

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Please turn your bibles with me to the Gospel of John 19

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the Gospel of John

And after a year and a half – of inching our way to the cross – we are almost there.

Initially, I was planning on doing my sermon all the way to verse 30

But God had other plans and I couldn't get beyond one verse –

It just spoke so much to my heart.

And I think it connects with the teachings that I have done over the past couple of weeks regarding the individuals that Jesus interacted with during His interrogations at the hands of the Jewish religious rulers as well as the Roman officials

We've looked at Annas and Pontius Pilate

Two individuals who rejected the Truth

One of them who wanted to suppress the truth and the other one incapable of making the right decision because of his fear of man.

So this morning, we are going to look at another individual –

He has an encounter with Jesus as Jesus made His way to the cross

This individual most likely never knew Jesus before this encounter

He may have not have heard of Him

But the end of His encounter with Jesus would be that his life was totally transformed.

Let's pray...

So just to get a little context here –

We are going to go back a little and begin in verse 14 -

**[Jhn 19:14-16 NKJV] 14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he (Pontius Pilate) said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 But they cried out, "Away with [Him], away with [Him]! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" 16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led [Him] away.**

**[Jhn 19:17 NKJV] 17 And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called [the Place] of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha,**

I had you make a note of the word "bearing"

Because the Greek word bearing that John uses here is the word - *bastazo*

It is a word that means to take up with the hands.

You see, the language that the Holy Spirit inspired John to write here is not that the Roman guards put the cross upon Jesus' shoulders, but that He picked it up Himself.

This was typical of Roman crucifixion, that the condemned individual was required to carry their own cross to the place of crucifixion.

By the way – this bearing of one's cross is something that Jesus had taught His disciples and us during His earthly ministry

**[Luk 9:23-25 NKJV] 23 Then He said to [them] all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?**

Later on – Dr. Luke records for us Jesus speaking to the multitudes -

**[Luk 14:27 NKJV] 27 "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.**

Luke uses the same Greek Word that John used – to take up with the hands –

It means I willfully reach out for it, I willfully pick it up, I willfully put it on my shoulders and I willfully carry it.

Sometimes I hear people quote this verse to point to some burden they must carry in their life.

It could be a demanding or thankless job, a disease, a broken relationship, or a challenging situation.

They will say this is their cross to bear.

But this is not what Jesus meant when he said "pick up your cross and follow me."

This is self-pity and pride.

What Jesus is talking about is the level to which we are to deny ourselves.

What does it mean to "bear my cross"

It means obedience to God's plan for our life, even if it's not pleasant.

It means His will be done – not, my will be done

It means pain, it means humiliation and it means death

And as shameful as it was, the cross was also the Father's will for Jesus - it was God's plan for Him.

You see church,

Jesus didn't just have a lot of nice things to say.

He lived what He taught.

He is giving them and giving us an example to follow.

That we all have crosses to bear

That we all count the cost

Therefore, we have a choice

- Jesus isn't forcing us to pick up our cross and follow Him. He's inviting us
- Therefore we have to let go of what we already have – we have to let go of self – we have to let go of our own desires. The problem with our desires is they keep us from what God has for us.
- So – We must die to our old selves. Put it to death. Picking up your cross means that we engage in this painful process. That we take those old things about us and nail it to the cross.
- And then Jesus tells us to do it daily -

Now, I want to provide a little background on what is going on here – as Jesus makes His way from the Praetorium to Calvary/Golgotha

Whenever an individual was condemned to die by crucifixion, the soldiers would make a procession (think of a parade) to where the execution was to take place.

Making up this procession there would be four soldiers—one in front holding the sign that had written on it the crime or the crimes the individual had been convicted of (in Jesus' case the sign would have indicated that He was the leader of an insurrection proclaiming Himself King of the Jews).

So, one soldier in front holding the sign, two on either side of the individual who was carrying his cross (or the beam) and then one soldier behind the prisoner.

The soldiers would then - purposely take a meandering route through the city to where the crucifixion was to take place—

They didn't take the quickest route because they wanted to put the criminal on display.

They wanted to strike fear in the hearts of others and cause them to think twice before going against Rome.

This was a warning to the people- don't even think about coming against Rome – because this is what will happen to you.

Now – something else we have to take into consideration is that at this time- Jesus is already physically drained.

Remember, He has been up all night

He has been beaten by the temple guards

He has been beaten by the Roman guards

Not to mention, the tremendous amount of blood He had already lost through the scourging.

All this combined to rob Him of His strength

So – at a certain point Jesus could no longer continue to carry the load up to Golgotha

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Turn with me to the gospel of Mark 15

**[Mar 15:21-22 NKJV] 21 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 (by the way – that is the same word) His cross. 22 And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.**

It's interesting how a person's life can change when they least expect it.

They get up one morning and start the day like they have every other day of their adult life—when suddenly something happens that changes them in a way they never could have imagined.

This was the testimony of Simon who lived in Cyrene (modern day Libya)

The name Simon is a common Jewish name

And in all probability – Simon was one of the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims that had come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

He hears the commotion –

He walks over to see the procession

He sees the soldier in the front with the sign – “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”

He sees Jesus walk by him, struggling to carry the cross, possibly stumbling there before him.

When suddenly, Simon feels a tap on his shoulder.

A Roman soldier tapped him with the flat part of his sword.

Roman law stated that if a soldier laid the flat part of his sword upon your shoulder he could “officially compel you” (he could press you into service to Rome) to carry either the soldier’s gear for one mile—or in this case a condemned criminal’s cross.

That was Roman law—and you couldn’t argue or refuse.

In fact, Jesus taught on this exact law during His ministry -

**[Mat 5:41 NKJV] 41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.**

The Jews hated to be under Roman rule.

So Jesus taught that when the Roman soldier would tap your shoulder – instead of resisting or resenting the soldier’s command – carry his gear for two miles.

One mile by compulsion and the other mile for compassion – in other words as a witness to him.

The Roman soldier didn't ask Simon, "Hey buddy, can you help him?"

Simon didn't say – here let me help You

He was forced to carry the cross of someone he didn't even know

Think of the bitterness and resentment that Simon must have had – not only for the Roman soldiers – who have compelled him to carry the cross but bitterness and resentment for Jesus as well.

Remember, Simon is there to celebrate the Passover – but instead, he has been pressed into work bearing the cross of someone he doesn't even know.

Try to imagine being in Simon's sandals.

As he reached out for the cross and began walking with the weight of the cross upon his shoulders – I am pretty sure that he was thinking – "man, once I get to the place of execution – I am dropping this thing and I am getting of here!!! –

I am supposed to be on vacation.

I am not sticking around. I don't care who is getting executed – I am outta here.

Going back to Libya and get back to what I want to do.

Going back to what I was doing before I came here

However, I don't think that's what happened—

I believe Simon stayed.

I believe there was something about Jesus that compelled Simon to stick around—  
something about Jesus caused Simon to want to stay with Him.

I personally believe it was because Jesus had talked with him.

I believe the Lord told him that, even as Simon had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the  
Passover that at that very moment,

Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the  
world—

was on His way to die so that the judgment of God upon guilty sinners would 'pass-  
over' all who would receive Him as their Savior and King!

How could Simon leave after all that?

How could he go back to his plans?

How could Simon go back to doing what he was doing before his encounter with Jesus

You see church,

This was a meeting Simon hadn't planned on, but as his path crossed with Jesus' path—his life would be forever changed!

**No one can bear the cross of Christ without experiencing a radical change in the direction of their life.**

When a person truly has an encounter with the living Christ—he or she can never go back to the way things were—they can never leave the presence of Jesus to go back to their old way of life.

**Turn with me to John 6**

**[Jhn 6:66-69 NKJV] 66 From that [time] many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 “Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

We have good reason to believe that Simon trusted in Jesus as his Savior that day and went home—and led his whole family to the Lord!

This man was so transformed by the cross of Christ—that the blessing of the cross overflowed onto his entire family!

Mark tells us that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus

If you look at the closing benediction of Paul's letter to the Romans, in 16:13 we read, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine".

Rufus was such a strong Christian that Paul singles him and his mother out for special mention—in fact so dear was his mother (Simon's wife) to Paul that he referred to her as 'his own mother!'

Turn to Gal 2

**[Gal 6:1-5 NKJV] 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.**

The word for bear in verse 2 – is the same Greek word that we have seen from John, Luke and Mark –

Paul tells us to bear one another's burdens

To willingly lift up one another's burdens

You see, there may be times when we will see someone about to collapse under the weight of their cross.

This is where we come in like Simon and help bear their cross for them

This is where we show our love for one another

Max Lucado –

He was once asked to illustrate the kind of love taught by Jesus

And this is what he said –

"The best example of love that I can think of occurred at the death of my own father. I remember a lady who was a distant relative of our family. She drove six hours to get to the funeral. She walked in the house and went immediately into the kitchen and began washing dishes. I didn't even know she was there. She straightened up everything and helped prepare for the meal. She came to the funeral. After the funeral, she came back and did the dishes again, got in her car and went home. As far as I know, she never said a word. She never introduced herself. But when I looked around, I realized that love had been in our house."

What did the relative do?

She helped bear the burdens of the family

She walked in obedience – she saw the brother and sister with a burden and she helped with it.

However, there is assumption that also lies behind the command – and that is, that every one of us has burdens and that God did not intend for us to carry them alone.

Which is exactly what Simon did

I truly believe that the Holy Spirit is holding up Simon as an illustration of how a person's life can suddenly intersect with Jesus when they least expect it and at that point—the Holy Spirit will seek to compel them to take up the cross and follow Jesus

And unlike Simon - who had no choice – we do!!!

Jesus is still looking for “Simon's” who will take up His Cross and follow Him to Golgotha (Calvary).

To heed His call is to become a blessing to those around us—in our home, in our church—and in our world.

The only way we can represent a crucified Christ is with a crucified life—which means absolute surrender to His will and purposes.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'