

## Unintended Consequences

Ponder: Does God always mean what He says?

Scripture: “See that you say nothing to anyone . . .’ However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city” (Mark 1:44, 45, NKJV).

How could it possibly be wrong to tell others what wonderful things Jesus did for you? The leper Jesus healed in Mark chapter one evidently concluded that it just couldn’t be wrong, even though Jesus plainly said not to do it. Both Mark and Matthew used the Greek imperative mode to record Jesus’ words, which means this was a command, not just a suggestion or request. Luke’s account says Jesus “charged” the man, which also indicates a command given by a superior, thus to be carefully obeyed (Luke 5:14).

I used to think Jesus was using reverse psychology on this occasion, as well as other times when He ordered people not to spread the word about His miracles. Forbidding them to speak only magnified their desire to proclaim His greatness, I reasoned, which was what He really wanted anyway.

On further reflection, I no longer believe Jesus was messing with people’s minds. He meant exactly what He said. Though we can empathize with the healed leper’s desire to tell everyone of his cleansing, his disobedience to Jesus was wrong. He may have had good intentions, but the ministry of Jesus actually suffered because he disregarded Jesus’ command. Since the man spread the word of his healing, Jesus could no longer enter a city openly or He would be mobbed. Effective ministry is virtually impossible under such circumstances. The law of unintended consequences certainly proved itself true.

Let each of us determine anew to take our Lord at His word! When He says no man comes to the Father but through Him (John 14:6), that settles it. The world might find a more “inclusive” statement more palatable, and greater numbers of people might swell the ranks; but in the final analysis, the church would be weakened, not built up.

Fortunately, Jesus has not told us to be silent about Him as He did the leper. To the contrary, we are to take His gospel to all people in every nation. May we be as zealous in proclaiming cleansing from sin as the leper was in announcing his own healing from disease!

Song: “Trust And Obey”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we gladly confess that You are infinitely wise and good. Please forgive us when we substitute our own reasoning in place of Your revealed will. Help us to trust and obey, we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.

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