

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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

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

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	G3588	the father	of Alexander	And
G2064	G575	G68		G3962	G223	G2532
Ῥούφου	ἵνα	ἄρῃ	τὸν	σταυρὸν	αὐτοῦ	
Rufus	to	bear	G3588	cross	his	
G4504	G2443	G142		G4716	G846	

Additional Cross-References

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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