

## Sermon - March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Grace Street Fellowship, Dr. Jim Burgin, pastor

Scripture: **Main Text:** Mark 15:21<sup>1</sup>

Series: "Come to the Cross"

### Part 5: "The Cross Beam"

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Simon. I am mentioned in 3 of your four gospels. Your pastor has asked me here to speak to you today.

#### 1. My Home -

- a. I was in Jerusalem for the Passover, but Jerusalem wasn't my home.
- b. I came from a place called Cyrene, located on the northern coast of the African continent.
- c. Originally settled by the Greeks (630 B.C.), Cyrene was now the capital of a Roman Occupied land called Cyrenaica, and it was home to many Greek-speaking Jews like myself.
- d. You would know it as Tripoli, Libya today.
- e. If you were to fly today, between Tripoli and Jerusalem, it would take you 7 hours and 40 minutes. It would take you 34 hours to make the drive. I was a long way from home.

#### 2. What was I doing in Jerusalem?

- a. Passover - If you know much about the history of our people, then you know that the Passover was an important celebration. At Passover, we celebrated God's redemption of his people from slavery in Egypt. We had been enslaved for 400 years, and God heard our cry. He sent his death angel to slay the firstborn child of any who did not place blood from the sacrifice of the purest lamb on the door posts. God's death angel passed over us, and set us free.
- b. "Next Year in Jerusalem" - Persecution has spread the Jewish people all across the world. Each year, we would celebrate the Passover wherever we lived, but our heart's desire was to celebrate it at least once in Jerusalem. Faithful, dispersed Jews end the Passover each year proclaiming - L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim. - "Next year in Jerusalem."
- c. My Pilgrimage - I had planned this trip for years. I brought my sons, Rufus and Alexander with me. We were going to experience Passover in Jerusalem. The city was packed, with an estimated 2 million people.

#### WHAT HAPPENED?

1. The Praetorium - We were passing by the palace of Pontius Pilate, also called the Praetorium. Pilate lived and held court there. It was originally built by Herod the Great. I was excited for my boys to see it.
2. An Execution - I ran right into the middle of an execution in progress. I wondered about this for years, because my first thought was "How could I be this unlucky?" Only later, did I see that God had a plan for me, and that I didn't arrive at this door by accident.
3. An Unjust Trial - I learned later what had happened just before I intersected the processional. Jesus had been accused by the Jewish Religious leaders. They believed he had violated God's law, and they wanted him dead, so they badgered and bullied Pilate (the governor) into doing their will despite the governor's sense that Christ was being railroaded.;

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<sup>1</sup> Parallel passages fill out some of the details - Mathew 27:32 / Mark 15:21 / Luke 23: 26 / John 19:17

4. Cruelly Treated. –

- a. Pilate had Jesus scourged, i.e. flogged, and it must have been especially severe – first, because they asked me to help him, and second, because he died after only 6 hours;
- b. a whole company of soldiers surrounded Jesus;
- c. They put a purple robe on him and twisted together a crown of thorns and pressed it onto his head;
- d. They began to call out “Hail King of the Jews” while striking him on the head again and again, and spitting on him, then falling to their knees and mocking him by paying homage to him.
- e. When they were through, they took off his robe and put his own clothes back on him.
- f. Then they led him out the door to take Jesus to Golgotha to crucify him

5. Led by soldiers

- a. The convict was placed in a hollow square of four soldiers.
- b. In front marched the soldier with the board stating the man’s crime.
- c. They would take the longest route possible, so that as many people as possible could see and be warned. Then the man would be crucified on the crossbeam he had to carry.
- d. But Jesus collapsed under its weight as they exited the palace.
- e. The guards saw me standing there and turned towards me. They tapped me on the shoulder with the flat of the sword, and I had no choice. I had to do whatever they told me to do. I took Jesus’ crossbeam on my soldiers and walked to Golgotha, the place of the skull.
- f. I watched them crucify him.

**HOW IT AFFECTED ME**

1. I had a front row seat to the crucifixion of Christ, and saw his death more closely than many others. I heard the centurion – the soldier in charge of the crucifixion, a man who did this day in and day out – exclaim “Surely this man was the son of God;
2. I heard Jesus ask God to forgive his persecutors. When he thought he had been forsaken, his cry to God was so immensely personal; when he cried out “It is finished,” and when he gave his Spirit to God and died. It wasn’t just the centurion who believed in those moments. So did I.
3. You heard the scripture from Mark read earlier, so you know that Mark mentions the names of my sons – Rufus and Alexander without any comment or explanation. That’s because he didn’t have to. Everyone knew who they were by the time Mark wrote his gospel – to the church in Rome. When Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans later, he asks that the church greet Rufus, my son, and his mother (my wife) who had been a mother to me too.
4. If you read Acts 13: 1, you see that I am mentioned there Simeon from Niger. Simeon also means Simon, and Niger means a man of swarthy skin from Africa. Through persecution, my family and many other Jews like me were forced out to Antioch, where the Lord used us to build one of the strongest missionary churches in existence. We were the ones who commissioned Paul.
5. So, what happened to me that day at the Passover affected me the rest of my life. I was pressed into service to carry the cross of Christ. After that day, I chose to carry it for the rest of my life. I found someone I could trust with my boys, my wife, my future, and my eternity.
6. Yes, I carried the cross that day, but Jesus has carried me for the rest of my life.

**INVITATION**