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“MUST JESUS BEAR THE CROSS ALONE?”

(Thomas Shepherd, 1665 – 1739)

Then He called the crown to Him along with His disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.” (Mark 8:34)

The scriptural qualifications for discipleship are very clear: Self-denial and a resolve to bear a cross of consecration for the sake of the gospel. Each true follower of Christ will have a cross to bear at various times throughout life. The cross is the badge that identifies us as a worthy representative and servant of our Master. **For some, the cross might be a physical weakness; for others it could be an unachieved goal, a discouraging situation, or a concern for a loved one. Whatever it may be, the way we bear our individual cross can in itself be a testimony to the power of the gospel as well as a source of encouragement to weaker Christians.**

The text for this hymn was the work of several different authors through the centuries. Thomas Shepherd, a 17th century English dissenter preacher, published a volume of poems in 1693 titled *Penitential Cries*. At least the first stanza with some possible alterations is believed to have come from that volume. One of the original stanzas from this work reads as follows:

- Shall Simon bear the Cross alone, and other Saints be Free?
Each Saint of Thine shall find its own – And there is one for me.

George Nelson Allen, a music teacher at Oberlin College, collected the verses and composed the music for the text in 1844 for inclusion in his collection, *Oberlin Social and Sabbath School Hymn Book* “*Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?*” has since challenged Christians in their commitment to Christ and His service with the realization that an earthly cross always precedes the heavenly crown.

- Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No, there’s a cross for ev’ry one, and there’s a cross for me.
- The consecrated cross I’ll bear till death shall set me free, and then go home my crown to wear, for there’s a crown for me.
- How happy are the saints above, who once went sorrowing here! But now they taste unmingled love, and joy without a tear.
- O precious cross! O glorious crown! O resurrection day! Ye angels, from the stars come down and bear my soul away. AMEN.

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“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18 – 20

