

Luke 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

Analysis

And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them. This command addresses the inevitable reality of rejection in gospel ministry. The conditional "whosoever will not receive you" (hosoi an mē dexōntai hymas, ὅσοι ἂν μὴ δέξωνται ὑμᾶς) uses dechomai (δέχομαι), meaning to welcome or accept—the same word used for receiving Christ Himself (Luke 9:48). To reject the messenger is to reject the message and its divine sender.

The dramatic gesture of shaking off dust (ton koniorton apo tōn podōn hymōn apotinaxate, τὸν κονιορτὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ποδῶν ὑμῶν ἀποτινάξατε) carries profound symbolic weight. Pious Jews returning from Gentile lands would shake dust from their feet to avoid bringing ceremonial uncleanness into Israel. Jesus commands the reverse—disciples should treat rejecting Jewish towns as spiritually unclean, more defiled than pagan territory. This shocking inversion demonstrates that covenant privilege without covenant faithfulness brings greater judgment (Luke 12:47-48).

The phrase **for a testimony against them** (eis martyrion ep' autous, εἰς μαρτύριον ἐπ' αὐτούς) reveals the gesture's legal character. Martyrion (μαρτύριον) means witness or evidence in a judicial sense—the shaken dust serves as courtroom testimony on judgment day. This is not vindictive but prophetic, a visible enacted parable warning that rejection of God's ambassadors has eternal

consequences. Paul and Barnabas later enacted this very command at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:51), demonstrating apostolic continuity with Jesus' instructions.

Historical Context

This instruction occurs within Jesus' commissioning of the Twelve (Luke 9:1-6), His first sending of the disciples on independent mission. Luke emphasizes their limited resources—no staff, bag, bread, money, or extra tunic (9:3)—forcing total dependence on God's provision through hospitable hosts. This itinerant poverty modeled prophetic tradition and demonstrated the kingdom's radically different value system.

First-century Jewish hospitality culture made this teaching especially significant. Ancient Near Eastern societies considered hospitality a sacred duty; Abraham's hospitality to angels (Genesis 18) epitomized this value. To refuse hospitality to traveling teachers was not merely rude but a serious breach of covenant community responsibility. Jesus' disciples, traveling as His authorized representatives, deserved reception as if Jesus Himself had come (Luke 10:16).

The dust-shaking gesture had rabbinic precedent but Jesus transformed its meaning. Pharisaic tradition taught that Gentile territory conveyed ceremonial defilement, requiring dust removal upon returning to the Holy Land. By commanding disciples to shake dust from Jewish towns that rejected the gospel, Jesus declared that covenant ethnicity without faith in Messiah offered no spiritual advantage (Luke 3:8). This foreshadowed the gospel's expansion to Gentiles and the tragic rejection of Jesus by the covenant nation, culminating in His lament over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) and the temple's destruction (Luke 21:5-6, fulfilled in AD 70).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this passage challenge the modern tendency to endlessly accommodate those who persistently reject the gospel?
2. What is the relationship between the freedom to reject God's messengers and accountability for that rejection?
3. How should ministers balance persistence in evangelism with the biblical mandate to 'shake off the dust' and move on?
4. In what ways does covenant privilege (religious heritage, biblical knowledge, church membership) increase rather than decrease accountability before God?
5. How does Jesus' commissioning of disciples with authority yet vulnerability (no provisions, facing rejection) model the church's mission today?

Interlinear Text

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|--------|-------------|-------|-------------|-----------|--------|-------------|-------|-------|
| καὶ | ὅσοι | ἂν | μὴ | δέξωνταί | ὑμᾶς | ἐξερχόμενοι | ἀπὸ | τῆς |
| And | whosoever | G302 | not | receive | you | when ye go | from | G3588 |
| G2532 | G3745 | | G3361 | G1209 | G5209 | G1831 | G575 | |
| πόλεως | ἐκείνης | καὶ | τὸν | κονιορτὸν | ἀπὸ | τῶν | ποδῶν | |
| city | that | And | G3588 | dust | from | G3588 | feet | |
| G4172 | G1565 | G2532 | | G2868 | G575 | | G4228 | |
| ὑμῶν | ἀποτινάξατε | εἰς | μαρτύριον | ἐπ' | αὐτούς | | | |
| your | shake off | for | a testimony | against | them | | | |
| G5216 | G660 | G1519 | G3142 | G1909 | G846 | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Acts 13:51 (Parallel theme): But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

Acts 18:6 (Parallel theme): And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Mark 6:11 (Witness): And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Nehemiah 5:13 (Parallel theme): Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

Luke 10:16 (Parallel theme): He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Luke 9:48 (Parallel theme): And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Mark 9:37 (Parallel theme): Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.