

Matthew 9:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

Analysis

The healed men disobey Jesus' command: 'But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country' (οἱ δε ἐξελθόντες διεφημισαυ αὐτον εν ολη τη γη εκεινη). Their disobedience seems well-intentioned—gratitude overflowing into testimony. However, obedience matters more than enthusiasm. Their public proclamation creates the very problems Jesus sought to avoid: crowds seeking miracles, intensified opposition, hindered teaching ministry. This illustrates common error: assuming good intentions justify disobedience. Faithful witness requires obedience to Christ's methods and timing, not just proclamation of His power. The passage warns that even testimony can become sin when it violates Christ's explicit commands. Zealous disobedience isn't faithfulness but pride.

Historical Context

Word-of-mouth communication in first-century Palestine spread news rapidly through family, trade, and social networks. Miracle reports traveled fast and grew in telling. The healed men's testimony, though disobedient, contributed to Jesus' growing fame and the opposition it generated. Mark's Gospel particularly emphasizes the 'messianic secret'—Jesus' commands for silence about His identity until the cross could properly interpret messiahship. Disobedient testimony complicated Jesus' mission by attracting crowds with wrong expectations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can enthusiasm for Jesus lead to disobedience to His clear commands?
2. What is the difference between faithful witness and presumptuous proclamation?
3. When might testimony about Jesus actually hinder His purposes if not conducted according to His wisdom?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	δὲ	ἐξελθόντες	διεφήμισαν	αὐτὸν	ἐν	ὅλῃ
G3588	But	they when they were departed	fame	his	in	all
	G1161	G1831	G1310	G846	G1722	G3650
τῇ	γῇ	ἐκείνῃ				
G3588	country	that				
	G1093	G1565				

Additional Cross-References

Mark 7:36 (Parallel theme): And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

Matthew 9:26 (Parallel theme): And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.