

“MY LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS”

“*Cast all your cares upon Me*—every burden, every concern and worry—*for I care for you* (1 Peter 5:7). I will carry the load upon My shoulders; I will bear the responsibilities that are weighing you down. If you’ll follow Me, I *will* be your strength. I *will* enable you and I *will* accomplish greater things than you can ask, think, or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).”

Simon the Cyrene was unexpectedly met with a task that challenged his plans and ambitions, his will, and desires. Unable to evade the situation, he was forced to decide whether he would submit his will to the challenge that God had laid before him.

It is when we encounter unexpected and trying circumstances that we must learn to lay our burdens on the shoulders of the One who was meant to bear them. Trusting God to accomplish the best for our lives in the way He chooses may be one of the most difficult, but most valuable obstacles we will ever surmount.

If the path God chooses for your ultimate good disrupts your plans for the future, will you still follow Him? _____

Do you believe that He has greater purposes for you than you have for yourself? How do Isaiah 55:8-9 and Jeremiah 29:11 speak to this? _____

Burdened

John 19:17a says, “*And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull.*” Weak and wearied from physical torture, Jesus began the ascent to Golgotha without strength, crushed under the weight of a wooden cross and a spiritual burden that only He could bear. Through His sufferings, Jesus truly understood what it meant to be exhausted, pan-stricken, abandoned, and alone.

Read Isaiah 53:4-6 and Matthew 8:17. What burdens did Jesus take upon Himself?

What did He seek to accomplish in your life by taking these things upon Himself? (Isaiah 53:5) _____

A burden is described as something that is carried; a load, a duty or responsibility, or something that is oppressive or worrisome.¹ The extreme weight of a burden presses us down until we can no longer stand in our own strength.

What burden are you currently bearing? What feelings and emotions have surfaced as the weight of your burden has pressed down on you? Why do you feel this way? _____

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

¹ Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 9th ed. Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1985, c1983

In this passage, “*labor* implies the burdens we take upon ourselves; *heavy laden* implies the burdens others put upon us.”² (See Matthew 23:4.) Have you taken up any “burdens” that you are not meant to carry?³ If so, what? _____

What is Christ’s solution? How is this accomplished? _____

What *are* we to take up? _____

Bearing Our Cross

Turn to Luke 23 and read verse 26. Simon the Cyrene left the country and was passing by when a disruption in his journey and his plans took place (Mark 15:21). What was Simon forced to do according to these passages? _____

Simon followed closely behind Jesus as He ascended the hill. The journey must have been difficult—he was carrying a cross he believed was not meant for him, walking down a road he was convinced he was not meant to be on.

Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? Explain. _____

Read Matthew 16:24. What does Christ say those who desire to follow Him must do?

Simon had to first lay down his will in order to place the cross upon his shoulders. Let us not be confused. Simon was not required to place on his shoulders the burdens that only Christ could carry, but he was required to deny his “self” so that God’s will could be done.

The denial of self and the taking up of one’s cross is the “constant refusal to gratify our self-life, the perpetual dying to pride and self-indulgence in order to follow Christ in His mission for the salvation of others.”⁴

Continue reading in Matthew 16, verses 25-27. How does one seek to “save his life”? Why does this result in the loss of life? _____

Identify your plans and ambitions, hopes, and dreams. Can you relinquish these to God? Explain.

² Carson, D.A. “*Matthew: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*” Volume 8 (Matthew-Luke), Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1984.

³ We are not meant to bear the burdens of sin (Psalm 38:4, 1 Peter 2:24), saving, changing, or healing others (Galatians 6:2, 5), perfectionism (Luke 10:41-42), knowing the future (Matthew 6:25-34), etc.

⁴ Meyer, F.B. *Our Daily Walk*. Bookwell, Finland: Christian Focus Publications, 2010. July 9. p204.

Have you placed conditions on what you are willing to bear or surrender to His control? If so, what are they? _____

F.B. Meyer has said, “Everyone must deny his own choice and will and pleasure, in order that he may reach the highest life for himself and others. When we live only to save ourselves, to build warm nests, to avoid every discomfort and annoyance, to make money entirely for our own use and enjoyment, to invent schemes for our own pleasure, we become the most discontented and miserable of mankind.”⁵

However, “it is not necessary for any man to make a cross; it is our part simply to take up that which God has laid down before us.”⁶ What does this statement mean to you? _____

Considering Simon, following in the footsteps of Christ means you may be led or forced to go places that you do not desire to go.

In Genesis 37, Joseph, the youngest and most favored son of his father, was given dreams of power and authority. Despised by his brothers, they sought to end Joseph’s life, but God preserved him. For thirteen years, Joseph lived in a foreign land as a slave and prisoner; he was falsely accused and forgotten (Genesis 39-41).

According to Psalm 105:16-22, what didn’t Joseph know amid his trial? (v.17, 19) _____

What might God’s purposes be for allowing difficult and trying circumstances in your life? Read Romans 8:28-29, James 1:2-4, and 1 Peter 1:6-7. _____

According to Genesis 45:5-11, 17-20, and 50:20, what had Joseph come to realize? _____

If personal hardship will result in the best possible outcome for others, are you willing to submit to the process? (Reconsider what it means to take up your cross.) _____

Record Romans 8:28. _____

Thinking on Simon the Cyrene, how would his participation benefit all of humanity? _____

If he had the option *not* to bear Christ’s cross, and refused to do so, what would he have missed?

⁵ Meyer, F.B.

⁶ Ibid.

What could you miss if you refuse? _____

There is another important truth we can learn from Simon. The text stated that he bore the cross *after* Jesus. This meant the “end” would be reached at the pace determined by the Lord. If Jesus fell, Simon waited. When Jesus walked, Simon followed.

Are you willing to go at the pace the Lord determines? Why can this be one of the most difficult aspects of following Christ? _____

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Strengthened

Although he may not have fully understood God’s plans and purposes when he took up Christ’s cross, Simon went forward one step at a time in the strength that God supplied.

It is believed that Christ’s solid wood cross weighed 300 pounds; the cross beam He carried approximately 100 pounds. Although the physical weight was great, Simon made it to the end with his eyes firmly fixed on Christ (Isaiah 26:3-4).

Under what circumstances is strength promised? 2 Samuel 22:40, Psalm 18:32, 119:28, 138:3, Isaiah 40:29-31, 41:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, and Philippians 4:13. _____

Will you trust God to accomplish the best for your life in the way He chooses? Read 1 Peter 5:6-11.

What seemed to be a great inconvenience and a heavy burden turned out to be the greatest opportunity of his life. Simon the Cyrene had come face to face with the living Christ, shared in His suffering, and eventually, in His triumph.

In closing, record Proverbs 3:5-6. _____
