

The Walk toward Calvary

Luke 23: 26-32

After enduring a long night of betrayal and false accusation, Jesus was brought before Pilate, sent to stand before Herod, and returned to stand in judgment before Pilate again. He was condemned of crimes worthy of death, mercilessly scourged, mocked, and ridiculed by the Roman soldiers who showed no pity or remorse.

After the unbearable abuse Jesus endured, His cross is placed upon His back and He is led by the soldiers toward Calvary's hill to be crucified. Our text deals with the journey Jesus made toward the site of His crucifixion. This path is commonly referred to as the: Via Dolorosa. The name comes from the phrase "Way of Grief" in Latin. It is a road within the old city of Jerusalem that led from the hall of Pilate unto the hill of Golgotha, where Jesus would be crucified, bearing the sin of humanity and suffering the righteous judgment of God in our place.

As we examine the text before us, I want to look at the [details](#) of Jesus' journey as we consider: [The Walk toward Calvary](#). As we do, I hope we realize the magnitude of Jesus' suffering and the grace extended to sinners such as we are. Notice:

I. The Delegation that Followed (26-27) – Here Luke reveals the gathering that followed Jesus along the path toward Calvary. Consider:

A. The Cyrenian (26) – [And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear *it* after Jesus.](#) We have already considered Simon in our last study. Again, I want to emphasize the impact this encounter with Jesus must have had on Simon. [Mark 15:21 – And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.](#) Acts 13:1 – [Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.](#) Some believe this was the same man who helped Jesus bear the cross. [Rom.16:13 – Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.](#) Also, some believe this to be Rufus, the son of Simon. We cannot say with absolute certainty, but one thing is sure: one cannot come into close contact with Jesus, even bearing His cross, and not be changed by that encounter!

B. The Company (27) – [And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.](#) This was no small procession heading toward Calvary. Many were

there to ensure the death of Jesus on the cross, but some were there in support of Jesus, desiring to be near Him as long as they could. We can only imagine the scene that day. No doubt many were shouting at Jesus. Some were mocking Him. Those close to Him followed in grief and mourning. Others stood there in total disbelief as Jesus passed by, beaten beyond recognition. His crucifixion was not carried out behind the scenes. There were many witnesses to this brutal atrocity. As each one looked on, they were forced to make a decision regarding Jesus. The same is true in our day as well. We cannot consider Christ and the suffering of the cross and remain neutral. We must make a decision!

C. The Conduct (27) – *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.* It was apparent the women who followed Jesus were visibly upset. Luke reveals they bewailed and lamented Jesus. This shows their strong emotion and utter grief during the proceedings. Their bewailing has the idea of “*striking or beating one’s body, particularly the breast, with the hands in lamentation.*” This is an outward display of inner grief. Their lamenting reveals the *dreadful sound of their grief, literally crying out in despair.*

- This would not have been a pleasant scene. The Via Dolorosa would have been lined with those who hoped to catch a view of the proceedings. Long before Jesus and Simon ever appeared, one would have heard the cries and screams of the women who followed.

II. The Declaration for the Future (28-31) – The words Jesus spoke during the entire process of the trials and the crucifixion are limited, but here we find a few statements He made as He journeyed toward the cross. Consider:

A. The Compassion (28) – *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.* As Jesus heard the lamentation of the women, He was moved to speak to them. His situation was excruciating, and yet He took the time to speak to the women that followed. His suffering would be beyond imagination, but He knew He was fulfilling the Father’s will, and there was comfort in that. Jesus also knew the multitude had rejected Him, and those who chose to follow Him would suffer persecution. He showed compassion for those who followed Him.

- It is interesting to note this account with the women. In that culture, and even there today, women were not held in high regard. Their place in society was always below that of men. However, Jesus took time to console the women. In fact, we find no account in the Gospels where a woman opposed or sought to harm Jesus. This reveals His care, compassion, and provision for all people, especially those whom society often rejects.

B. The Caution (29-30) – Here Jesus speaks a word of caution to the women, and all who would hear. Through His words of caution we discover:

➤ **The Prophecy (29)** – For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Certainly a time of great calamity awaited the Jews in the near future. The Romans would destroy the Temple and they would be scattered throughout the world. Barrenness was considered a curse among the Jews, and yet Jesus declares it will become a blessing in that day.

This too refers to the dreadful time yet future when the Antichrist will appear on the scene, setting himself up as God within the Temple in Jerusalem. This will be a time of great suffering and despair for the Jews and all who do not know Christ as their Savior.

➤ **The Intensity (30)** – Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. Jesus reveals the suffering will be so intense that the people will literally cry out for the rocks and stones from the mountainsides to fall upon them, covering them, and removing them from the dreadful agony they are under through extreme persecution. This will be repeated in the end times, as God begins to pour out His wrath upon those who deny Christ as Lord and Savior. Rev.6:15-17 – And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ^[16] And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ^[17] For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

C. The Confirmation (31) – For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

Jesus uses imagery to make a profound point. He is the green tree, full of life, vigor, and provision. The Green Tree was forsaken, condemned, and crucified. If humanity will treat the Son of the living God, Savior of the world, in such a way, how will they treat mere mortals, those that are dead and dry spiritually?

▪ As I considered the words of Jesus, I was reminded of the holiness of God. He allowed His Son to bear the righteous judgment deserved of sinners. Jesus bore our sin and endured the wrath of God so we could escape through salvation. For those who deny the Lord in salvation, great suffering and judgment awaits. God will not allow sin to go unpunished. Those who have denied Christ as their Savior remain accountable for sin, and will receive the judgment of God. I am thankful my sin debt is paid, but I also realize many remain accountable for their sin.

III. The Description of the Felons (32) – [And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.](#) Here Luke provides a brief description of those who were to be crucified along side of Jesus. Consider:

A. Their Character – We find they were described as [malefactors](#). The term literally means “*an evildoer*” and it speaks of the malicious character they possessed. These men had been convicted of heinous crimes against society.

- As they are crucified on Calvary’s hill, Jesus will hang in the midst of these malefactors. They had committed crimes worthy of their punishment, but Jesus was innocent of any crime or misdeed. He was falsely accused and condemned. We must not forget, however, this was all within the plan and will of God. Jesus was not there by accident or mistake. He was there to atone for our sin, offering Himself as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin. The innocent took His place among the guilty, bearing the sin and shame of all sin. Innocence died so the guilty could live. [Isaiah 53:12 – Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.](#)

B. Their Condemnation (32) – [led with him to be put to death.](#) These two men were led to Calvary with Jesus. They will soon be put to death for the crimes they had committed. One can only imagine the agony of soul these men felt. Their carefree life of crime had caught up with them. Their sin had resulted in condemnation and death. We don’t have any record of anyone being there to show support for these men. It is very likely they were companions of Barabbas, or at least knew him. Can you imagine how they felt, trying to comprehend the fact that an innocent Man would soon die, and one who was clearly guilty was set free? They will soon hear the words Jesus speaks from the cross. One will look to Him by faith and the other will die in his sin. For the one who rejected Jesus, his physical and emotional suffering didn’t end at death. In fact, it had only begun; and as he closed his eyes in death, the reality of a Christ-less eternity began to set in on him.

- Even in condemnation, these men were confronted with Truth. One received Christ as his Savior, believing by faith. The other rejected the only means of salvation and died in his sin, eternally separated from God. We discover that none are beyond the reach of salvation through Christ, but only those who respond by faith receive salvation. Jesus died on the cross to purchase our redemption. He suffered in agony so we could escape the righteous judgment of God. He died and was buried, but He rose again triumphant in resurrection life. Because of that, there is a means of forgiveness and eternal life for all who respond to Him in faith.

Conclusion: This has been a moving passage of Scripture, even though it is one we haven't heard preached or taught as often as other passages. We see the tender heart of compassion Jesus had for all who believe upon Him. We are reminded of the great price He paid on our behalf. I am thankful to know Him in salvation. Can you say the same? Do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, I urge you to come to Him by faith, repent of sin, and receive salvation that only He can give.

Christian, there is a challenge for us in these verses as well. The women who followed were not ashamed to identify with Jesus during a dangerous and volatile time. How is our witness for Jesus? Are we willing to publicly identify with Him when most do not? He is worthy of our worship and our service!