

---

And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*.

~Prayer~

*Heavenly Father, only your Son could live the holy life your law demands, only your Son's death could pay for the sins of all, and only his resurrection could open the gates of heaven for all believers. We thank you for his mercy and ask you grant us strength to bear whatever cross comes our way with patience and joy, when it leads us to think of the incomparable sacrifice Christ made for us. Amen.*

**The Christian's Cross**

**I. Unexpected**

**II. Incomparable**

In Christ Jesus, who has removed the heavy load of our sin through his suffering and death, so that our yoke would be easy and our burden light, dear fellow redeemed!

In less than a day's time, Jesus had been betrayed by one of his disciples, deserted by the rest, and brought before the religious authorities. There he was accused by false witness after false witness, but nothing would stick until they were able to charge him for blasphemy for acknowledging that he was the Son of God. Since the Jews could not sentence someone to death, they brought him before Pontius Pilate. However, Pilate could find no actual fault in him. Perhaps, hopeful that the Jews would cease their demands after seeing him being beaten, Pilate had Jesus scourged. The soldiers gladly inflicted their harsh blows to Christ, putting on a crown of thorns and purple robe, mocking him as the "King of the Jews," even spitting on him. Yet, Pilate's cruel punishment did not satisfy the bloodthirsty crowds. They wanted death. Pilate, worried about his own position and keeping peace among the Jews, eventually yielded to the demands of the crowd and sentenced Jesus to crucifixion, a death saved for the worst of criminals.

**"And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."** Jesus now began his journey to the cross, traditionally known as the Via Dolorosa, meaning, the Way of Sorrows. They had Jesus carry the very cross upon which he would be crucified. He likely would have been carrying the crossbeam, which could weigh up to 100 pounds. Since Jesus was either too exhausted to carry the cross any further after the beatings he had received or the soldiers were worried he would die in the process, the soldiers compelled or seized a man, Simon, to carry Christ's cross.

Mark only gives one verse on Simon, but this is still more than the other Gospel writers. He notes that Simon was from Cyrene which was a Roman colony on the coast of Libya in North Africa. He was a foreigner. We don't know whether he was making a pilgrimage to

Jerusalem or there on business, but what we do know was that he had nothing to do with what was happening that day. He was coming out of the country and simply “passing by.” The soldiers likely saw that he was not from there and picked him out for convenience.

### I. Unexpected

When Simon got up that morning, he would have had no idea that his role that day would be spoken of throughout the rest of history. Did he even know who Jesus was? What did he think about everything going on? What did he do after carrying the cross?

It’s hard for us to imagine Good Friday. Every year we learn about it and commemorate it, but it’s hard to imagine what it would have been like to be there, as someone in the crowds that day. It was a day of extremes – love and hate, compassion and anger, mercy and cruelty. Here was a King, but he was crowned with thorns. God is there, but as the murder victim. Simon carries the cross past mockers, crying women, Roman soldiers, confused foreigners, and a few disciples who remained. He bears not only the cross, but the jeers, the sorrow, the pain, and the blood.

Imagine being Simon. What were the thoughts going through his head as the soldiers forced him to carry Christ’s cross? He was likely embarrassed and scared, to be associated with a Man who was condemned to such cruel suffering and death. He was probably confused. Of all the people, why him? He was just passing by. He hadn’t done anything wrong. He was probably trying to avoid the soldiers’ attention, just like students when a teacher asks a question.

Nonetheless, for whatever reason, Simon was chosen. But Mark does add one important detail for us about Simon, he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. The Bible doesn’t tell us if Simon became a Christian, but we do know that Alexander and Rufus were. They became associated with the other apostles as we hear in both Acts 19 and Romans 16. No doubt, this event had made an impression on Simon and his family. He saw our Lord’s terrible suffering, but how he handled it all with meekness. He witnessed how through all the pain and ridicule, Jesus still cared for the wailing women, his mother, prayed for his enemies, and promised a thief eternal life in heaven. How could this not make an impression on Simon?

By bearing our Lord’s cross, Simon serves as a picture of all true disciples of Jesus, who must bear his cross after him. Jesus said, “**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**” (Matthew 16:24). Every Christian must bear the cross of Christ. Our crosses, like the one Simon bore, are often unexpected. A cross is a challenge or trial you face as a Christian. Of course, we all would prefer Styrofoam crosses. But we can’t choose our crosses. Simon needed to understand why Jesus, a King, had to receive such punishment. All Christians face similar struggles – trying to understand evil, making sense of hardship, public rebuke for remaining faithful to the scriptures and its teachings such as creation in six 24-hour days, a biblical flood, biblical morality, admitting your sin and need for another’s help, you name it. But Jesus says, “**For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.**” What Jesus means is that he who is willing to lose all for Christ – pride, social standing, riches, and more – he will be

given life. He will find life—because he will have Christ. What’s more, how we bear our crosses often serves as the best sermons, like Simon’s did to his own sons.

## II. Incomparable

But we are to remember that whatever cross we might bear in this life pales in comparison to the cross Christ bore for us. Ours are but a splinter of the cross Jesus bore for you and for me. While Simon literally carried Jesus’ cross for a distance, that was nothing compared to the weight of the world’s sin that Jesus carried on his back. As the prophet Isaiah foretold, **“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”** (Isaiah 53:5,6).

This is why Jesus had come to Golgotha. It wasn’t Pilate’s doing, he was just God’s instrument along with the religious leaders, who unknowingly played a part in completing God’s plan for our salvation. Because of our sin, we had been thrown out of God’s holy city, his paradise. Our punishment was death in hell. But God intervened. He promised a Savior, born of a virgin, who would crush Satan’s head. Only Jesus, as true God and true man, could perfectly fulfill God’s law in our place by his holy life. Only Jesus could lay down his life to make full satisfaction for the sins of the world. By Simon carrying Jesus’ cross, we also see that Jesus did not just come for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles—for all people.

What sins troubled Simon? What sins trouble you? Just as Simon saw Jesus bear them all, we have the Scriptures recorded for us so that we might know that Christ has paid for them all. Through faith in Jesus, that forgiveness is ours. Why does this forgiveness matter so much? Because then Christ’s promise is also ours—**“You will be with me in Paradise.”** Death had no power over Jesus, and it now has no power over you.

Simon’s name means, “hearer” or “listener.” We all become Simons when we listen to God’s Word. Jesus said, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish”** (John 10:27,28). Though it is true we are tasked to bear our cross, it is an easy burden because Christ has taken our heavy burden of sin away. Jesus invites us, **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”** (Matthew 11:28–30). Amen.