

Up from the Country and Pressed Into Service

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that God often calls unexpected and ordinary individuals to bear the cross of Christ, illustrating the believer's call to discipleship and partnership in Christ's suffering.

Scripture: Mark 15:21, John 19:17, Luke 9:23, Romans 8:28, Genesis 22:6

Topics: "Cross Bearing", "Discipleship", "Providence"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the story of Simon the Cyrenian, who was unexpectedly called to carry the cross of Jesus. Spurgeon emphasizes how God often calls ordinary and unknown individuals to participate in His redemptive work, illustrating the believer's call to discipleship and partnership in Christ's suffering. Through vivid exposition and heartfelt appeal, Spurgeon invites listeners to recognize their own call to bear the cross and follow Jesus faithfully.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"And they compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross." Mark 15:21.

JOHN tells us that our Savior went forth bearing His Cross (John 19:17). We are much indebted to John for inserting that fact. The other Evangelists mention Simon the Cyrenian as bearing the Cross of Christ, but John, who often fills up gaps which are left by the other three, tells us that Jesus set out to Calvary carrying His own Cross. Our Lord Jesus came out from Pilate's palace laden with His Cross, but He was so extremely emaciated and so greatly worn by the night of bloody sweat that the procession moved too slowly for the rough soldiers and, therefore, they took the Cross from their prisoner and laid it upon Simon. Or, possibly they laid the long end upon the shoulder of the strong countryman, while the Savior still continued to bear, in part, His Cross till He came to the place of doom. It is well that we should be told that the Savior bore His Cross, for if it had not been so, objectors would have had ground for disputation. I hear them say—You admit that one of the most prominent types in the Old Testament, of the Sacrifice of the Son of God, was Abraham's offering up his son Isaac. Now Abraham laid the wood upon Isaac, his son, and not upon a servant. Should not, therefore, the Son of God bear the Cross Himself?

Had not our Lord carried His Cross, there would have been a flaw in His fulfillment of the type—therefore, the Savior must bear the wood when He goes forth to be offered up as a Sacrifice. One of the greatest of

English preachers has well reminded us that the fulfillment of this type appeared to have been in eminent jeopardy, since, at the very first, our Lord's weakness must have been apparent and the reason which led to the laying of the Cross upon the Cyrenian might have prevented our Lord's carrying the Cross at all. If the soldiers had put the Cross upon Simon a little earlier, which they might very naturally have done, then the prophecy had not been fulfilled! But God has the minds of men so entirely at His control that even in the minutest circumstance, He can order all things so as to complete the smallest jots and tittles of the prophecy! Our Lord was made to be, in all points, an Isaac and, therefore, we see Him going forth bearing the wood of the burnt-offering. Thus you see that it was important that Jesus should, for a while, bear His own Cross.

But it was equally instructive that someone else should be made a partaker of the burden, for it has always been part of the Divine counsel that for the salvation of men from sin, the Lord should be associated with His Church. So far as Atonement is concerned, the Lord has trod the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Him. But as far as the conversion of the world and its rescue from the power of error and wickedness is concerned, Christ is not alone. We are workers together with God. We are to be, in the hands of God, part bearers of the sorrow and travail by which men are to be delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan and brought into the liberty of truth and righteousness. Hence it became important that in the bearing of the Cross, though not in the death upon it, there should be yoked with Christ one who would follow closely behind Him.

To bear the Cross after Jesus is the office of the faithful. Simon the Cyrenian is the representative of the whole Church of God and of each Believer in particular. Often had Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross daily and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." And now, at last, He embodies that sermon in an actual person. The disciple must be as his Master—he that would follow the Crucified, must himself bear the cross—this we see visibly set forth in Simon of Cyrene with the Cross of Jesus laid upon his shoulder—

"Shall Simon bear the Cross alone, And all the rest go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, And there's a cross for me."

The lesson for each one of us is to take up our Lord's Cross, without delay, and go with Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

That many among this vast and mixed congregation may imitate Simon is the anxious desire of my heart! With holy expectancy I gaze upon this throng collected from all parts of the earth and I long to find in it some who will take my Lord's yoke upon them this day.

I. I will begin with this first remark, that UNEXPECTED PERSONS ARE OFTEN CALLED TO CROSS-BEARING. Like Simon, they are pressed into the service of Christ. Our text says—"They compelled one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His Cross." Simon did not volunteer, but was forced into this work of cross-bearing. It would seem, from another Evangelist, that he speedily yielded to the command and lifted the burden heartily, but at first he was compelled. A rude authority was exercised by the guard who, being upon the Governor's business, acted with high-handed rigor and forced whomever they pleased to do their bidding. By the exercise of such irresponsible power, they compelled a passing stranger to carry Christ's Cross. It was especially singular that the man to have this honor was not Peter, nor James, nor John, nor any one of the many who had, for years, listened to the Redeemer's words, but it was a stranger from Northern Africa

who had been, in no way connected with the life or teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.

Notice, first, that he was an unknown man. He was spoken of as, "one Simon." Simon was a very common name among the Jews, almost as common as John in our own country. This man was just, "one Simon"—an individual who need not be further described. But the Providence of God had determined that this obscure individual; this certain man—or I might better say, this uncertain man—should be selected to the high office of Cross-bearer to the Son of God! I have an impression upon my mind that there is, "one Simon" here, this morning, who has to bear Christ's Cross from this time forward. I feel persuaded that I am right. That person is so far unknown that most probably he does not recognize a single individual in all this throng and neither does anybody in this assembly know anything of him. Certainly the preacher does not. He is one John, one Thomas, or one William, or perhaps, in the feminine, she is one Mary, one Jane, one Maggie. Friend, nobody knows you except our Father who is in Heaven—and He has appointed you to have fellowship with His Son! I shall roughly describe you as, "one Simon," and leave the Holy Spirit to bring you into your place and service.

But this "one Simon" was a very particular "one Simon." I lay the emphasis where there might seem to be no need of any—he was one whom God knew, chose, loved and set apart for this special service. In a congregation like the present, there may be somebody whom our God intends to use for His Glory during the rest of his life. That person sits in the pew and listens to what I am saying and, perhaps, as yet he does not begin to inquire whether he is that, "one Simon," that one person. And yet it is so and, before this sermon is ended, he shall know that the call to bear the Cross is for him. Many more unlikely things than this have happened in this house of prayer. I pray that many a man may go out from this house a different man from the man he was when he entered it an hour ago. That man Saul, that great persecutor of the Church, became such a mighty preacher of the Gospel that people exclaimed with wonder, "There is a strange alteration in this man." "Why," said one, "when I knew him, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees! He was as bigoted a man as ever wore a phylactery and he hated Christ and Christians so intensely that he could never persecute the Church sufficiently."

"Yes," replied another, "it was so, but he has had a strange twist. They say that he was going down to Damascus to hunt out the disciples and something happened. We do not know exactly what it was, but evidently it gave him such a turn that he has never been himself since. In fact, he seems turned altogether upside down and the current of his life is evidently reversed—he lives enthusiastically for that faith which once he destroyed." This speedy change happened to "one Saul of Tarsus." There were plenty of Sauls in Israel, but upon this one Saul, electing Love had looked in the counsels of eternity and for that Saul, redeeming Love had shed its heart's blood! And in that Saul, effectual Grace worked mightily. Is there another Saul here, today? The Lord grant that he may now cease to kick against the pricks and may we soon hear of him, "Behold, he prays."

I feel convinced the counterpart of that "one Simon" is in this house at this moment. And my prayer goes up to God—and I hope it is attended with the prayers of many thousands, besides—that he may, at once, submit to the Lord Jesus.

It did not seem likely that Simon should bear the Cross of Christ, for he was a stranger who had newly come up from the country. He probably knew little or nothing of what had been taking place in Jerusalem, for he had come from another continent. He was "one Simon, a Cyrenian" and I suppose that Cyrene could not have been less than 800 miles from Jerusalem. It was situated in what is now called Tripoli, in Northern Africa, in which place a colony of Jews had been formed long before. Very likely he had come in

a Roman galley from Alexandria to Joppa and there had been rowed through the surf and landed in time to reach Jerusalem for the Passover. He had long wanted to come to Jerusalem. He had heard of the fame of the Temple and of the city of his fathers—and he had longed to see the great Assembly of the tribes and the solemn Paschal feast. He had traveled all those miles and had hardly yet got the motion of the ship out of his brain—it had never entered into his head that he should be impressed by the Roman guard and made to assist at an execution! It was a singular Providence that he should come into the city at the moment of the turmoil about Jesus and should have crossed the street just as the sad procession started on its way to Golgotha.

He passed by neither too soon nor too late! He was on the spot as punctually as if he had made an appointment to be there and yet, as men speak, it was all by mere chance. I cannot tell how many Providences had worked together to bring him there in the nick of time, but so the Lord would have it and so it came about! He, a man there in Cyrene, in Northern Africa, must, at a certain date, at the tick of the clock, be at Jerusalem in order that he might help to carry the Cross up to Mount Calvary—and He was there!

Ah, my dear Friend, I do not know what Providences have been at work to bring you, here, today—perhaps very strange ones. If a little something had occurred you had not taken this journey. It only needed a small dust to turn the scale and you would have been hundreds of miles from this spot, in quite another scene from this. Why you are here, you do not yet know, except that you have come to listen to the preacher and join the throng. But God knows why He has brought you here! I trust it will be read in the annals of the future—

"Thus the eternal mandate ran, Almighty Grace, arrest that man!" God has brought you here, that on this spot, by the preaching of the Gospel, you may be compelled to bear the Cross of Jesus. I pray it may be so. "One Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country," is here after a long journey, and this day he will begin to live a higher and a better life!

Further, notice, Simon had come for another purpose. He had journeyed to Jerusalem with no thought of bearing the Cross of Jesus. Simon was probably a Jew far removed from the land of his fathers and he had made a pilgrimage to the Holy City to keep the Passover. Every Jew loved to be present at Jerusalem at the Paschal feast. So, to put it roughly, it was holiday-time—it was a time for making an excursion to the capital—it was a season for making a journey and going up to the great city which was "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Simon, from far-off Cyrene, must, by all means, keep the feast at Jerusalem. Maybe he had saved his money for months, that he might pay his fare to Joppa and he had counted down the gold freely for the joy which he had in going to the City of David and the Temple of his God.

He came for the Passover and for that only. And he would be perfectly satisfied to go home when once the feast was over and once he had partaken of the lamb with the tribes of Israel. Then he could say throughout the rest of his life, "I, too, was once at the great feast of our people, when we commemorated the coming up out of Egypt." Brothers and Sisters, we propose one way, but God has other propositions! We say, "I will step in and hear the preacher," but God means that the arrows of His Grace shall stick fast in our hearts! Many and many a time, with no desire for Grace, men have listened to the Gospel and the Lord has been found of them that sought Him not. I heard of one who cared little for the sermon till the preacher chanced to use that word, "eternity," and the hearer was taken prisoner by holy thoughts and led to the Savior's feet.

Men have even stepped into places of worship with evil designs and yet the purpose of Grace has been accomplished! They came to scoff, but they remained to pray! Some have been cast, by the Providence of God, into positions where they have met with Christian men and a word of admonition has been blessed to them. A lady was, one day, at an evening party and there met with Caesar Malan, the famous Divine of Geneva, who, in his usual manner, enquired of her whether she was a Christian. She was startled, surprised, vexed and made a short reply to the effect that it was not a question she cared to discuss. Whereupon, Mr. Malan replied, with great sweetness, that he would not persist in speaking of it, but he would pray that she might be led to give her heart to Christ and become a useful worker for Him. Within a fortnight she

met the minister, again, and asked him how she must come to Jesus. Mr. Malan's reply was, "Come to Him just as you are." That lady gave herself up to Jesus—it was Charlotte Elliott, to whom we owe that precious hymn—

"Just as I am—without one plea

But that Your blood was shed for me

And that You bid me come to You—

O Lamb of God, I come."

It was a blessed thing for her, that she was at that party, and that the servant of God from Geneva should have been there and should have spoken to her so faithfully! Oh for many a repetition of the story "of one Simon, a Cyrenian," coming, not with the intent to bear the Cross, but with quite another mind and yet, being enlisted in the cross-bearing army of the Lord Jesus!

I would have you notice, once more, that this man was, at this particular time, not thinking upon the subject at all, for he was, at that time, merely passing by. He had come up to Jerusalem and whatever occupied his mind, he does not appear to have taken any notice of the trial of Jesus, or of the sad end of it. It is expressly said that he "passed by." He was not even sufficiently interested in the matter to stand in the crowd and look at the mournful procession. Women were weeping there right bitterly—the daughters of Jerusalem to whom the Master said, "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." But this man passed by! He was anxious to hurry away from so unpleasant a sight and to get up to the Temple. He was quietly making his way through the crowd, eager to go about his business, and he must have been greatly surprised and distressed when a rough hand was laid upon him—and a stern voice said, "Shoulder that Cross." There was no resisting a Roman centurion when he gave a command—and so the countryman meekly submitted, wishing, no doubt, that he were back in Cyrene tilling the ground.

He must necessarily stoop his shoulder and take up a new burden and tread in the footsteps of the mysterious Person to whom the Cross belonged. He was only passing by and yet he was enlisted and commanded by the Romans and, as I take it, commanded by the Grace of God for life—for whereas Mark says he was the father of Alexander and Rufus—it would seem that his sons were well known to the Christian people to whom Mark was writing. If his son was the same Rufus that Paul mentions, then he calls her, "his mother and mine." And so, it would seem that Simon's wife and his sons became Believers and partakers of the sufferings of Christ. His contact with the Lord, in that strange compulsory way, probably worked out for him another and more spiritual contact which made him a true cross-bearer. O you that pass by this day, draw near to Jesus! I have no wish to call your attention to myself—far from

it—but I do ask your attention to my Lord! Though you only intended to slip into this tabernacle and slip out again, I pray that you may be arrested by a call from my Lord!

I speak as my Lord's servant and I would constrain you to come to Him. Stand where you are, a while, and let me beg you to yield to His love which even now would cast the bands of a man around you. I would compel you, by my Lord's authority, to take up His Cross and bear it after Him. It would be strange, you say. Yes, so it might be, but it would be a glorious event! I remember Mr. Knill, speaking of his own conversion, used an expression which I should like to use concerning one of you. Here it is—"It was just a quarter past twelve, August 2nd, when twang went every harp in Paradise, for a sinner had repented!" May it be so with you! Oh that every harp in Paradise may now ring out the high praises of Sovereign Grace as you now yield yourself to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! May that Divine impression which is imaged in the text by the compulsion of the Roman soldier take place in your case at this very moment! And may it be seen, in your instance, that unexpected persons are often called to be cross-bearers!

II. My second observation is—CROSS-BEARING CAN STILL BE PRACTICED. Very briefly let me tell you in what ways the Cross can still be carried. First, and chiefly, by your becoming a Christian. If the Cross shall take you up, you will take up the Cross! Christ will be your hope! His death your trust, Himself the object of your love. You never truly become a cross-bearer till you lay your burdens down at His feet who bore the Cross and curse for you.

Next, you become a cross-bearer when you make an open acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not deceive your-selves—this is expected of each one of you if you are to be saved. The promise, as I read it in the New Testament, is not to the Believer alone, but to the Believer who confesses his faith. "He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved." He says, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father; but he that denies Me"—and from the connection it should seem to mean, he that does not confess Me—"him will I deny before My Father which is in Heaven." To quote the Inspired Scripture, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." There

should be, there must be the open acknowledgement, in Christ's own way, of the secret faith which you have in Him. Now this is often a cross. Many people would like to go to Heaven by an underground railway—secrecy suits them. They do not want to cross the channel—the sea is too rough. But when there is a tunnel made, they will go to the fair country. My good people, you are cowardly and I must quote you a text which ought to sting your cowardice out of you—"But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." I say no more and make no personal applications, but, I beseech you, run no risks! Be afraid to be afraid! Be ashamed of being ashamed of Christ! Shame on that man who counts it any shame to say before assembled angels, men and devils, "I am a follower of Christ." May you who have, up to now, been secret followers of the Crucified Lord become manifest cross-bearers! Do you not even now cry out, "Set down my name, Sir"?

Further, some have to take up their cross by commencing Christian work. You live in a village where there is no Gospel preaching—preach, yourself! You are in a backwoods town where the preaching is very far from being such as God approves—begin to preach the Truth of God, yourself! "Alas," you say, "I would make a fool of myself." Are you ashamed to be a fool for Christ? "Oh, but I would break down." Break down—it will do you good and, perhaps, you may break somebody else down. There is no better preaching in the world than that of a man who breaks down under a sense of unworthiness—if that breakdown communicates itself to other people, it may begin a revival! If you are choked by your

earnestness, others may become earnest, too. Do you still murmur, "But I would get the ill-will of everybody"? For Christ's sake, could you not bear that? When the good monk said to Martin Luther, "Go home to your cell and keep quiet," why did Martin not take the advice? Why, indeed? "It is very bad for young people to be so forward! You will do a great deal of mischief, therefore be quiet, Martin. Who are you to interfere with the great authorities? Be holy for yourself and don't trouble others. If you stir up a reformation, thousands of good people will be burnt through you. Do be quiet."

Bless God, Martin did not go home and was not quiet, but went about His Master's business and raised Heaven and earth by his brave witness-bearing! Where are you, Martin, this morning? I pray God to call you out and, as you have confessed His name and are His servant, I pray that He may make you bear public testimony for Him and proclaim the saving power of the Savior's precious blood! Come, Simon, I see you shrink, but the Cross has to be carried, therefore bow your back! It is only a wooden Cross, after all, and not an iron one. You can bear it! You must bear it! God help you!

Perhaps, too, some Brother may have to take up his cross by bearing witness against the rampant sin which surrounds him. "Leave all those dirty matters alone. Do not say a word about them. Let the people go to the devil, or else you will soil your white kid gloves." Sirs, we will spoil our hands as well as our gloves, and we will risk our characters, if necessary, but we will put down the devilry which now defiles London! Truly the flesh shrinks and the purest part of our manhood shrinks with it when we are compelled to bear open protest against sins which are done of men in secret. But, Simon, the Master may yet compel you to bear His Cross in this respect, and if so, He will give you both courage and wisdom—and your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Sometimes, however, the cross-bearing is of another and more quiet kind and may be described as submission to Providence. A young friend is saying, "For me, to live at home I know to be my duty, but father is unkind and the family generally imposes upon me. I wish I could get away." Ah, dear Sister, you must bear Christ's Cross and it may be the Lord would have you remain at home. Therefore bear the Cross! A servant is saying, "I would like to be in a Christian family. I do not think I can stay where I am." Perhaps, good Sister, the Lord has put you where you are to be a light in a dark place. All the lamps should not be in one street, or what will become of the courts and alleys? It is often the duty of a Christian man to say, "I shall stay where I am and fight this matter through. I mean, by character and example, with kindness and courtesy and love, to win this place for Jesus." Of course the easy way is to turn monk and live quietly in a cloister—and serve God by doing nothing—or to turn nun and dwell in a convent and expect to win the battle of life by running out of it!

Is not this absurd? If you shut yourself away from this poor world, what is to become of it? You men and women that are Christians must stand up and stand out for Jesus where the Providence of God has cast you! If your calling is not a sinful one and if the temptations around you are not too great for you, you must "hold the fort" and never dream of surrender! If your lot is hard, look upon it as Christ's Cross and bow your back to the load. Your shoulder may be raw, at

first, but you will grow stronger before long, for as your day, your strength shall be. "It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth." But it is good for a man to bear the Cross in his old age as well as in his youth! In fact, we ought never to be rid of so blessed a burden. What wings are to a bird and sails to a ship, the Cross becomes to a man's spirit when he fully consents to accept it as his life's beloved load. Truly did Jesus say, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Now, Simon, where are you? Shoulder the Cross, man, in the name of God!

III. Thirdly, TO CROSS-BEARING, THERE ARE NOBLE COMPULSIONS. Simon's compulsion was the rough hand of the Roman legionary and the gruff voice in the Latin tongue, "Shoulder that Cross." But we hear gentler voices which compel us, this day, to take up Christ's Cross.

The first compulsion is this—"the love of Christ constrains us." He has done all this for you and, therefore, by sweet but irresistible compulsion, you are made to render Him some return of love. Does not Jesus appear to you in a vision as you sit in this house? Do you not see that thorn-crowned head, that visage crimsoned with the bloody sweat, those hands and feet pierced with the nails? Does He not say to you pointedly, "I did all this for you; what have you done for Me"? Startled in your seat, you cover your face and inwardly reply, "I will answer that question by the rest of my life. I will be first and foremost a servant of Jesus—not a trader, first, and a Christian, next, but a Christian, first, and a business man afterwards." You, my Sister, must say, "I will live for Christ as a daughter, a wife, or a mother. I will live for my Lord, for He has given Himself for me and I am not my own, but bought with a price."

The true heart will feel a compulsion arising from a second reflection, namely, the glory of a life spent for God and for His Christ. What is the life of a man who toils in business, makes money, becomes rich and dies? It winds up with a paragraph in the Illustrated London News, declaring that he died worth so much—the wretch was not worth anything, him-self—his estate had value but he had none! Had he been worth anything, he would have sent his money about the world doing good. But as a worthless steward, he laid his Master's stores in heaps to rot. The life of multitudes of men is self-seeking! It is ill for a man to live the life of swine! What a poor creature is the usual ordinary man! But a life spent for Jesus, though it involve cross-bearing, is noble, heroic, sublime! The mere earthworm leads a dunghill life. A life of what is called pleasure is a mean, beggarly business. A life of keeping up respectability is utter slavery—as well be a horse in a pug-mill! A life wholly consecrated to Christ and His Cross is life, indeed—it is akin to the life of angels—yes, higher still, it is the life of God within the soul of man! O you that have a spark of true nobility, seek to live lives worth living, worth remembering, worthy to be the commencement of eternal life before the Throne of God!

Some of you ought to feel the Cross coming upon your shoulders, this morning, when you think of the needs of those among whom you live. They are dying, perishing for lack of knowledge! Rich and poor, alike, ignorant of Christ! Multitudes of them wrapped up in self-righteousness! They are perishing and those who ought to warn them are often dumb dogs that cannot bark! Do you not feel that you ought to deliver the sheep from the wolf? Have you no heart of compassion? Are your hearts turned to steel? I am sure you cannot deny that the times demand of you earnest and forceful lives. No Christian man can now sit still without incurring awful guilt. Whether you live in London or in any other great town amidst reeking sin, or dwell in the country amidst the dense darkness which broods over many rural districts, you are under bonds to be up and doing! It may be a cross to you, but for Jesus' sake you must lift it up and never lay it down till the Lord calls you Home!

Some of you should bear the Cross of Christ because the cause of Christ is at a discount where you dwell. I delight in a man in whom the lordlier chivalry has found a congenial home. He loves to espouse the cause of the Truth of God in the cloudy and dark day. He never counts heads, but weighs arguments. When he settles down in a town, he never enquires, "Where is the most respectable congregation? Where shall I meet with those who will advantage me in business?" No, he studies his conscience rather than his convenience. He hears one say, "There is a Nonconformist Chapel, but it is down a back street. There is a Baptist Church, but the members are nearly all poor and no gentlemen are among them. Even the Evangelical Church is down at the heel—the best families attend the high church." I say he hears this and

his heart is sick of such talk! He will go where the Gospel is preached and nowhere else! Fine architecture has scant charms for him—and grand music is no part of his religion! If these are substitutes for the Gospel, he abhors them. It is meanness, itself, for a man to forsake the Truth of God for the sake of respectability!

Multitudes who ought to be found maintaining the good old cause are recreant to their convictions if, indeed, they ever had any! For this cause the true man resolves to stick to the Truth of God through thick and thin and not to forsake

it because its adherents are poor and despised. If ever we might temporize, that time is past and gone. I warn yonder man, this morning, who has long been a Christian but has concealed half his Christianity in order to be thought respectable, or to escape the penalties of faithfulness! Come out from those with whom you are numbered, but with whom you are not united in heart! Be brave enough to defend a good cause against all comers, for the day shall come when he shall have honor for his reward who accepted dishonor that he might be true to his God, his Bible and his conscience. Blessed is he that can be loyal to his Lord, cost him what it may—loyal, even, in those matters which traitors call little things. We would compel that Simon, the Cyrenian, this day, to bear the Cross because there are so few to bear it in these degenerate days.

Besides, I may say to some of you, you ought to bear the Cross because you know you are not satisfied—your hearts are not at rest. You have prospered in worldly things, but you are not happy. You have good health, but you are not happy. You have loving friends, but you are not happy. There is but one way of getting rest to the heart and that is to come to Jesus! These are His Words—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If, after this, you need a further rest for other and higher longings, then you must come, again, to the same Savior and hearken to His next Words—"Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Some of you professors have not yet found perfect rest and the reason is because you have looked to the Cross for pardon, but you have never taken to cross-bearing as an occupation. You are hoping in Christ but not living for Christ! The finding of rest unto your soul will come to you in having something to do or to bear for Jesus. "Take My yoke upon you: and you shall find rest unto your souls." There are many ways, then, of bearing the Cross for Christ, and there are many reasons why some here present should begin, at once, to carry the load.

IV. To close, bear with me a minute or two while I say that CROSS-BEARING IS A BLESSED OCCUPATION. I feel sure that Simon found it so. Let me mention certain blessings which must have attended the special service of Simon. First, it brought him into Christ's company. When they compelled him to bear His Cross, he was brought close to Jesus. If it had not been for that command, he might have gone his way, or might have been lost in the crowd. But now he is in the inner circle, near to Jesus! For the first time in his life, he saw that blessed form and, as he saw it, I believe his heart was enamored with it. As they lifted the Cross on his shoulders, he looked at that sacred Person and saw a crown of thorns about His brow. And as he looked at his fellow sufferer, he saw all down His cheeks the marks of bloody sweat and black and blue bruises from cruel hands. As for those eyes, they looked him through and through!

That face, that matchless face, he had never seen its like. Majesty was therein blended with misery; innocence with agony and love with sorrow. He had never seen that Countenance so well, nor marked the whole form of the Son of Man so clearly if he had not been called to bear that Cross! It is wonderful how

much we see of Jesus when we suffer or labor for Him. Believing Souls, I pray that this day you may be so impressed into my Lord's service that you may have nearer and dearer fellowship with Him than in the past! If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. They see Jesus best who carry His Cross most.

Besides, the Cross held Simon in Christ's steps. Do you catch it? If Jesus carried the front part of the Cross and Simon followed behind, he was sure to put his feet down just where the Master's feet had been before. The Cross is a wonderful implement for keeping us in the way of our Lord. As I was turning this subject over, I was thinking how often I had felt a conscious contact between myself and my Lord when I have had to bear reproach for His sake—and how, at the same time, I have been led to watch my steps more carefully because of that very reproach! Brothers and Sisters, we do not want to slip from under the Cross. If we did, we might slip away from our Lord and from holy walking. If we can keep our shoulder beneath that sacred load and see our Lord a little ahead of us, we shall be making the surest progress! This being near to Jesus is a blessed privilege which is cheaply purchased at the price of cross-bearing! If you would see Jesus, bestir yourselves to work for Him! Boldly acknowledge Him! Cheerfully suffer for Him and then you shall see Him—and then you shall learn to follow Him, step by step! O blessed Cross which holds us to Jesus and to His ways!

Then Simon had this honor, that He was linked with Christ's work. He could not put away sin, but he could assist weakness. Simon did not die on the Cross to make expiation, but he did live under the Cross to aid in the accomplishment of the Divine Purpose. You and I cannot interfere with Jesus in His passion, but we can share with Him in His commission. We cannot purchase liberty for the enslaved, but we can tell them of their emancipation. To have a finger in Christ's

work is glory! I invite the man that seeks honor and immortality, to seek it thus. To have a share in the Redeemer's work is a more attractive thing than all the pomp and glitter of this world and the kingdoms thereof. Where are the men of heavenly mind who will covet to be joined unto the Lord in this ministry? Let them step out and say, "Jesus, I, my cross have taken. From now on I will follow You. Come life or death, I will carry Your Cross till You shall give me the crown."

While Simon was carrying the Cross through the crowd, I doubt not that the rough soldiery would deal him many a kick or buffet—but I feel equally sure that the dear Master sometimes stole a glance at him. Simon enjoyed Christ's smile. I know the Lord so well that I feel sure He must have done so—He would not forget the man who was His partner for the while. And oh, that look! How Simon must have treasured up the remembrance of it! "I never carried a load that was so light," he says, "as that which I carried that morning, for when the Blessed One smiled at me amidst His woes, I felt myself to be strong as Hercules." Alexander, his first-born, and that red-headed lad, Rufus, when they grew up, both felt it to be the honor of the family that their father carried the Cross after Jesus. Rufus and Alexander had a patent of nobility in being the sons of such a man! Mark recorded the fact that Simon carried the Cross and that such-and-such persons were his sons. I think when the old man came to lie upon his deathbed, he said, "My hope is in Him whose Cross I carried. Blessed burden! Lay me down in my grave. This body of mine cannot perish, for it bore the Cross which Jesus carried and which carried Him. I shall rise, again, to see Him in His Glory, for His Cross has pressed me and His love will surely raise

me."

Happy are we if we can, while yet we live, be co-workers together with Him, that when He comes in His Kingdom, we may be partakers of His Glory! "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." God bless you and especially you who have come out of the country. God bless you. Amen and amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 15:1-38.

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