

Title: **A PASSER-BY COMPELLED**
Text: Luke 23:26
Subject: *The Sweet Force of Omnipotent Mercy*
Date: Sunday Evening — November 26, 2006
Tape # Z-15b

Introduction:

Does God force sinners to be saved? Would God actually force a person to be saved? — No one will ever be saved by the grace of God who is not forced by grace to be saved by grace. No sinner will ever believe on the Lord Jesus Christ until he is forced by God's omnipotent mercy to believe.

But there are some people in this world of whom it is written, "*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.*" Were you wise, you would pray for God to force his grace upon you, for Christ to force himself into your heart, for God the Holy Spirit to force you to believe. You would cry out...

O my God, what can I do?
 You alone can mercy show.
 You can save my soul this hour.
 I have neither will nor pow'r.

Sov' reign over all You are,
 Even of my sinful heart!
 Make Your saving power known, —
 Take away my heart of stone.

Come, subdue my lusts obscene;
 Make this filthy sinner clean!
 Make me willing to believe!
 Life eternal, Savior, give!

Force me, make me willing now;
 Force my stubborn will to bow!
 Grace almighty, Savior, show,
 Make this wretch a creature new!

Nothing is too hard for You;
 Work in me Your will and do.
 Let my prayer not be denied, —

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

Grant repentance, break my pride.

Stop the madness of my will;
Speak, and bid my heart stand still.
Your Salvation let me see, —
Jesus crucified for me!

Bow the heavens, Lord come down;
Take me, Savior, for Your own.
Wretched unbelief o'erthrow;
Lay the highest mountain low.

Conquer me, oh, conquer me;
Get Yourself the victory!
Save the vilest of the race,
Force me to be saved by grace!

Oh, may God graciously force you, this very hour, to be saved by his grace, for Christ's sake! I want to talk to you tonight about the sweet force of omnipotent mercy. The title of my message is — **A PASSER-BY COMPELLED**. Three times in the Book of God we are told of one man who, as he passed by, was compelled to take up the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and follow him.

(Luke 23:26) “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.”

(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.”

(Matthew 27:32) “And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.”

SIMON, A CYRENIAN

Who was this man? His name was Simon. The name means, “hearkening and obedient.” None will ever bear the cross of Christ except those who

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

hearken to his voice and are obedient to his call who are made to hear his voice and obey his will.

This man, Simon, was a Cyrenian, a native of Cyrene, an African, a black man. He was probably a Jewish proselyte who had come up to Jerusalem to observe the passover.

Luke tells us that he was “*coming up out of the country.*” Mark tells us that he was simply passing by. Apparently, he found no place in the city of Jerusalem in which he was welcome to lodge; either because there were no vacancies in the inns or because there were no vacancies for a black man. Whatever the case, he found a place of lodging in one of the country villages. As he was walking into Jerusalem for the passover, he passed by the angry mob of blood-thirsty people, leading the Lord Jesus up to Calvary to crucify him. When the soldiers saw him pass by, Luke tells us, “*they laid hold on him...and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.*” Both Matthew and Mark tell us that him they “*compelled to bear his cross.*”

COMPELLED

That word, “*compelled,*” means “forced into service” or, more precisely, “forced into royal service.” Being soldiers with royal authority, they had absolute power to force this man into Caesar’s service. They could force him to bear the cross on his back. But there was another King who graciously forced him to carry the Savior’s cross in his heart willingly and follow him. And that King is the Savior whose cross he was forced to carry.

Lest anyone imagine that I am stretching the intent of God the Holy Spirit in the records given by Matthew, Mark and Luke, I want you to see clearly that this man, Simon the Cyrenian, as he was forced by the soldiers, was made willing in the day of Christ’s great power to take up the cross and follow Christ by faith.

In Acts 13:1, Simon of Cyrene, who was called “Niger” (black), is named as one of the teachers in the church at Antioch. Mark tells us that he was the father of two sons who became eminent men in the early church, Alexander and Rufus. Alexander is named as one of those who were with Paul during the uproar at Ephesus (Acts 19:33). And Rufus is mention by Paul in the last chapter of Romans along with his mother (Rom. 16:13) as those who

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

were named among the elect, chosen of God and beloved. There can be little doubt that it was their father, Simon, who taught them the gospel. What a delightful picture! What a rare blessing! Seldom does a man see his whole family converted by the grace of God; but Simon the Cyrenian did. How his heart must have rejoiced when he saw first his wife and then one son, and then another confessing Christ. How he must have beamed with joy and praise, as he observed them bearing the cross and following Christ in the way!

LESSONS

What great lessons we should learn from the picture God the Holy Spirit gives us of this man! Let me mention just two in passing.

(Psalms 76:10) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

- **Oh, how we ought to adore the minute detail of God’s wise, adorable and good providence.** — Suppose Simon had not been born a black man. — Suppose he had found lodging in Jerusalem. — Suppose there had been no racial prejudice to keep him at a distance. — Suppose he had passed by five minutes earlier, or five minutes later! — **How confidently we ought to trust our God!**

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.”

- It is often (I think it is safe to say, most commonly) **God’s pleasure to use the most unlikely men as his messengers** (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Who would ever have dreamed of choosing a black man to be one of the first and most well-known preachers of the gospel? — Only our Savior!

IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

What was the irresistible force that compelled Simon's heart? What made the humiliating providential experience of being compelled to carry the cross of the condemned Christ a blessed experience of grace for his soul? Let's look into the Sacred Volume and see if we can find the answer to that question.

(John 12:31-33) "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. (33) This he said, signifying what death he should die."

But what did Simon the Cyrenian see and hear as he passed by that day?

- The Inscription? — "*JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS!*"
- The jeering cry? — "*He saved others, himself he cannot save.*"
- The Savior's cries? — "*Father forgive them!*" _ "*Why hast thou forsaken me?*"
- The Rent Veil?
- The Open Graves?
- "*It is finished!*"
- "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*"
- The Centurion's Confession?

Perhaps it was the combination of all that he heard and witnessed that day that was made effectual to his soul by the grace of God. But I cannot help thinking there is a very specific reason why the Holy Spirit tells us that he was compelled, as he "*passed by.*" Turn back to the book of Lamentation chapter 1, and look with me at verse 12.

(Lamentations 1:12) "*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.*"

There can be no question that these are the words of our Savior? Others may think there is no sorrow like their sorrow, but the Book of God does not speak in exaggeration. These words could not come forth from the lips

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

of God's prophet by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, except as he spoke as a type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like the words of the prophet in Psalms 22, 40 and 69, these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great Substitute, when he was made to serve with our sins and wearied with our iniquities (Isa. 43:24).

INCOMPARABLE SORROW

Carrying the cross up to Golgotha's hill, Simon must have been present as the Son of God was nailed to the cursed tree and hung up between heaven and earth. Perhaps he started to turn and walk away, determined to go on passing by, when suddenly he was arrested by the heart-piercing cry and effectual call of the Savior. — *"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?"* — Perhaps he heard the Savior's cry audibly. Perhaps he simply recalled these words in Lamentations, as he witnessed the things that transpired that day. But he heard the voice of the Son of God; and, hearing, he was made to live.

Our Saviour went to the cross willingly, voluntarily, and laid down his life. So great is his love for us that, for the joy of saving us from our sins and the wrath of God, he endured the cross, despising the shame. But that which he endured upon the cross was indescribable sorrow!

Follow the Son of God into the gathering shadows of the cross in Gethsemane's gloom. There, as he anticipates the death he must die, we are told something of his sorrow. With heavy, heavy heart he says, *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"* (Matthew 26:38-39; John 12:27-28).

(John 12:27-28) "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. (28) Father, glorify thy name"

That One who hangs upon the cross is the *"Man of Sorrows"* (Isaiah 53:3). Despised and rejected of men, cursed and forsaken of God, he is filled with grief. The sorrow which our Redeemer endured was incomparable, indescribable sorrow.

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

It is written in Psalm 18:5 — “*The sorrows of hell compassed me about!*” — “*The sorrows of hell!*” Who can talk about that? What language can we borrow to describe those sorrows? If we could understand them, we would not be able to endure the realization of them. **“The sorrows of hell” are...**

- **The Sorrows of a Man under the Wrath of God!**
- The Sorrows of **a Conscience Aware of Guilt!** — In Lamentations 1:11, we here the Savior’s preface to the cry of verse 12. — “*See, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile!*”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(Galatians 3:13) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.”

(1 Peter 2:24) “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

(Psalms 22:1) “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*”

(Psalms 22:6) “But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.”

(Psalms 22:15) “My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”

(Psalms 40:11-13) “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. (12) For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. (13) Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.”

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

(Psalms 69:5) “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”

(Psalms 69:9) “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”

(Psalms 69:19-21) “Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries *are* all before thee. (20) Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none. (21) They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

● The Sorrows of a Soul Forsaken of God!

All the sorrow our Savior, all the sorrows of hell he endured upon the cursed tree were our sorrows! He suffered as our Substitute (Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

- He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!
- He suffered all the wrath of God due to our sins!
- He was forsaken of God for us, that we might never be forsaken!

All this great sorrow was done to Christ by God his Father in the day of his fierce anger. It was sorrow done unto him, “*wherewith the LORD afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger!*” And why did the Lord God his Father and our Father so afflict him? Because there was no other way for the holy Lord God to save us from our sins!

My soul, behold the sorrow of Christ upon the tree and realize something of...

- The Enormous Evil of Sin!
- The Infinite Price of Redemption!
- The Greatness of God’s Amazing Love!

This great sorrow of death is the baptism with which our Savior had to be baptized. **And now that it is accomplished, you and I, believing on his name are...**

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

- Forgiven of All Sin!
- Made the Righteousness of God in Him!
- Heirs of Eternal Salvation!

Did the Son of God, who from all eternity lay in his Father's bosom, the only begotten and dearly beloved of his Father's affection, indeed die under such amazement and exceeding sorrow? Did he cry, "*My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" Was he deserted by his Father? Were these the sorrows of his soul? And is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?

Is it nothing to you, you who ignore him, disregard him, and with malice would crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame? "*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?*"

My soul, bring the question home to your own heart. Let me never cease to hear my dying Savior's cry! Let me never, for a moment, stop my ears to his voice! This is everything to me!

- My hope.
- My Redemption.
- My Righteousness.
- My Salvation.
- All my Desire!

Yes! precious Lord Jesus, blessed Savior, my Redeemer, every wound of your body, your heart, and your soul is precious! Every groan, every cry pleads for me, and pleads with me. If I forget you, O precious, bleeding Lamb of God, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my heart cease to beat!

What is the compelling, the omnipotent, irresistible, effectually compelling force that makes sinners willing to take up the cross and follow Christ? — The revelation of the crucified Christ!

Why was I made to hear his voice,
And enter while there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,

A PASSER-BY COMPELLED

And rather die than come?
The love that made Him die for me,
Has sweetly forced me home;
Else I would still with others be
A wretched soul, undone!

Amen.