

Mark 6:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

Analysis

And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse. Jesus' instructions for the disciples' missionary journey emphasize radical dependence on God's provision. 'Commanded them that they should take nothing' (παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδὲν αἴρωσιν, parēngeilen autois hina mēden airōsin) uses strong imperative—this wasn't suggestion but command. 'Save a staff only' (εἰ μὴ ῥάβδον μόνον, ei mē rhabdon monon) allowed minimal walking aid, but prohibited 'scrip' (πήραν, pēran—traveler's bag for provisions), 'bread' (ἄρτον, arton), and 'money in their purse' (εἰς τὴν ζώνην χαλκόν, eis tēn zōnēn chalkon—literally 'copper in the belt').

Why such austere requirements? To teach faith-dependence on God's provision through hospitality, to demonstrate the gospel's free nature (not commercial enterprise), to ensure urgency (no time for lengthy preparations), and to reveal that God's kingdom advances through divine power, not human resources. This temporary mission preparation differed from later instructions (Luke 22:35-36), showing principles adapt to circumstances. Reformed theology emphasizes God's sufficiency—His servants need divine provision more than material resources. The radical simplicity testified that their message's authority came from God, not impressive presentation or financial backing.

Historical Context

Ancient itinerant teachers typically traveled with supplies: bag for food, money for lodging, extra clothing, and provisions. Cynical philosophers were known for similar austere travel, but their motivation was philosophical independence, while Jesus' disciples demonstrated dependence on God and community hospitality. The 'staff' (rhabdon) was standard traveler's aid for walking rough terrain and protection from animals or robbers. Prohibition of 'scrip' (traveler's bag) and provisions meant they must accept hospitality rather than being self-sufficient. Ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs obligated communities to provide for traveling teachers/prophets—the disciples' ministry depended on this cultural practice. Copper coins (chalkon) were low-value currency, not silver or gold—prohibiting even minimal money emphasized total dependence. Early church applied these principles variously: some (Franciscans) took them literally as perpetual poverty vow; others recognized them as situation-specific for that particular mission. The principle endures: gospel ministers should trust God's provision rather than worldly security.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' command for radical simplicity challenge modern ministry's tendency toward elaborate programs, budgets, and resources?
2. In what areas of life or ministry might God be calling you to greater dependence on His provision rather than self-sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

καὶ παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδὲν αἴρωσιν εἰς
And commanded them that nothing they should take for
G2532 G3853 G846 G2443 G3367 G142 G1519

οδὸν εἰ μὴ ῥάβδον μόνον μὴ πήραν μὴ ἄρτον
their journey G1487 no a staff only no scrip no bread
G3598 G3361 G4464 G3440 G3361 G4082 G3361 G740

μὴ εἰς τὴν ζώνην χαλκόν
no for G3588 their purse money
G3361 G1519 G2223 G5475

Additional Cross-References

Luke 10:4 (Parallel theme): Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

Luke 9:3 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

Luke 22:35 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.