

# Mark 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**They compel one Simon a Cyrenian** (ἀγγαρεύουσιν Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον)—The verb angareuō (ἀγγαρεύω) is a technical term for Roman military requisition: soldiers could legally force civilians to carry military equipment one mile (Matthew 5:41). Simon from Cyrene (North Africa, modern Libya) was likely a Diaspora Jew visiting for Passover, **coming out of the country** (ἐρχόμενον ἀπ' ἀγροῦ, returning from field labor).

Mark uniquely identifies Simon as **the father of Alexander and Rufus**—these names indicate Simon's family became known in the early church (Romans 16:13 likely references this Rufus). Jesus, weakened by blood loss, shock, and sleeplessness, could not carry His crossbeam. Yet this 'chance' encounter transformed Simon's family: forced to literally bear Christ's cross, he apparently became a disciple. This fulfills Jesus' words: 'Take up your cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34).

## Historical Context

Crucifixion victims typically carried the 40-pound crossbeam (~18 kg) through crowded streets while the vertical post remained at the execution site. Roman soldiers routinely requisitioned civilian labor for military purposes throughout occupied territories. Cyrene in Libya had a substantial Jewish population; many

came to Jerusalem for major festivals. Mark's original Roman audience would have known Alexander and Rufus personally, validating this eyewitness detail.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How might an initially unwelcome 'burden' from God actually be His means of drawing you into deeper discipleship?
2. What does Simon's transformation from forced laborer to believer reveal about God's sovereignty over 'chance' encounters?
3. In what practical ways are you called to 'bear the cross' for Christ in your daily circumstances?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ἀγγαρεύουσιν παράγοντά τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον  
And they compel who passed by one Simon a Cyrenian  
G2532 G29 G3855 G5100 G4613 G2956

ἐρχόμενον ἀπ' ἀγροῦ τὸν πατέρα Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ  
coming out of the country the father of Alexander And  
G2064 G575 G68 G3588 G3962 G223 G2532

‘Ρούφου ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ  
Rufus to bear cross his  
G4504 G2443 G142 G3588 G4716 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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

**Luke 23:26** (Cross): 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.

**Romans 16:13** (Parallel theme): Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

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