

Compelled to Bear the Cross

Written by George Bentsch

There were many people associated with the death of Christ. Caiphas said his death was expedient. Matthew 27:20 says, "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus." Pilate knew he was innocent. Mark 15:10 says, "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy." Yet he permitted the crucifixion of an innocent man.

Matthew 27:32 says, "And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross." We do not know if Simon knew the Savior. We would have felt honored to assist him with that awful burden. Simon did not volunteer to bear the cross. It was forced on him.

The cross to us represents responsibility to the Lord and his church. In Matthew 10:38 Jesus said, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." In Luke 9:23 he said, "... If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." We must live right every day. Once we take up the cross, there is no putting it down. In Luke 14:27 Jesus said, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." These scriptures are a call to volunteer. Sometimes people feel compelled to take up the cross for the wrong reason. Doing it to please family or friends is not what God desires. He loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son to be sacrificed for our sins. Understanding this should be what moves us to obey the gospel. Taking up the cross must be a personal decision. Paul wrote in Romans 6:17, "... but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." The form of doctrine is the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is a certain amount of fear involved as we realize our sinful condition. Hell is a burning reality! Romans 1:18 warns: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men..." God has the right to demand obedience. He loves us and wants us in heaven. Paul wrote in 2nd Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." The thought is, deny ourselves and live for Christ. We each have a cross to bear. Our love for our Lord and his church is stirred by knowledge. The more we learn, the more we love. The more we love the greater our desire to obey and please the objects of our love.

In the account of Simon we see a man sharing the burden of the Lord. One translation reads,

Compelled to Bear the Cross

Written by George Bentsch

"him they compelled to bear the neither end (bottom) of the cross." Now the Lord is ready, willing to share our burdens. A song says, "take your burden to the Lord and leave it there." Isaiah 53 says, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." He understands our struggles. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 7:25 tells us, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If we come to God for our salvation, it is by Jesus Christ. In John 14:6 he said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

As the song says, "There is no other way for the sin burdened soul, than the blood sprinkled way of the cross." The truth calls us to enlist in the Lord's army. To take responsibility for our salvation. Paul, speaking to a group of idol worshippers who were ignorant of the living God said, "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." 2 Peter 3:9 tells us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The love of God continually reaches out to us. There will be no group of soldiers with weapons compelling you to take up the cross. Paul wrote in 2nd Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." "Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan. Oh, the grace that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span, at Calvary." If we truly understand the words of this song our conscience will compel us to take up the cross and carry it with joy!! -105 W Jefferson Ave., Richland, MO 65556