

Lesson 4 - Follow the Footsteps of Jesus to the Cross

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Introduction: We must follow the footsteps of Jesus all the way.

- A. We will study about a path that most people will not go.
 - 1. Jesus made it very clear that His way will involve a complete loss of our earlier way of living. **(Lk 9:57-62)**
 - 2. Earlier He made what seemed to be an impossible requirement for discipleship. **(Lk 9:23-24)**
 - 3. There are many who profess to be a disciple of Jesus who really do not bear a cross. These in fact are not disciples of Christ.
- B. To the Christian the cross should represent the foundation of our lives. **(Gal 6:14)**
 - 1. How does it become a foundation? Far too many see the cross in a casual way.
 - 2. We should be shocked by the cross of Christ. In it we will see the vileness and the gore of sin, even our own.
 - 3. Every issue in our lives must be framed by the cross of Christ.
- C. The people of God are identified by the cross of Christ. **(Matt 16:21-24)**
 - 1. Peter had to come to learn how the unthinkable would later become his glory.
 - 2. How does the cross become a daily activity? My decisions must become a cross issue and not one of personal preference. **(Gal 2:20)**

“The cross is "I" crossed out.”

I. The steps leading to the cross

- A. The reason for God’s eternal plan. **(1 Pt 1:20; Rev 13:8)**
 - 1. Why was it absolutely necessary for Jesus to die on a Roman cross? **(2 Cor 5:21)**
 - 2. Why all the suffering? Why not a quick death? **(Rom 5:6-8)**
- B. Jesus’ preparation for the cross
 - 1. How would you prepare for a soul-shaking event?
 - a. If you are about to go into battle you must be concerned with your equipment! **(Eph 6:10-18)**
 - b. Suppose you are a football coach and are preparing for a game. You better know your players and then know your opponent.
 - c. Jesus knew Satan was coming and how to prepare. **(Jn 14:30)**
 - 2. Jesus tries to get His disciples to prepare. **(Mt 26:30-35)**
 - a. Peter has not yet understood how to defeat his opponent. **(Lk 22:31-34)**
 - b. The death of Christ would be the defeat of Satan. **(Heb 2:14-15)**
 - c. Peter views the death of Christ as a defeat! Whose side is he on?
 - d. Peter is ready to die in a fight! **(Mt 26:35)**
 - i. Earlier he is ready to go to prison and die but now his mind has changed. **(Lk 22:33)**
 - ii. Peter has limited resources. If he puts all his energy into the wrong battle what will likely happen?
 - 3. The Lord fought a great battle at Gethsemane **(Mt 26:36-46)**

- a. Gethsemane means “olive press.” This was likely a place where Jesus could have privacy with His disciples.
 - b. Satan’s first battle over man took place in a garden. How fitting the second battle begins in one as well.
4. The burden of Jesus at the start of His prayers. **(Mt 26:37; Mk 14:33)**
- a. “troubled” – to be homesick, to be sated.
 - b. Jesus did want to return to the father. **(Jn 17:1-5)**
 - c. The word “sate” describes the glutton who has eaten so much that he cannot eat any more. Even the sight of food becomes unbearable. “The Son of God has endured such infinite suffering that in this hour of agony, He is sated with suffering.”
5. The agony of the garden.
- a. Jesus first knelt and then fell on His face. **(Mt 26:39)**
 - b. Jesus wanted the cup to pass from Him. Jesus had used this expression before but the disciples did not understand. **(Mt 20:22)**
 - c. The double form of Abba, Abba shows a tenderness and compassion. Note Jesus’ address to Martha. **(Lk 10:41)**
 - d. Did Jesus express disillusionment to God in the garden? Was He afraid to die? Note the great intensity of His suffering in the garden. **(Heb 5:7-9)**
6. Jesus comes to a resolution and now is ready to face the cross. **(Mt 26:42)**
- a. Between the second and last prayer angels comfort Him. **(Lk 22:43-44)**
 - b. Jesus was strengthened by this angel. How?
 - c. When was the last occasion Jesus was helped by angels?
 - d. The intensity of this agony is seen in His sweat.
 - e. For the disciples it is too late. Jesus is now ready! **(Mk 14:41-42)**
- C. The preparation of the enemies of Christ
1. If Satan had understood God’s plan what would he had his followers do? **(1 Cor 2:7-8)**
 2. Both the disciples and Jesus’ enemies were unprepared!
 3. Things that the enemies had done so far.
 - a. Judas had an attachment of Roman troops. **(Jn 18:3)**
 - b. Pilate had to have authorized this and knew he would later see Jesus.
 - c. The temple guards were ready for their duty.
 - d. The Roman guards provided security and legitimacy, the swords and staves were weapons to put down opponents in an armed battle.
 - e. No doubt the false witnesses were gathered to give testimony before the priests and lawyers.
 - f. Judas has planned an “innocent” way of revealing the identity of Jesus.
 - g. What was lacking in their planning? **(Acts 5:38-39; Acts 4:27-28)**

Class discussion:

1. What does it mean for every Christian to bear a cross?

2. Why was there no other way for Jesus to redeem mankind?
3. What great mistake did Peter and the disciples make before the cross?
4. Did God answer Jesus prayer?
5. Why did Jesus suffer such agony in the garden? Did He suffer more at the cross or in the garden?
6. What great mistake did the enemies of Christ make as well as their leader, Satan?

II. The Scene at the Cross

- A. Rushed illegal trials were conducted throughout the night.
 1. The trials were a fiasco: Annas, Caiphas, and Pilate
 2. The men who represent the highest religious office in the nation established by God and whose constitution was the word of God were filled with blindness and hypocrisy. **(Jn 18:28)**
 3. Pilate declare Jesus innocent and then allows Him to be executed! **(Mt 26:24-25)**
- B. Jesus showed concern for others even as He was being lead to be executed. **(Lk 23:27-31)**
- C. There were two thieves whose execution was obviously rushed.
 1. Their execution was rushed in order to provide a setting to make Jesus appear guilty!
 2. Their response was to rail at Jesus. **(Mt 27:44)**
- D. The Intense Hatred of the Religious Leaders was seen. **(Lk 23:35; Mt 27:39-44)**
 1. If someone with no background of these events had walked upon this scene what would he think?
 2. What were the leaders saying?
 - a. "Taunts that offer a tribute."
 - b. These are the judges, the religious leaders glorying in a man's suffering. Even vile criminals are allowed to die without this kind of treatment.
 - c. Many of these very men will later have a chance to rethink this.
- E. We see the Crucified Jesus.
 1. How did Jesus respond to these injustices? "Father, forgive them". **(Lk 23:34)**
 2. The greatest influence one can have is to do right while suffering. **(1 Pt 2:21-25)**
 3. Consider the suffering of crucifixion.

“The victim was placed on a wooden cross. Nails, undoubtedly wooden, were driven into the hands and feet of the victim, and then the cross was lifted and jarred into the ground, tearing the flesh of the crucified and racking his body with excruciating pain. Historians remind us that even the soldiers could not get used to the horrible sight, and often took strong drink to numb their senses.”

“The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries-especially at the head and stomach -- became swollen and

oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst; and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself -- of death, the unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most -- bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release.”

III. The mind of Christ at the Cross (Psalms 22)

A. Jesus saw that He was forsaken. (Psa 22:1-2)

1. Jesus was crying out to God in His pain. (Mt 27:46)
2. He cried out both in light and darkness. (Mt 27:45)
3. To add pain far beyond the physical side, God poured out the sins of the world upon Him. (2 Cor 5:21)

B. But Jesus knew that God is always true! (Psa 22:3-5)

1. Because Jesus had so prepared His heart, He could see beyond the physical realm. How could He do this? He knew God's promises. (1 Pt 2:21-23)
2. God is "enthroned in the praises of Israel." Why? He is holy!
3. God will always deliver those who trust in Him. (Ps 34:3-5)
4. Do you know this as a certainty?

C. Jesus saw that He was despised. (Psa 22:6-8)

1. After being beaten and nailed to the cross His appearance was that of a worm.
2. His enemies surrounded Him and shouted insults. (Mt 27:41-44)
3. Evil men will try to beat the righteous down with their deeds and their tongues.

D. Jesus knew that God had always loved Him. (Psa 22:9-11)

1. God provided for Him from conception! He does so to us as well.
2. Because of this He called out for God's help and was comforted that He will answer! He will always help when there is "none to help."

E. Jesus saw that His body was wounded and dying. (Psa 22:12-18)

1. Jesus described in detail the physical effects of a death upon the cross.
2. During His death he heard hatred and scorn from those surrounding Him. The soldiers even gambled for His clothing. (Mt 27:35-36)
3. This was written 1500 years before the event and hundreds of years before crucifixion was invented! THINK!

F. Jesus knew that God would deliver Him. (Psa 22:19-21)

1. In spite of everything He could see, He knew that God would respond!
2. Abraham had this kind of faith. (Rom 4:17-18; Heb 11:18-19)
3. Will you prepare you mind so you too will believe these things in suffering?

G. "You have answered Me." (Psa 22:21)

1. This simple statement overshadows and erases all the pain that went before!
2. If we could only see the answer God has for us. (2 Cor 4:17-18)

Class Discussion:

1. What was wrong about the trials of Jesus?
2. What was most shocking about the conduct of the religious leaders?
3. Why were the thief's blaspheming Jesus at first?

4. What made Jesus' example at the cross so powerful?
5. What struggle went on in Jesus' mind on the cross?
6. When was Psalms 22 written? What does this mean to me?

IV. The power of the example of the cross

A. One thief responded to this example.

1. He sees the greatness of his own sin. He makes no excuses. More importantly he now has turned to consider God's thinking. "Don't you even fear God?"

(Lk 23:41)

- a. If we could only see the cross! Paul's preaching was like this **(Gal 3: 1)**.
- b. You can tell what a person thinks about their past sins when they talk about them. Do they show shame, or glory?
2. He Took a Stand for Jesus. **(Lk 23:40-41)**
 - a. He could not stand by silently. He gives an open rebuke in love. A hatred of sin demands this. **(Heb 1:9)**
 - b. He also had a love for Jesus.
3. He Cast Himself on the Lord's Mercy. **(Lk 23:42)**
 - a. He was not like the other thief. "Just in case... save me!" **(Lk 23:39)**
 - b. Did he understand the Kingdom? He only wanted to be with the Lord.
 - c. What a change! But remember there were 2 thieves.

B. A Roman centurion responded to this example. **(Mt 27:50-54)**

1. He needed more instruction and would later have that opportunity.
2. Why did this centurion see what man of the Jewish leaders could not?

C. You and I must respond to this example.

1. This message must prick our hearts and create a great change. **(Acts 2:37-38)**
2. We must constantly remember who we are. **(Gal 6:14)**

Conclusion: What does the example of the cross mean to you?

A. Some in hardness never respond.

B. Some begin the battle and then become enemies of the cross. **(Phil 3:18)**

1. We become enemies when we let our appetites rule our lives.
2. We become enemies when we fear men more than we do God. **(Gal 6:12; 1:10)**

C. How do you remember this great event?

In A Garden Agony

Bob Buchanon

The Passover feast having been completed, the discourse of John 14-16 and the prayer of John 17 having been spoken, Jesus crossed the valley with the eleven disciples to the Mount of Olives. He frequently retreated to this hillside and into the Garden of Gethsemane for rest, prayer, fellowship with His disciples, and often spent the night here (Luke 21:37; John 18:2). This night was different. He was well aware of what was ahead of Him. He had already been betrayed by one of His apostles and sold for thirty pieces of silver; impetuous Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster would crow the next morning; the remaining apostles would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd; He would be put through the mockery of a trial, stripped of His garments, scourged, slapped, spit upon, and finally crucified. With full knowledge of all that was happening, He sought for a place of solitary prayer.

He left eight of the disciples at the entrance of the garden and said, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36). He then took Peter, James and John further into the garden. Then came that awful and mysterious agony: He began to be exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He turned to the three and said, "Tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:38). As Jesus went a stone's cast away from them (Luke 22:41), He fell on His face and prayed. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Our Lord was about to walk through the "valley of the shadow of death" and it was like a storm rolling over Him. Was He afraid of death? Was that the reason for His agony? Was death the "cup" that He wanted removed? We can almost be sure it was not the mere fear of death that caused Him to be "in agony" as "His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Many of God's people, and even some ungodly men, have met death without flinching; and we know with what calm fortitude the Lord endured the shame of the cross.

We cannot comprehend the full meaning of that most awful agony, but we must constantly look at it with respect and thanksgiving. Had it not been for Gethsemane, there would never have been a Calvary. He had the power to call forth ten thousand angels and yell "Stop" at any moment, but He went through it all for you and for me. Where did He get the strength to continue? In the epistle to the Hebrews, some affecting details are added, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (5:7-8). Jesus prayed hard and He shed tears. An angel from heaven came to Him to comfort and strengthen Him, fulfilling Psalms 91:11. Jesus asked that the "cup" be removed, but it wasn't. He still had to drink of the cup, but with the strength from the Father and the comfort from the angel, He was able to bear it.

Just a few days prior to this agony in the garden, the impenitence of Jerusalem had wrung from Him a burst of tears; and now, when the intense wickedness of men, the sins of the apostles, of the leaders of His own country, was gathering round Him, He may well have agonized over that wretched prospect. He had loved those people. He had come down from heaven to save them, and they were rushing into deadly sin, into utter ruin. Jesus was well aware of the fact that He would be made sin for the whole world. Isaiah informs us that "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (53:6). Paul said that God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Since God made Him to be sin for the world, we can be persuaded that all the sins from the first one by Eve to the final one which the last living men will commit—all came in one burden of accumulated horror upon "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." The sinless One was about to become our sin offering. He knew that because of our sins God the Father would have to forsake Him for a brief moment. On the cross, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Even though God loved Him as a Son, He had to turn His back on Jesus because of our sins.

Jesus came to the apostles as if seeking for their sympathy, their affection, in His loneliness and exceeding sorrow. But they were asleep. "I looked for some to take pity, and for comforters, but I found none" (Psalm 69:20). He said to Peter, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?" (Matthew 26:40). Temptation was close at hand. They needed watchfulness; they needed prayer.

Three times He agonized in prayer. With calmness, He was finally able to say, "If this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." His hour was come, and He was ready. He had schooled His human will into complete resignation, into absolute harmony with the Father's will. He was ready to die for you and for me.