

Mark 13:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

Analysis

Let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment—laborers worked in fields wearing inner tunic, leaving outer cloak at field's edge (valuable garment, used as nighttime covering). Jesus commanded: don't return for it. The urgency supersedes recovering even necessary items. The Greek *mē epistrepstō* (μὴ ἐπιστρέψάτω, 'let him not turn back') parallels v. 15's prohibition—no delay permitted.

This intensifies the point: value life above clothing, safety above possessions. It echoes Proverbs: 'How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?' (Proverbs 6:9)—spiritual urgency demands immediate response. Hesitation proves fatal. Philippians 3:13-14 applies spiritually: 'forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.' Christians must pursue Christ single-mindedly, not distracted by worldly concerns. The field worker leaving his cloak pictures believers abandoning worldly attachments to follow Christ wholeheartedly.

Historical Context

First-century Judean agriculture involved day laborers working fields outside villages. Outer garments (himation) were valuable—used as collateral (Exodus 22:26-27 required returning by sunset), nighttime covering, protection. Workers left them at field edges for mobility. When danger struck (bandits, invading armies, wild animals), workers fled immediately. Jesus' command: don't risk life retrieving

property. AD 70's siege fulfilled this: those who hesitated to flee, attempting to save belongings, perished. Spiritually applicable throughout church history: Christians must abandon worldly attachments pursuing Christ. Reformers left Catholic Church despite cost; missionaries abandoned comfort for gospel; converts from other religions forsake family, security. Discipleship costs everything—no turning back.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the command not to retrieve even necessary items (outer garment) illustrate discipleship's radical cost?
2. What does 'not turning back' teach about Christian life—how does Philippians 3:13-14 apply this spiritually?
3. What 'garments'—worldly securities, comforts, attachments—might Christians need to abandon without looking back to follow Christ fully?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὁ	εἰς	τὸν	ἀγρὸν	ὦν	μὴ	ἐπιστρεψάτω	εἰς
And	G3588	in	G3588	the field	him that is	not	again	in
G2532		G1519		G68	G5607	G3361	G1994	G1519
τὰ	ὀπίσω	ἄραι	τὸ	ἱμάτιον	αὐτοῦ			
G3588	back	for to take up	G3588	garment	G846			
	G3694	G142		G2440				
