so.