



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior, Mark 15:16-23

"Via Dolorosa, part I: or the Way of the Stench"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the light of the word of God. The light that it throws upon our pathway, and we pray tonight as we consider the passion of our Lord Jesus that Thy will guide us and direct us into a deeper understating of all that it meant for him to be able to say, that he was the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. And we pray that we may be grateful and thankful for all that he has done for us, and through our study tonight, may we receive new motivation for Christian service, and the kind of service that will honor him. We commit each one present to Thee. We pray that the spiritual needs that we each have may be met through the Scriptures, and this we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, tonight we are continuing our series of studies in the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, the Old Testament and the Doctrine of the Atonement, and for those of you have been here right along, you'll remember that just last week, we concluded our study of the servant songs in the prophecy of Isaiah, and there relationship to this general title, and tonight we're continuing our series, and the subject is the Via or Via Dolorosa, or the Way of the Stench, and this subject we will seek to cover tonight, and then next week

will be the last on the first page of the series of lessons that will be the second part of this particular one, and we will deal particularly with the New Testament doctrine of substitution. We are using Mark chapters 14 through 16 for our basic Scriptural study, but we are free to move over into the Old Testament as we encounter texts that the evangelists or that our Lord used in the Passion account.

Now, tonight, the Way of the Stench, and first a few words by way of introduction after I read Mark 15, verses 16 through 23.

"And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon of Cyrene, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not."

I think since we are going to refer to the parallel passage in Luke chapter 23, that it would be good for us to read that passage also right now. Luke chapter 23, and we'll read verses 26 through 32. This is the Luken account of the encounter of Simon of Cyrene with the crowd as our Lord was being led out to Golgotha. Verse 26, Luke 23,

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, of Cyrene, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women," (Now, we are not to assume from this that women are not people.) "Who also bewailed and lamented him." (You can see that I am in bad shape for tonight. [Laughter]) "But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your

children." (I want you to particularly notice our Lord's reaction to the women, the particular women who were following him who were bewailing them and emending him. He turned to them and rebuked them.) "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in that they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts, which never gave nursed. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death."

It is Paul who is best known for the self emptying of our Lord, in Philippians chapter 2, in verse 7, the apostle speaks about how the Lord Jesus, who though he was in the form of God made himself of no reputation. In the Greek text it says something like this. That he emptied himself." That is the famous kenosis passage, the self-emptying of our Lord Jesus, in which he surrendered the voluntary use of his divine attributes. Paul states that saying he became a servant, so it is Paul who is known for the self-emptying humiliation of our Lord when he became a man. If it was an emptying for Jesus Christ to become a man, how much this humiliation was a self-emptying of our Lord. As we come to the cross, we plunge deeper and deeper into the humiliation of the Lord Jesus. I wonder if Paul may have had something of this in mind when he spoke about the mystery of Godliness in connection with the Lord Jesus.

Now, I know that he was speaking about those great events in his life, but I think also he was thinking undoubtedly about some of the experience of our Lord in this self-humiliation, which led ultimately to the cross of Jesus Christ. The journey from the palace to Golgotha, where we left our Lord in our study, before we turned to the Old Testament, to Golgotha, which was outside the camp, is a natural opposite of the triumphal entry. Our Lord came into Jerusalem with crowds of people shouting hosannas and hallelujahs to the great prophet from the little village of Nazareth, but now just a few hours later, he leaves the city to go out the mount called Golgotha there to be crucified.

There are some intriguing persons and incidents along the way. There is of course the encounter with Barabbas, the robber and murderer, whose life tells the story of the cross with such ironic plainness. I guess that Barabbas is the only man who in a purely fleshly way could say that Jesus Christ died for me.

There is Simon of Cyrene, whose story was thought so noteworthy that all three of the synoptic mention it, and we are going to deal a little bit with the story tonight. And then there is the dying thief, one of the noblest theologians of Jesus' day, although few realize it. It would be interesting to know a great deal more about each of these men. We are going to study them as we encounter them in the Via Dolorosa and our Lord's crucifixion at Calvary. There are three principle movements in this section. There is the crowning with thorns, in verse 16 through 19 of Mark 15, and then there is second, Simon and the cross, verses 20 and 21, and finally, there is Golgotha and the wine verses 22 through 23, and that's what we're going to be looking at in our time tonight. So first of all we turn in our outline to Romans 1, vaudeville, the crowing with thorns.

The little spectacle that we have heard described for us by Mark the evangelist in verses 16 through 23 is a kind of grotesque vaudeville. A. M. Hunter, a professor of New Testament at the university of Aberdeen, has spoken of the Mark crowing as a species of grim barrack room jesting. That is the kind of thing it was. In the historical incident itself, a faded kind of scarlet cloak was somehow obtained. The soldiers took it. They placed it mockingly around the shoulders of the Lord Jesus. They obtained a wreath planted with an acanthus shrub, or something like that. They put that on his head, and then proceed to make fun of him because these were the insignia of the Hellenistic Vassal Kings. The scarlet cloak and the crown of thorns, in this they were saying, "He is a king, but look at what kind of a king he is." They proceeded to make all kinds of mock movements, which suggest that he is a king. Mark even says they bowed down on their knees and worshiped him, but it all in strict fun for them.

Now, the spiritual instruction that arises out of this is, I think, is rather significant. We've been saying all along that the things that happen to our Lord Jesus Christ in the passion are things with ironic instruction, and if your spiritual eyes are open to what is happening and what the evangelists are saying, you're going to discover some rather interesting spiritual things. In the first place, one of the things that comes to the four immediately is some truth touching the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we have already talked about this in our study of Pilot, and so I am not going to do anything more than remind you of it. The fact that our Lord Jesus had a crown of thorns crammed down upon his head is something of deep spiritual significance because the thorns are designed to suggest for us the judgment that God originally gave men because of sin. I'm going to read from Genesis chapter 3, and the judgment of Adam.

"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;"

The thorns and the thistles in the natural creation are signs that the curse of God rests upon the creation. Whenever you see thorns and thistles, whenever you feel a thorn you should think of the fact that Adam fell in the Garden of Eden, and we are suffering on account of his fall, so the thorns were a very explicit sign of the fall of man, and the fact that these Roman soldiers guided by the providence of God took the crown of thorns, of all things a crown of thorns, and crammed it upon the head of our Lord Jesus is a vivid picture of the fact that the Lord Jesus is bearing the curse. For that is precisely what those thorns signify.

Now, of course the fact too that they put a crown of thorns upon his head speaks in an ironic way of the fact that he is true king, but he is king who suffers. He is the Messianic King, but a Messianic King who must suffer because of the curse which

Adam has brought upon the human race. In the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians he speaks of this when he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us," and the picture that that conjures up before my mind is the picture of our Lord Jesus with the crown of thorns upon his head.

Now, also as I have suggested, the fact that it was a crown of thorns upon his head, as he was arrayed in the garments that suggested the fact that he was a king, this too touches the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. He is actually no Vassal King, as they sought to make him, a simple Hellenistic Vassal King, a little king beneath the great emperor in Rome, but he is really the ruler of the kings of the earth. As John says, in Revelation chapter 1, in verse 5, so there is a great deal of irony in this picture, and there is also a great deal of truth underneath the outward picture that we gain of the Lord Jesus suffering with the crown of thorns upon his head, but I think the thing that I want you to particularly to notice, is the fact that we've been saying all along that the Old Testament pictures our Lord as a king, but as a king who would suffer, and the sufferings are described for us in the suffering servant songs of the prophecy of Isaiah. So here again, we have him pictured as a king who is destined to suffer, and here we have some indication of the fact that the suffering that he is going to undertake is a suffering under the curse due to human sin in the Garden of Eden.

Now, we come secondly, to providence, Simon and the cross. I hope I don't make too much over Simon because he is such an interesting character, and my excuse for making what I'm going to make over him is the fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke record the encounter of the Lord Jesus with Simon of Cyrene. And as a matter of fact Mark goes out of his way to point out that he is the father of Alexander and Rufus, who evidentially were very well known to the church in Rome. For Mark's gospel was written primarily for Romans to read, so evidentially Mark thought that there was some connection that would be interesting to the first readers of the gospel of Mark.

Providence, Simon and the cross, verses 20 through 21.

The Lord Jesus is now on his way to Golgotha, and he is carrying his own cross, as was the custom for those who were to be crucified. Death by crucifixion was one of the cruelest and most degrading forms of punishment ever conceived by human perversity, even in the eyes of the Pagan world. We must not think that Romans all loved the spectacle of crucifixion. They did not. Cicero for example writes, "Even the mere word "cross" must remain far, not only from the lips of the citizens of Rome, but also from their thoughts their eyes, their ears." Elsewhere Cicero also calls crucifixion the "Grossest, cruelest, or most hideous manner of execution." Josephus a Jewish historian speaks of it as the "Most wretched of all ways of dying," And the shutter caused by the cross as an instrument of execution is still reflected in our English word "excruciating pain," for that is derived from cross or crucifixion.

Now, the Romans in their histories as they thought of the important things that happened, they wrote histories, and of course you may remember that Tacitus is probably the best known of the Roman historians. He said concerning the reign of Tiberius, "Under Tiberius nothing happened."

Now, that is the blindness of the natural man. "Under Tiberius, nothing happened." It is as if the Lord Jesus died, and the world paid him no attention at all. Rome the capital of the world at that time, hardly knew what was happening when the Son of God died for sinners. This account is important for practical reasons too because the unexpected things in our lives are often the most important things. The issue always is, when these things happen to us, what will we do with them? And Simon's incident is a beautiful illustration, it seems to me, of what can happen to a man, and if we respond to it, what can happen in the providence of God, for the glory of God. I'm going to put Simon's story into the form of a three-act drama, and act one is Golgotha, and I want you to imagine yourself in a situation somewhat similar to Simon's.

Now, you understand, of course, that what I'm going to say has a measure of imagination about it, and so what I'm telling you is not necessarily the precise way that

these things happened, but the essence of what I'm saying, I think, is suggested rather strongly by the word of God. Have you ever after a busy week of work, or a busy day of work or a long siege of work, looked forward to a few days of rest and relaxation, when you could as it were put away all of the labor and exertion, the long hours that you've been engaged in and sit down and just enjoy yourself for a little while.

Can you just imagine for example, you've had a busy week at work, you men, and you're looking forward to Friday night. You can go home, it's nice cool weather, you can think of building a fire in the fireplace, and sitting down in front of the fire place with a good book that you've been trying to read for about a month and have never found the time yet to open it up, so Friday comes, and you take off your shoes, and you put on your slippers, and after you've had a very nice evening meal, you pull your chair over in front of the fire, and you get the book, and you turn on the light, and you open it up on about the first page. You read to page two, and suddenly the doorbell rings, and so you walk somewhat unhappily to the door, and open it up, and there is cousin Sally and her seven fiendish brats, who have come to spend a couple of hours with you.

Now, how are you going to react in a situation like that? We all have these little experiences you know. Now, of course that was rather insignificant for us. I remember one time when my wife and I invited a young couple to come to have supper with us, and the time came 6:00, no company, 6:30 no company, 7 no company. We could not reach these people by telephone for they lived in Denton, and did not have a telephone. 7:30 nobody was there. It was evident that they had forgotten, so we sat down and ate ourselves, and thought not a great deal more about it waiting to hear from them until the next Monday night, we looked up. My wife looked up from the kitchen outside, and saw them coming up to the house at 6:00 at the precise time, just one week later than we had invited them.

Now, she was having hamburger that night. [Laughter] Now, these are some of the experience of life that someone has called "the bludgeoning of chance" Now, how

shall ye respond to incidents like that? Simon's had a great deal more significant, as we shall see. For act one, for him, was an act that meant the instead of going into the city of Jerusalem and enjoying the time of fellowship with the Jews over the Passover weekend, the weekend of the feast.

He now finds himself forced by the Roman soldiers to go outside the city and observe the crucifixion of which he had had no part, and of which he had utterly no interest. It was early Friday morning, evidentially. I'm going to presume since he was from Cyrene, that he had come from Libya, and this was the weekend which he was going to enjoy as a Jew who has come home to celebrate the Passover, perhaps for the first time. Well, even perhaps the first time in his life. He'd always looked forward to being in Jerusalem at feast time, when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to celebrate the Passover, and also the fifty days perhaps that concluded with Pentecost, and so he comes out of the city, perhaps from the country, perhaps because he was unable to find motel accommodations in the city of Jerusalem.

And so he put up his tent out on the hills of Judea, and early Friday morning he was making his way into the city when a disorderly procession, with it's hard Romans and it's yapping Jews and it's weeping women came by, and he noticed a couple of men who seemed to be bearing their cross very well, but one of them, the third, seemed to be having a great deal of difficulty in carrying his cross out to Golgotha. He did not know of course that he had been buffeted and scourged throughout the night, that our Lord had had no sleep for hours upon end and that he was physically weekend, but he saw him weakening. And as he stood watching the procession pass by, just as that figure came by him, he stumbled, and it was evident that he was going to fall, and one of the Roman soldiers reached out, and put a hand on the shoulder of Simon and commandeered him, impressed him and said, "You carry the cross."

Now, I think I can imagine Simon. His expostulations. I don't want to go out there. I haven't had anything to do with this. I just happened to be passing by. Get one

of these people in the crowd who are going by, but no he was impressed into the service of the carrying of the cross, and so he unwillingly, unhappily, takes the cross in hand, and becomes a part of the procession after our Lord Jesus and the women.

Now, I'd like to say something about the women too, because I think this is of some significance. In the Luken account, you'll remember, specific reference is made to the women, and to the fact that they were weeping and bewailing and lamenting him and following him. There is no evidence whatsoever, that these women were believing women. As a matter of fact, the way in which our Lord speaks to them, seems to suggest that they were not. That they were women who just had a sympathetic interest in the fact that here was fellow Israelite who was suffering at the hands of the Roman soldiers and of the Jewish leaders. And our Lord, instead of responding in kindness, apparently as you might expect, somewhat tartly speaks to them, as he turns to them and says, "Daughters of Jerusalem don't weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." And then he speaks of the fact that there is going to come great tribulation upon the earth, and their tears were much better directed toward the sufferings that the nation as a whole would suffer in the future.

I do not think it's fair to say that our Lord despises the emotion of the women. He does not resent this misplaced human emotion., but what he is trying to say, is that he does not need it. He is no waif broken upon the wheel of fortune. "Weep for Jerusalem's children, for their sin is full and their judgment is certain." These women apparently sentimentally attached to him, but misguided for they did not understand what he really was carrying out gets then something of a tart rebuke from our Lord.

You know, it reminds us of the fact that there are lots of people who have sympathetic attachment to Jesus Christ, who do not have any genuine faith in him. There are people who can sit and listen to Handel's Oratorio, and be swept up into a great religious emotion, but they know nothing about the fact that he is suffering servant of Jehovah who has shed his blood for their sin. They are moved emotionally by the music.

Moved emotionally by the experience, but there is no reality in their Christian experience, and I think these women illustrate that.

Now, Simon was compelled. That's a very interesting word. It occurs only three times in the Greek New Testament. It occurs in the Mathian parallel account, and then it occurs in Matthew chapter 5, in verse 41 in the Sermon on the Mount, when the Lord Jesus says, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him too." But it's evident that Simon is not very well instructed at this point in the Sermon on the Mount, and I'm sure that he did not accept this cross in the spirit of, "Well, if you are compelling me to go a mile out to Golgotha, let me have it I'll be willing to take it out there and back as well" because this word to compel is a word that means to impress into service.

It was a word that was derived from the Persian language, and it was used of the Persian postal service. The Persians had one of the finest postal services in all of ancient times. They could have taught our post office department a whole year full of lessons. As a matter of fact, so far as I know, they could have told a lot of countries how to operate their postal services. They wouldn't have been able to tell the British or the Swiss very much because they know a great deal about postal service, but they surely could have told our men a great deal about postal service. They had such a fine postal service and such laws to back it up, that the days work of the men who carried the postal service to the distant parts of the Persian empire, their days work was marked out in specific days, so that as the men rode their horses, for it was a service on horseback, when they rode their horses to a certain place, there were always fresh horses and food for the men who were working for the postal service, and furthermore, if it so happened that something happened that a horse went lame, or something else, they were by law permitted to commandeer any animal that they wished, and that word was used to describe it. They were able to impress or compel into service, anybody else's horse, and also they could compel someone to feed them if they needed food.

Now, that is the word that is used here, and so it evident from it that this was a heavy hand that was laid upon an unwilling shoulder. So his protest and his expostulations were failing, I'm sure that Simon, at this point, felt like a man who got caught in a revolving doorway, or else a man who rushes out to the freeway and discovers that there has been an accident down the way, and he cannot get on the freeway, and he cannot get off, and so all he does is sit there and seeth. Have you ever felt like that? Well, that's the way he felt undoubtedly.

But finally, he got into the procession, and he is carrying the cross after our Lord Jesus. He doesn't, so far as I know, he has not looked into his face a very carefully. He is following along behind the Lord Jesus, as you might expect him to do. The women are all about, and then he hears this strange utterance from the man who is in front of him. He sees the man stop. He sees the man turn around to the women who are right by him as he's carrying the cross, and he gazes into the face of our Lord Jesus, which seems to him to be the noblest face that he has ever seen, tenderness amid majesty, and he was fascinated by the dignity, and yet the humiliation of the man and the voice, and puzzled extremely by the words that he spoke to the woman. For he would have expected the Lord Jesus for him to thank them for the fact that they were so sympathetic for the sufferings that he was undergoing, so the fact that he looked into the face our Lord Jesus, saw the tenderness and the majesty all mingled together, for he is remember, the king who is going to his suffering, and something came over Simon, what it was, we do not know except it was part of the work of irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit, who alone brings men to faith in Jesus Christ. You knew I would get that in, didn't you? So astounded by the bravery and dedication of the Lord Jesus, Simon goes out to Calvary.

I'm going to assume just for the sake of imagination, that Simon stayed. That there was something strangely drawing and appealing to him about what he saw, and that he stayed there at least for a lengthy period of time while the Lord Jesus was being crucified.

Act two, takes place on the day of Pentecost. I don't have near as much Scripture for this, and this is S.L. Johnson's imagination, but I want you to read with me, one or two verses in Acts chapter 2 because I am just going to try to reconstruct, in my own mind, what may have happened.

Now, you know the account. It is the Day of Pentecost. It is fifty days after our Lord's resurrection. Seven weeks have passed. Simon's visit to Jerusalem is almost over. He has heard much of the life and the works and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, for he's been inquiring about him. He no doubt has run into some of the disciples of the Lord, for they're proclaiming the fact that he has been resurrected from the dead. He has noted the hush, hush attitude of the authorities to the reports of the resurrection, and that has caused him to be only interested just a little bit more, and now, on the day of Pentecost, he arrives on the scene, and there is this unorthodox crowd, plain Galileans, and amazingly these plain Galileans, they are not Judeans, they are not the cultured. They are not the educated. They are not the refined, but they are unrefined, uneducated Galileans and worldwide citizens, for the most part, and they are speaking in other tongues.

Now, they are not speaking gibberish. That is not speaking in tongues. They are not speaking in ecstatic speech. That is not speaking in tongues. That is a blaspheme against the biblical teaching on speaking in tongues, speaking in tongues is speaking in known languages, not unknown languages. As you well know in this class, the term unknown is not found in the New Testament, added only by the translators. They were speaking in known languages, and as they listen, these men from all over the face of the earth, the Jews who had come back for the feast, they heard them speaking in their own dialects.

Now, in the midst of it, we read in verse 7, "And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And

how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" They were speaking known languages, not ecstatic speech, not gibberish.

Now, I have a good friend. He's a Bible teacher in the state of Texas. He has a young friend who has been interested in the Bible in past few years, and he's a rather avid student of the Word, and he's also very interested in things, and they have mutual friends who are claiming to be speaking biblical tongues, but they mean ecstatic speech or gibberish, which is not biblical speaking in tongues, so he wrote off to one of the organizations that supports and spreads the gospel of ecstatic speech, and he received a book which tells you how to speak in tongues, how you can learn to speak in tongues, and so he took the book out, and he went out by himself, and he has taught himself how to speak in tongues.

Well, they were having this meeting in this little Bible study just a couple of months ago in central Texas, and the subject of tongues came up, and there is a couple there in which there is great deal of interest in speaking in tongues. This couple has never spoken in tongues, but they are especially anxious to be able to speak in this gibberish, and yet they never have, and as a matter of fact, they have never heard anyone, but they are very interested in doing it themselves. That's a very dangerous place to be in, but any way that's the situation. So they were having the class, and at the end of the class they had a little discussion, and during the midst of the discussion, well again, this couple expressed their desire to speak in ecstatic speech, and finally I think it was the wife, who said, "I'd love to hear." And then the teacher, knowing that his friend had learned how to do it, he said, "Well, we have someone here who can speak in tongues," and they said, "Oh wonderful, let's hear him." And so he began to speak in tongues.

And then when he finished, after he had demonstrated his speaking in tongues, then they said, "Well, what did you say. We'd love to know what you said." He said, "I said nonsense. It means nothing." And that of course is really the situation in speaking in tongues throughout this country. It is nonsense. I know that you think that I am being

very hard because you have heard all kinds of stories about what people have said, but let me assure you. It is nonsense, total nonsense. It does not mean anything. It is simply the concatenation of certain kinds of syllables one after the other. It is gibberish.

Now, what they heard on the Day of Pentecost was not gibberish. They were there Parthians. They heard their language from Parthea. There were Persians. They heard the Persian language. There is Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontas, Asia, Phrygia, Egypt, and on the day of Pentecost in the temple area there were all of these people speaking in tongues, and they were speaking in known languages, and you can hear one man saying, "Well, I know that man. That man is John the fisherman. He's never been to Egypt. He doesn't know anything about Egypt, but now I see him, and I hear him speaking Egyptian," and so on. It was a miracle. It was a miracle, and thus they were prepared by the miracle to listen.

Now, to speak gibberish does not convenience anyone that it is a miracle, least of all me, but here it is evident that they thought it was a miracle, and so they were listening, and I want you to notice in verse 10 it says, "Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene,"

Now, I am going to say, there is Simon. There is Simon of Cyrene, and he was there on the day of Pentecost, perhaps. Well, he observed the men first. He first asked himself, like the rest of the crowd, "Are these fellows a little tipsy? Have they had a little too much wine?" But when Peter the Galilean stood up and began to preach, it was evident that the was not a man who was moved by the spirits, but he was moved by the Spirit, and so finally he came to end of his address, and at the end of the address, there was a breathless silence, and contrary to all of the evangelistic sermons that are ordinarily given in the 20th century, it was not the preacher who gave the invitation, it was the crowd, who gave the invitation. They said, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Because their hearts were pricked by the Holy Spirit from the preaching of the Scriptures.

Now, I think that is true evangelism. When men are pricked by the Holy Spirit, I'll not say anything about irresistible grace this time, but they are pricked by the Holy Spirit, and they turn out of the working of God the Holy Spirit to ask for the way of salvation. They were prepared, and so Simon, I'm going to suggest, may well have been saved at this time, if not before.

William Ward Hayre used to say about a friend of his who spoke about his preacher who said, "My master, my minister is invisible during the week, and incomprehensible on Sunday." Well, now Peter did not preach like that. He preached with the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not preacher like that recommended by William Stubbs, the Bishop of Oxford, who spoke to a young curit of his, said in answer to the question, how should he preach? Well, he said, "Preach about God, and preach about twenty minutes." [Laughter] Evidently Peter was not hindered in any way by the fact that at 12:00 the congregation began to think about roast beef. He preached from the Scriptures, and they were so entranced by what they heard, well, they could pass up what they were going to eat.

Now, act three, Libya. Now, I'm going to try to put together two or three things that are mentioned in the Scriptures. I am going to suggest to you that Simon brought back to his wife and sons the strangest story that a Pilgrim to Jerusalem ever told.

Now, it's possible of course that he was by now living in Jerusalem. That does not affect the story at all. It only affects my imagination. I am going to say, that he went back to Libya. At any rate, he went back to his home, and there he told the strange story of how on the Friday morning, the day in which the lamb was to be slain. He had been going into the city of Jerusalem, and he had been commandeered by the Roman soldiers, and he had gone out to observe the crucifixion of this man Jesus, and he also spoke about how, during that time in Jerusalem he had come through that experience by the providence of God to an understanding, that that man was the suffering servant of Jehovah of the Old Treatment, and on the basis of that, he said, "I have come to know the

Messiah in truth and in deed." And he unfolded to his family the story of his conversion. Simon had two sons. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus. There is tradition to the effect that Alexander was martyred. We would assume therefore that Rufus lived for some period of time.

Now, there is one other text that I think that we ought to look at. It is in Romans chapter 16, in verse 13, Romans chapter 16, in verse 13. Now Paul is writing to Romans, remember, and the gospel of Mark is written to the Romans. Here is Romans chapter 16, verse 13, Paul now writes to the Romans, he is writing from the city of Corinth, and he says, "I want you Romans to greet for me Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." So greet Rufus, and greet his mother, who is not only his mother, but also my mother.

Now, what does Paul mean by that? Well, I think that what he must mean is this. That Rufus', mother Simon's, wife has been a benefactor of the Apostle Paul someplace. If it possible that Simon brought his family back to Jerusalem in order to have further fellowship of the Christian movement. Perhaps, they had also been scattered out with some of the other Christians. It is possible that she had been a friend to the Apostle Paul in his adversity and in his need. And furthermore that now as a result of this, not only was Simon converted, but his wife was converted. His two sons are converted, and evidentially they are significant enough Christians, to be specifically mentioned by Mark in writing the gospel, a strange thing to say, "Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus," if they were not well known and well respected in the city of Rome, so that what has happened here is that by the commandeering of the providence of God, upon one man there is become a tremendous transformation in his whole family. He has become a Christian. His wife has become a Christian, and she has been enabled by God to be a benefactor of the Apostle Paul. The two sons had become Christians. One perhaps a Christian martyr and their names are respected in the Christian church, and we have read of them now for nineteen hundred years, and so the name of Simon of Cyrene and his

family goes sounding along with the name of the crucified to the end of time. He is the man, the only man, who can say, "I carried the cross of the Lord Jesus, literally."

Now, I know you think that is a little bit of imagination on my part, but the facts are all there in the word. It just takes a good detective, a good private eye to put them together, and so I say that probably this is what happened. Now, we have a most interesting thing that has happened. It doesn't prove anything, but it is interesting. A burial cave used in the 1st century, prior to the destruction of the temple, and belonging to a family of Cyrenean Jews, was discovered by Israeli archeologists on the southwestern slope of the Kidron Valley in November of 1941. Thirty years ago¹, before Israel became a state. The intriguing possibility that this tomb was owned by Simon and his family is raised by an Ossuary inscribe twice in Greek, Alexander son of Simon. Now, that is most striking.

Now, I must say, Alexander is a common name. Rufus is a common name. Simon was a common name. There is no evidence defiantly linking this cave and the Ossuary with the Simon of Cyrene, but they are of Cyrenian Jews, or the Alexander with the son of Simon, who was martyred, but it just may be that that is the tomb, an amazing thing. Well, now what are the lessons of this incident? I think first of all, there is the lesson of the benediction of the accidents of providence. A strange mingling of chance and fate seems to shape our lives, and out of the most disappointing experiences may come the most divine blessings. Often out of frustration, comes revelation, and through revelation, salvation, and this experience repeated over with a slightly different doctrinal emphasis often occurs in Christian lives. The little incidence of life are often the incidence that change the whole scope and purpose of our life.

I think it is also an illustration for meeting the dilemmas of life. There are three ways that we can meet these dilemmas. We can first of all, resist, and when we resist the

¹ Dr. Johnson’s series on “The Suffering Servant” was taught in the early 1970s.

will of God expressed it the providence of God, we are tormented by bitterness. Have you ever seen bitter Christians? They are a very, very unhappy lot, and they do not make a very good recommendation for the Lord Jesus Christ. They're like the woman I read about five or six years ago, who bought a thunderbird. This was in the day when the seatbelts were first put on, and the light flashed on. Remember when you got in the car and turned on the car, and there was a noise if you did not hook up the seatbelts. She became very upset over that, and finally she reached down, took off her heels, and just struck the light with the heel and put it out, and then she was troubled with it no longer. The Ford company said that they had many testimonies to the effect that people did similar things, so the next year the only thing that they did was to have to light flash on for about ten seconds. Well, these automobile companies, they have the patience of Job, and so they now have us at their mercy with all of these sounds in the cars. Well, you can resist if you want to.

The next way to respond to the dilemmas of life is to surrender, but to surrender in the sense of being torn apart by self pity and despair, and telling everybody how much you suffer because you finally surrendered to the will of God, so you can resist and be tormented by bitterness, or you can surrender and be torn apart by self pity constantly asking your self, "Why it have to be me? Why should it have to be me, who suffers in this way?" Or you can seek God's will through the incident, which may involve some confession and repentance, but leads to ultimate happiness in the will of God. It's what the writer of the epistle of the Hebrews speaks about when he speaks about being exercised by the discipline that God brings to us.

Now, I don't like books by psychiatrists as you well know, or books by psychologists. As a general rule, I do not say, I don't know enough to say, that a psychologist or a psychiatrist may not help. In many instances, I am sure that that is true. I am not attacking the whole profession of psychology and psychiatry, just a major part of it. [Laughter] I'm just kidding, but I do think that there is great deal of overemphasis on

what psychology and psychiatry can do for a Christian. Paul Tournier, who is probably one of the most famous of our current psychiatrists, a professing Christian Swiss of the Reform church, wrote a book two or three years ago, called *To Resist or Surrender*, and I read that little book because it was a little book to start with, and I read it because I wanted to see what Mr. Tournier had to say in that book about resisting and surrender. I have about a half a dozen of his books.

And in it he says there are three ways in which you can respond to the things that happen to you. You can resist, or you can surrender, or you can seek God's will, and I said, well, that's precisely what the Bible says. And I thought about a criticism that someone once made of Westcott and Hort, the great textual critics of the New Testament as opposed to Griesbach [phonetic], a German textual critic of a few generations before Westcott and Hort. Someone said about Westcott and Hort, "Whatever in them is good is found in Griesbach [phonetic], and whatever is not good, is their own. In other words, if they had just followed Griesbach [phonetic] everything would be all right, and so I want to say in fun, whatever in Tournier is good, is found in the Bible, and whatever is not good, is Tournier's because to resist to surrender or to seek God's will, well, that's the real test for all of us when troubles come. It's either break out in bitterness, break down with a sick headache, or break through to the will of God.

Now, I think there is a moment like Simon's in every life. For some it's a quiet call in youth, for others it comes by the arresting words of some persuasive personal counsel from some friend or perhaps some preacher, in the ministry of the word, or it may come by the accident of divine providence, through a burden, through a tragedy through a perplexity, through a problem, or through a chance acquaintance, but it comes, and the test is how we respond to the will of God. I wish I could tell you how God enabled me to respond positively to the incident that came in my life. I would never have responded were it not for the grace of God, for he not only brings us face to face with these accidents of providence, but for his elect, he gives them the grace to respond positively,

and he gives them the grace so they cannot brag about human volition. It is divine volition that determines the future of the man who has believed in Jesus Christ, dedication, Golgotha and the wine. It's not necessary for me to say much about this.

Golgotha is related to the Hebrew word *gulgoleth* which means “skull.” The Latin for Calvary is *calvaria*, which comes from *calvis*, which means “a skull.” Our English word Calvary is brought then from the Latin. Golgotha was the name of the place where Jesus was crucified. It was located to the north of the city, out side the gates, and there Jesus was crucified.

In going outside the gates of Jerusalem, what did our Lord become? Well, my good Bible students, my systematic theologians, when the Lord Jesus went out of the city of Jerusalem, outside the camp he became the sin offering, and in becoming the sin offering, he was unclean. All of the Levitical ritual of the Old Testament stresses the fact that the sin offering was unclean. No one was to touch it, and it was that part of the animal that was the most distasteful to be around. That's why I say this is Via Dolorosa, the Way of the Stench, for our Lord Jesus is becoming the sacrifice for sin, but the stench is not his, it's ours because of our sin, and that's what he was bearing. Time is up. I must stop. Let's bow in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]