

notable reputation, or enjoy the lifestyle of those around us. Some may even think, *“If I can get in with the worldly crowd, I can talk to them about Christ.”* It’s hard for us to understand why God would command us to be separate from the world!

Consider the potential consequences God presented Israel and think about how they mirror our own situations. What if we engage in close friendships with the world for a noble cause? We put ourselves in a position to be tempted by ungodly people to do ungodly things. After engaging in those things, our children (or others around us) may see that and be tempted to serve their fleshly lusts rather than God as well. Surely we can see why God commanded us to be different from the world. He commanded it to guard us against the consequences!

Christians must be aware of where their actions lead themselves and others. We must understand the consequences. Consequences in this lifetime are hard to foresee, but God has made clear the eternal consequence of disobedience. Jesus said, **“Then I will declare to them, ‘Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’”** (Matthew 7:23). On the other hand, we can rest assured that if we trust and obey God, we will be richly rewarded.

Conclusion

I’d like to show you one more text. After the children of Israel entered the promised land, as they were going about conquering the various nations, we find a situation arise that directly relates to this discussion. We read, **“When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, they also acted craftily and set out.... They went to Joshua... and said to him and to the men of Israel, ‘...make a covenant with us’”** (Joshua 9:3-6). Despite the Lord’s warning in Exodus 34, the text tells us, **“The men of Israel... did not ask for the counsel of the Lord. Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live”** (Joshua 9:14-15). Just as God predicted, the Gibeonites, along with a number of other nations which were not completely destroyed, plagued Israel throughout their history and caused them to turn away from serving the Lord. Brethren, when God speaks, may we faithfully obey Him so that we will not be plagued with the consequences of our sins.



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OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

September 28,
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Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM

10:20 AM

6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Jeff Nunn

Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Eddie Cook

Steve Dixon

Jack Langley

Neil Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Walker McAnear

Lance Purcell

Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope

Andrew Dow



Understanding the Consequences Exodus 43:11-17 By Andrew Dow

Consequences follow us everywhere we go. Everything we do has a consequence we must endure. While we may think of consequences being inherently negative, the fact is, consequences can be either positive or negative. Unfortunately, foreseeing the consequences of any given action can be difficult. As a result, many people act on impulse without considering what the final outcome will be.

I think this was a problem the Israelites had. Shortly after God made a covenant with the children of Israel, they constructed a golden calf and worshipped it as if it were God (Exodus 32:1-6). This was after God had clearly commanded, **“You shall not make for yourself an idol...”** (Exodus 20:4, NASB). In an effort to dissuade the Israelites from committing this sin again, God said, **“Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day.... You shall make for yourself no molten gods”** (Exodus 34:11-17). After seeing the way the Israelites created the golden calf, I think it is safe to say that Israel probably saw nothing wrong with making molten gods. Therefore, in these verses, after giving two commands, God shows Israel the consequences of disobeying Him. Let’s consider the text and make some application.

The Commands of God

When the Lord renewed His covenant with Israel, He was primarily concerned with obedience. He began, **“Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day”** (Exodus 34:11). The Lord went on to foretell how He would be responsible for driving out all the pagan nations from before them. These nations would only be a distant memory after the Lord’s power had been exerted against them. However, these nations posed a potential problem for the incoming Israelites, so Jehovah made two commands.

First, God instructed, **“Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going...”** (Exodus 34:12). Under no circumstances were the Israelites to make a covenant with these nations. This command seems simple enough, but human reason might cause us to

consider this a poor strategic decision. After all, it could prove valuable from a military standpoint to have some allies among those who are familiar with the land. Despite what may seem logical, God demands that no covenants be made.

Second, God said, **“You are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim”** (Exodus 34:13). Next God commanded them to destroy all the things that pertain to these nations’ pagan worship. Altars and sacred pillars were to be torn down. All the idols that they constructed were to be destroyed. There was to be nothing left of their religious rituals throughout the promised land.

Before we go further, God gives the Israelites a very clear reason why they should obey both of these commands: **“For you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”** (Exodus 34:14). They should have obeyed because the God of Heaven told them to obey! Nothing more should have been needed. However, the people had already ignored the command of the Lord before by constructing the golden calf.

I suppose it’s natural for humans to ask, *“Why?”* Can’t you just imagine the Israelites looking at these two commands from God and saying, *“We know you commanded these things, but why can’t we make covenants with the people? Why must we completely destroy their worship?”* After all, allies could be valuable? It could be in their best interests to keep some of the inhabitants happy with them, rather than destroying their way of worship? This time around God doesn’t leave any question in the minds of the Israelites. He goes on to spell out very clearly what the consequences would be if Israel refused to obey Him.

The Consequences of Disobedience

God explains, in no uncertain terms, the consequences of disobeying the above commands. If Israel made covenants with

the inhabitants of the land, and if they did not completely destroy the pagan worship in the land, God says, **“You might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons to also to play the harlot with their gods”** (Exodus 34:15-16). You see, God has something Israel lacked: foresight. God was able to foresee the consequences.

Notice the clear sequence of events God lays out. If Israel made a covenant with the people of Canaan, they would be bound to honor that covenant. What’s more, the Canaanites would undoubtedly continue to worship their false gods. Whereas human logic might think nothing of this situation, God foresaw danger. God suggests, **“Someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice”** (Exodus 34:15b). What’s the danger in accepting this kind gesture? God continues, **“You might take some of his daughters for your sons”** (Exodus 34:16a). Could intermarrying with the people of the land really be that bad? **“His daughters,”** God concludes, **“might... cause your sons to play the harlot with their gods”** (Exodus 34:16b).

The choice to disobey God in this manner is much more than a poor decision that can be quickly turned away from. It would become a perpetual cycle that would cause Israel to fall further and further into idolatrous worship. In this instance, even though they were not immediately apparent to the Israelites, the consequences were extremely serious. With the consequences fresh in their minds, the Lord firmly states, **“You shall make for**

yourself no molten gods” (Exodus 34:17).

Making Application

Just as the Israelites were the people of God, Christians are God’s chosen people today. While we’re not commanded to destroy the idols of those around us, we are instructed to be different from the world we live in. Paul wrote, **“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier”** (2 Timothy 2:4). Elsewhere Christians are described as **“a holy nation”** (1 Peter 2:9), and are instructed to **“be holy yourselves also in all your behavior”** (1 Peter 1:16).

As Christians, we are in a position where we must choose whether we will follow God or follow what seems right to us. See, human wisdom tells us it’s good to be friends with the world. By becoming close with the world, we may be able to advance our careers, attain a