



Burdens



Bearer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

That Night.....	3
The Morning After.....	4
Encounter.....	5
Front Row Seat.....	7
Get Behind Jesus.....	9

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“Burden Bearer” by Pastor Mike
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THAT NIGHT

The once sunlit landscape is now illuminated by stars. The blazing fireplace is dull embers. The bustling household is fading off in slumber.

That night.

The soldiers lay hold of Jesus. (Mark 14:46) He puts up no fight. His followers flee in fear. (Mark 14:50)

That night.

Simon's mind struggles to rest as he lays in bed. The burdens of running his home grip his thoughts.

"We're short on cash. The bills are piling up. Jobs are few and far between. I'm just having a hard time dealing with life right now."

That night.

They spit on Him. (Mark 14:65a) Their fists pound His face. (Mark 14:65b) And when Pilate presents Jesus to the crowd, they shout, "Crucify! Crucify Him!" (Mark 15:13-14)

That night.

Lying in bed Simon tries desperately to calm his own fears, but his mind won't cooperate.

"I must get off to Jerusalem early tomorrow. I have to find some work and soon. You know what they say, 'The early bird catches the worm!' That's what I have to do."

That night.

The whip snaps viciously as it tears into Jesus. (Mark 15:15)
Unbearable, the anguish. Unspeakable, the merciless beating.

That night.

THE MORNING AFTER

Dawn comes quickly this day.

"Did I really even sleep?" Simon thinks while tying on his sandals. "I've got to get going. I've got to beat others to the punch."

The morning after that night.

Through the Via Dolorosa they venture. Jeers and mocking paint the way. The sins of the world weigh heavily on Christ's back.

The morning after that night.

Off Simon goes, his sons by his side. As they approach the city, their attention turns to the procession. The awful procession!

The morning after that night.

Shortly Simon and his sons will be interrupted. And dad will be forced to participate. He'll come face to face with the Messiah!

The morning after that night.

And when they led [Jesus] away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

ENCOUNTER

"[The Roman soldiers] pressed into service a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene . . . to bear [Jesus'] cross." (Mark 15:21)

Simon encounters Christ.

Wow.

And he's come along way for this unforeseen meeting - from as far as Cyrene - a place in the northern part of Africa.

It's believed that Simon was a Jew - one of the many who were living in Cyrene at the time. His place of residence must have still remained there for the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) all make sure to mention him as "Simon of Cyrene."

But Simon finds himself in Jerusalem now, or at least near it for he ventures in from the country this day.

Simon is just passing through. Simon is just minding his own business. He's just going about his day as the commotion ahead catches his attention.

Suddenly, he is gazing upon the most horrifying of sights.

He sees a Man who has been abused beyond recognition.

He's disfigured. (Isaiah 52:14)

The brutal act of scourging had a way of doing that to a person. (John 19:1)

The Romans used a three-thonged whip weighted with pieces of bone

or metal as their method of beating condemned criminals. These whips created deep lacerations on the backs and shoulders of their victims. Most didn't survive the scourging.

But this Man does.

And now He's heading to the Place of the Skull (Mark 15:22) bearing His cross, the weight of which buckles the knees beneath Him.

Imagine Simon's perspective.

Might he be thinking thoughts like:

"What's this? The soldiers are scouring the crowd for a volunteer?"

"To do what? To help carry this Man's cross?"

"They're pointing my way."

"They're choosing me?"

"But why me?"

"I'm just a foreigner."

"I'm just passing through."

"I'm not even supposed to be here."

"I want no part of this."

Scripture says that...

[They] found a man of Cyrene...whom they pressed into service.
(Matthew 27:32)

[They] laid hold of [him]...and placed on him the cross to carry. (Luke 23:26)

So Simon of Cyrene encounters Christ as Jesus' cross is placed on Simon's shoulders.

And do you think that maybe - just maybe? - at some point during the time that it takes the Roman soldiers to remove the cross from our Lord and give it to Simon - that quite possibly during those few seconds both Simon and Jesus' eyes meet?

Simon is never the same.

FRONT ROW SEAT

It's impossible to erase the affects of a true encounter with Jesus from the consciousness of an individual.

Do you think that Simon ever forgot what happened to him (Him) that day?

There's just something about coming in contact with the God-Man.

The meeting leaves its mark on your soul.

And I'm convinced Simon had heard of Jesus prior to this moment.

It would have been close to impossible to suppress the news about the great things Christ had been doing in the region.

Here was a Man performing incredible miracles, showing supreme understanding and treating others with extraordinary compassion.

Jesus seemed to have a handle on how life should be lived.

At least that's what others were telling Simon.

And now Simon gazed upon the Christ for himself!

He was able to observe just how Jesus dealt with life, up front and personal.

Was Jesus all that He was made out to be?

I don't know how long Simon had to carry Christ's cross.

I don't know if Simon stayed to watch much of the crucifixion.

What I do know is that he certainly was afforded some time to observe the Lord.

Take a second look and note the last two words of Luke's verse...

[They] placed on [Simon of Cyrene] the cross to carry behind Jesus.
(Luke 23:26d)

Do you see that there? "Behind Jesus."

Simon had a front row seat!

And it was from that vantage point that he was able to see just how

Jesus dealt with life's toughest of situations.

It goes without saying that Simon saw the most supreme and victorious of examples.

Even the centurion who watched Jesus die (and had presided over hundreds of crucifixions prior to this to compare His to) couldn't help but say...

"Truly this Man was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39)

And there are crosses we all must bear.

Sometimes they creep up on us in a moment's time just like Simon's did.

The loss of a job.

The loss of one's health.

The death of a loved one.

You can be going about your life minding your own business and then something comes along and stops you right in your tracks.

Circumstances or situations can arise that press in on you, even to the point of forcing you to journey a much different path than you had planned.

Those times can be unbearable.

They can feel like weights impossible to carry.

Impossible, unless your companion is the Lord Jesus Christ...

...and you're following behind Him.

GET BEHIND JESUS

In frontier times traveling companies practiced sending out scouts ahead of the group to tread the path and plot the course for the entire party. They might scout the trail as much as two or three days' journey ahead (Matthew 12:40) and then come back (Mark 16:6) bringing the proper directions for the others to follow.

Jesus has done the same thing for us.

He's gone ahead like a scout and made the way.

He's tread the path and plotted the course.

You see, Jesus knows what it takes to get through the most horrifying and hopeless of situations imaginable.

And He purposed long ago for Simon to come all the way from Cyrene to meet Him on Good Friday so that we might know it, too.

The secret to handling the tough times of life is this:

Get behind Jesus and follow Him.

Get behind Jesus with whatever cross you've been forced to carry.

(Yes, I'm speaking to you.)

Place your complete focus on Christ (not the burden)!

Observe the way He handled things. (Hebrews 12:2)

And then do the same.

I've always been struck by the tale of Charles Spafford.

He and his family were set to travel overseas. However, Spafford was detained at the last minute so his wife and two daughters went ahead without him. He followed later on the next possible ship.

While at sea, the most terrible news met him. The vessel carrying his wife and daughters went down in rough seas.

With such a grievous burden placed on his shoulders (Mark 15:21), Spafford penned these famous words...

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll.
Whatever my lot, God has taught me to say:
"It is well, It is well with my soul."

"Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken." (Psalm 55:22)

"I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me."
(Philippians 4:13)

(14-century fresco of Jesus bearing the cross cover picture in the public domain: [click here.](#))