

Mk. 1:29-45 “Advance and Retreat!”

For the Children: Has anyone ever said to you, “Back off!”? If you are very eager to see something happen, you might push others too hard, become too bossy with them. People don’t like that! You might have to “back off” in order to persuade them. Sometimes the Lord Jesus was very forceful – as God, He has the right to be – and sometimes He “backed off.” By backing off, He showed us He is also humble. He showed that He wanted people to believe for the right reasons. And He made sure that He was following God’s timetable in His ministry. **Questions:** What would have been the dangers if Jesus had kept performing miracles to larger and larger crowds? Why did Jesus have to preach and do miracles before any crowds? What reasons should we give people as to why they should believe in the Lord Jesus?

Introduction:

First Point: Fuelling His Growing Reputation

- 1) Promoting the Gospel Deliberately: As “Herald,” the Lord Jesus had a very clear mandate to promote the Gospel. The “fulfillment of time” demanded that He make Himself known as Messiah, as well as spread God’s fame (Ps. 102:21; Is. 66:19). The repetition of “immediate” (1:10,21,28,29) suggests a definite programme in place. As God, the Lord Jesus would have known this and the effects of His ministry
- 2) The Mother-in-Law and More: Even the “low-key” miracle of healing of Simon’s mother-in-law, combined with the exorcism in the synagogue, caused the “whole city” to gather. Jesus healed many of them who were ill and cast out many demons. Surely He knew the effect this would have? Note that there was an outbreak of possessions then, indicating Israel’s darkness; and Satan’s all-out effort to thwart Jesus’ work. Mark distinguishes illness and possession – the latter was not a form of mental illness (v. 34)
- 3) To the Synagogues: Now that His reputation was great in Capernaum, Jesus began to visit the synagogues in all the other population-centres throughout Galilee (v. 39). This was a deliberate act to increase exposure of His message and miracles
- 4) Healing the Leper: By allowing close contact with a leper, then healing him, the Lord knowingly acted controversially. He had the right to set aside the ceremonial law of Lev. 13-14, re unclean lepers, in favour of the “law of love” and the cause of the Gospel. He is, after all, Lord of the Law. He then tells the man to go to the priest to follow the cleansing and offering ceremonies of the Law, to show He still upholds it. This would no doubt draw Him to the attention of the High Priest

Second Point: Restricting His Growing Reputation

- 1) Silencing Demons: The Lord also took action to slow down the spread of His reputation. When He confronted demons, they wanted to identify Him as the Son of God and Messiah (Lk. 4:41) – before He was ready to have that degree of fame. So He regularly silenced the demons (v. 34)
- 2) Prayer-Retreat: At a time when the Lord could have played up to the crowd, He left Simon’s home in the dark, and found an isolated place to pray (v. 35-38). Similar actions in 6:46, 14:32f, show His human need of strengthening by prayer, but also His need to reaffirm His commitment to the will of His Father – “Not My will, but Yours.” When His disciples track Him down and rebuke Him for running away from the crowd, He points out that God’s priority is His preaching. Signs and wonders must come second, as a demonstration of the nature of the Kingdom. He therefore decides to go somewhere else, away from the crowds that seek signs and wonders
- 3) Silencing the Leper: Jesus also attempts to limit the leper’s testimony to the priests. The leper ignores this command, and spreads the story widely. The result is exactly what the Lord was seeking to avoid: huge crowds seeking healing rather than the Truth. There is also, perhaps, the danger of the priests and the crowds turning against Him prematurely
- 4) The Wrong Kind of Fame: Today, we can promote the Name of Jesus, without restriction. But we must take care to call on people to believe because it is the Truth, because this honours the Lord; rather than primarily because of the benefits to man – though the benefits are indeed great

Conclusion: