

It was certainly the class case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As far as the Roman government was concerned, Simon from Cyrene was an innocent man who happened to walk by at just the wrong time for him, but the right time for them. Simon had no choice. When the Roman soldier lifted the cross off Jesus and put it on his back, Simon had to do what the soldiers ordered him to do or suffer the consequences.

The cross was heavy and full of splinters. It must have left a ragged track in the dust as Simon drug it through the streets. It certainly left its mark on his shoulder and back. Simon was the first to literally take up Jesus' cross and follow Him.

Jesus of Nazareth was an innocent man. He was weak, dirty and beaten beyond recognition. He was supposed to carry His own cross, but couldn't. The weight was too much for Jesus to carry because He was already carrying the weight of the world on His shoulders. The sins of all the people of the world, everyone who will ever live, were embedded on Jesus. His blood, like the blood of the sacrificial lamb, had already begun to flow.

Simon was ordered to carry the cross past the murderous mob, ahead of the group of mourners, to the top of the hill outside of Jerusalem called Mount Calvary. He left the cross there. Simon's job was done. No one would ask Simon to do any more than that.

Jesus ask us to follow Him to the cross. Jesus invites us to lay our sin and guilt at the foot of the cross. He carried the load for us there. Jesus bore the weight of your sins and mine on the cross so that we will never have to face eternal punishment for our sins.

Jesus told the mourners on the way to the cross, **“Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”** He tells us the same thing. He wants us to realize the seriousness of our sins, to truly repent for what we have done wrong and the good we have failed to do. Jesus invites us to gather up all of our sins, failures, guilt, shame and regrets and carry them up the hill to Him. No doubt about it, they are heavy. They are worth crying about. But we have to bring them to Jesus because He has dealt with them on the cross.

When we drag our sins to the cross, the trail they leave behind is instantly covered by Jesus' footsteps. Our sins are forgiven, gone forever. When Jesus said, **“It is finished,”** He meant it. The price for sin has been paid in full. When we let go of our sins, our hands come away clean. The weight of our sins rolls off our shoulders and onto His. Once Jesus has them, they disappear. Our sins are forgiven and we are set free.

Tonight we can feel the weight of the cross of Christ. But with every step we take, we can also feel its cleansing power. So bring your sing to the cross and leave them there. Jesus will take them from there. That is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.