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# Key Notes

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**I**t must be awful for a grocery store manager to discover that meat sold in his store contained the E-coli virus. I can only imagine the inner anguish that would come to someone who assumed he was doing the public a service by selling fresh beef when in reality he was spreading a dangerous disease! But what a grocer may feel when he unknowingly poisons his clients is only a fraction of what must be felt by someone who discovers that the gospel he preaches is contaminated! Jesus warned the spiritual leaders of his day that their evangelism was actually doing more harm than good!

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are (Matthew 23:15).*

You'll seldom hear *that* verse quoted on the first Sunday of Missions Conference! And yet Jesus' warning is a sober reminder to make sure the Gospel we send to the nations is not contaminated with some virus that actually poisons those who receive it.

I am struck by the fact that Jesus did not give the Great Commission in Mark 8. Finally, the disciples knew who he was. *You are the Christ* (v. 29), Peter affirmed for them all. That would have been a great occasion for Jesus to send them into the world to announce the news. Right? Wrong. After Peter's Great Confession came Jesus' Great Prohibition: *Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him* (v. 30). Don't tell? Don't go to the nations and announce that Jesus is the Messiah? Why?

Jesus did not permit his disciples to go and preach because he knew they did not yet understand the cross, both his cross and theirs (vv. 31-35). They still believed that the Messiah's arrival meant health, wealth and happiness for all his followers. It would take Calvary, Easter and Pentecost to teach them that the cross was not an unfortunate aberration. It was, rather, the central point of Jesus' coming... and their going! The cross defined Jesus' ministry and would define theirs as well. Unless the virus of selfish ambition and pride was purged from their witness in word and deed, the disciples would be offering contaminated meat to the nations.

This week, as we hear again the call to be witnesses for Christ in the world, let us reflect deeply on the message we preach, the methods we use, and the lifestyles we live. Is the cross central? If not, we may be spreading the very disease the Gospel was intended to cure!

Pastor Stan  
Galatians 6:14