

Mark 5: 11-20; "He who had been Demon Possessed", Sermon # 28 in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 25th, 2009, in the Morning Worship Service.

Last week when I preached to you about the demoniac of Gadara I set before you the symptoms of demon possession, the worship of this man who was demon-possessed, and the danger of demon-possession. I preached to you about the glorious power of Jesus Christ which was exercised toward this poor man who could not rescue himself from the control of the Legion over him. But Christ's power is so much greater than demonic power. And Christ's mercy and compassion were so very great toward this man. He had great mercy on him and delivered him. And this man knew instantly that he was delivered and set free. He was not only delivered from his demon possession; he was delivered from all of his sins which had led to this demon possession. His was a true and definite and instantaneous conversion. We must say at the outset that among those who are truly being saved, there is not always a definite known experience of conversion. Some people cannot point to the hour and day of their conversion even though they know the general time period. Nevertheless they have believed in the Lord Jesus and they have come to saving faith. These people who I am describing do not understand, in their experience at the time of their conversion, just what is taking place. They often lack an immediate assurance of their faith. There is nothing wrong in this. They should not consider their experience to be inferior to the testimony of the person who has a dramatic conversion. They know that they are trusting in the Lord, but nothing dramatic is taking place in their soul to give them the tremendous joy of having been released from Satan's power, as this man of our text experienced. Often these persons are those who have been raised in Christian homes. They have not been those who have sinned in such a way that they became demon oppressed or demon possessed. They did not traffic with Satan in the occult before their conversion and this is the reason that the time of their conversion may be a bit more cloudy. They are certainly no less saved. If you were to talk to them about their experience they would tell you that they were deceived by Satan in respect to themselves. They were deceived by him in much more subtle ways than even this demon-possessed man was. But the radical change has taken place in their heart, none-the-less, and it manifests itself in their thinking much and often about the righteousness of Christ, not their own self-righteousness. They are now taken up with the beauty and glory of Christ as He has given them a different view of themselves. They have come to understand that their greatest sins, no other man has seen or known. Their sins were related to their own high opinion of themselves and

their abilities, and they were guilty of lessening Christ's glory by trying to take glory away from Him to themselves. They did not see their need of Him. They did not desire His beauty. They thought much too highly of their own abilities and good qualities, and they magnified these in their own heart and thought that their compliance with the outward standard of righteousness was all that God required. They were great sinners in their judgment of themselves and their judgment of other people in relation to themselves. When they came to understand the gospel in truth, not so much changed in their outward behavior, but very much changed in their heart. Their testimony would be different from this demon-possessed man, but well worth hearing even so.

But other persons who become Christians have a greater awareness, a most definite awareness, that something very wonderful and powerful has happened or is happening when they are converted. They are like this man in our text in this sense. Their sins have been so very great and obvious that when Christ came to their soul and their heart, and they believed in Him and came to know His saving power; that their experience was one of actually knowing that they had been blown out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. In this demon-possessed man's experience there was an immediate realization of the greatness of the power of Jesus Christ to save and to rescue him from himself and from the greatness of Satan's power. There was an immediate realization that Satan's power was broken and that he who was before completely Satan's captive, now found himself released from the prison that he had been held in, which in this case was the grasp of demonic control over his mind, soul, and body. Some people, I say, have this kind of experience, and they should not deny it or suppress it; their dramatic conversion.

The Lord Jesus affirms this in the passage before us. And He gives specific instructions on what the man should do, who was rescued, and converted, and who wanted to follow Him. He would not permit him to stay with Him and follow Him in His public ministry. Instead, he would have the man follow Him in a different way. Jesus says to him in verse 19 to, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how Has had compassion on you." This is what Jesus would have him to do. And there are lessons from this man's life and experience which can help each Christian to understand how to bear a better witness for the Lord Jesus. The first lesson is that when you are savingly converted to Jesus Christ, do not expect everyone to be happy about it. The second lesson is that when you are savingly converted to Jesus Christ, there ought to be a great desire to be with Him at all times. And the third lesson is that if Christ has done great things for you that you ought not to be ashamed to proclaim them to all of your friends and others who will listen.

The 1st Lesson is - When you are savingly converted to Jesus Christ

you should expect that many people will not be happy about it. (Verses 12-17)

Obviously the demons were not happy about the conversion of this man. It meant that they would have to leave. And just as obviously, the swine were not happy about the demons being given permission to enter them. It meant their death. But let us remember that even though the demonic hosts never like the conversion of sinners, that the angels of heaven do, and they rejoice over it. Jesus says in Luke 15: 7, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine persons who need no repentance." So, we see that even though the fallen angels are unhappy about the conversion of any person, the holy angels rejoice. And so, also, there are similar ramifications in the realm of men. Those who are not converted, for the most part, are not going to be happy about your being saved and converted and changed by the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be like casting pearls before swine to tell them about the great things that Christ has done for you. They will flee from it, or turn and rend you for it. But there will be some who will be very happy about it; people who have been praying for your conversion, and all true Christians everywhere. There will always be a witness born both for, and against, your conversion. Your conversion, especially when it is a dramatic one, does have an impact on people around you. Look at what happened to this man. Verse 14 says, "So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country." "And they went out to see what it was that had happened." Jesus had allowed this legion of demons to come into the swine after He commanded them to come out of the man. And all two thousand of the swine ran violently down into the sea, and drowned in it. This was something very unusual, and very destructive of personal property.

We should understand that when Jesus does His mighty works in salvation; when He does His mighty works of bringing down Satan's kingdom, and destroying his strongholds, and releasing those who were his captives, that it may negatively affect the business interests of men who are totally unconcerned with spiritual things. We see this happening at a number of points in New Testament history, where men resent the preaching of the gospel because they sense or know that it will hurt their business. You remember Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4: 14. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm." "May the Lord repay him according to his works." "You must also beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words." Why did this man do Paul much harm? Why did he resist his words? Probably because Paul preached against the worship of idols, and much of Alexander's business was the making of idols. We must look at this incident from the perspective of the Lord of glory who gave permission for these swine to be destroyed. Is this man's business to continue as usual

when the purpose of the preaching of the gospel is to win men to Christ and bring them away from their worship of idols? Indeed if they are truly converted, they will go on to destroy them and not to buy new idols to replace them. No, the Lord Jesus determined in this case that this man's business would be affected by the gospel, even if his heart was not. Jesus, as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords has every right to make these kinds of decisions to permit the destruction of private property in order that a witness might be born to the truth. Men's eternal destiny is more important than the preservation of a man's business when it is making idols. That is what Jesus was saying here with the death of these swine. Sending swine into the abyss is better than men going to hell. Is Jesus against the rights of private property and for the destruction of that property? I would say, "No." But He is showing here that the salvation of a man's soul from the power of Satan is much more important than the life of many swine.

You remember the case of Paul's coming into Philippi to preach the gospel, where he preached the gospel to a group of women down by the river, gathered there for the purpose of prayer. And the Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the things spoken to her by Paul. But it says in Acts 16: 16, "Now it happened as we went to prayer, that certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling." And after putting up with her following them for some days crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation,' Paul cast out this spirit from the woman. And verse 19 says, "But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place to the authorities." And they were cast into prison for this supposed crime. But it was the loss of their profit that they were more concerned about, than the gospel being the power of God to the salvation of men's eternal souls.

So it is, here in our text. Verse 15 says, "then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind." And it says, "They were afraid." They were not happy about it; they did not marvel over it and ask questions which might have led to their being taught the truths of the power of the gospel and the power of Christ. They were afraid. Those who took care of the swine fled, and those who came to see what had happened were afraid. This is the typical reaction of people who witness the dramatic conversion of a sinner. People flee from such a powerful witness to the truth because they cannot deal with the implications to themselves; the implication is, that it is only the power of Christ that can deliver men from the power of their sins and the influences of the devil upon them. Men want to believe in any other type of a cure than this. They will believe in

medicine and psycho-therapy but they will flee from Christ. They become afraid when they actually behold the reality of a demon-possessed man clothed and in his right mind, because it suggests very strongly that Christ might indeed also have the right and the power to do something to them. He might very well be the One who would have power to judge the world, and He might judge them some day and send them to the abyss as well. But they will not receive this witness. The world will not receive the witness of Jesus, and it will not receive the witness of a life transformed by His power. Not without grace to allow them to see that the exercise of His power and authority is good. Many people who are unbelievers question whether they want this man Jesus to rule over him. You will notice that in verse 17 that not only did the swineherds flee, and those who came to investigate were afraid, but when the swineherds told those who came out from the city the truth of what had happened, they pleaded with the Lord Jesus to "depart from their region." The truth is, that men are more afraid of a converted man than they are of a demon-possessed one, when they see what Christ's power can do to save and to destroy. So men ought to fear God, but not with kind of craven, unholy fear that would rather see swine saved than men's souls rescued from the power of the Devil. Do not expect that people will be happy about your conversion when you tell them what has happened to you. People, and even your closest relatives may feel much more comfortable with the person that you used to be in your sin, rather than what they see the grace of God do for your life. People who are unconverted will always feel uncomfortable around a person who is changed by the grace of God, and who is beginning to manifest a holy life. They may feel much more comfortable around you when you are sensual and insane than when you are clothed and in your right mind. But let your witness be seen anyway. God is glorified in the life of those will clothe the naked and teach the insane that grace will bring them a sound mind.

The Second Lesson we find here is that when you are savingly converted to Christ you will have a great desire to be with Him.

(Verses 18 and 19)

We find here in verse 18 the words, "and when Jesus got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him." You can understand this can't you? When a person has been that bad off for so long, and suddenly delivered, why wouldn't he, very naturally, want to be with the One who delivered him from such a awful life of oppression and depression and insanity? However, we find something very amazing in how Jesus answered him. Jesus had answered the request of the demons in him favorably and let them go into the swine. He answered the request of the those who came to investigate the miracle that he had performed on the demon-possessed man favorably. He was going to depart their region. But he does not answer the

request of this man whom He had delivered favorably. Why not? He is not going to let him follow him in the same way that he had called the 12 disciples to follow Him. Rather, He says to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." What can we learn from this? Well, first of all, it was not wrong for this man to want to be with Jesus. Everything was right in the request. It simply was not the Lord's will that this man follow Him in the same way that He was leading the others. You and I should understand some things from this. If the Lord, when He was upon the earth, knew that this man would better glorify Him by taking this path of obedience which He commanded him to; then how much more do we need to understand this same principle when we are living in times when we do not see Him now, and when we know Him no longer after the flesh. We need to understand that the Lord does not lead all of His disciples in the same way. He does lead them all the same way in terms of the truth of the Bible; its precepts, its promises and its principles of truth. But He does not providentially lead all believing people in the same way, nor does He have the same plans for usefulness extended to all. He is sovereign in these things.

When I say this, I am not saying that it is permissible to go about to live our Christian lives apart from a local church of God's people. Nor am I saying that Christians ought to live separately and independently of a church of God's people. We should not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some," it says in Hebrews 10: 25. But it was different in this man's case. He desired to be with Jesus. His greatest desire, were he one of us in our day, would be to be with Christ's church, to be with His disciples and to follow Him in the keeping of His commandments and the keeping up of His worship. He would not be missing services or making poor excuses for why he couldn't be there. He would be there. But the Lord did not permit him to be with Him. This shows us that there will be some people whom the Lord will use in unusual and unordinary ways to bear witness to His name and to preach the gospel in less than desirable circumstances. Actually, what might be less than desirable to many Christians, in this case was very desirable to Him because he could clearly see that this was His Lord's will for him. That is what Christ was calling this man to. He did not refuse it. He would be a missionary to his own people. It is when we desire to be with Jesus, even as this man desired to be with Jesus, that the Lord Jesus knows that he can entrust us with missions on His behalf. This is how missionaries come to be called to the field. This is how pastors come to be called into the ministry. This is how ordinary Christians become strong enough to bear witness to their friends and neighbors and relatives. It is when they want to be with Him. The Lord lays this on a man or a woman's heart who in their heart wants to be with Jesus. Actually, since Jesus' ascension to heaven, and

because of the gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer, Jesus is with every one of His people. The real question of their relationship of faith with Him is this; Do I want to be with Him where He wants me to be? This is not a call for a man or woman to leave their church or their family to go to missions but to see the place where you are presently living to be the mission field that the Lord has called you to. This man would basically be a lone witness to Decapolis, but O how willing he was!

When you are first converted, the place to begin as a witness to Jesus is with your friends. Go home to your friends and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." Tell them of the great things that He has done for you; not the things that you are doing for Him. It is His power and His grace and His mercy upon you, an unworthy sinner, that has changed your life. Don't go to your friends with the purpose of trying to argue them out of their present religious views. Rather, simply declare what great things that He has done for you, and how He showed you compassion. Over time, people will no doubt begin to see the changes that the Lord has begun to produce in you. Give Him all the glory for what has changed in you for the better. Make your boast in Him for the power of His love and grace which has been shown to you; how He opened your eyes to your lost estate, and how He gave you the grace to see that you needed to come to Him seeking His merciful and compassionate help that your soul might be saved. Begin with your friends. If you don't believe that, as a Christian, you have the strength to witness to his grace in your life, perhaps it is because you have not sufficiently considered what great things that He has done for your soul. Jesus Christ had the power to cast out these demons from this man. But in order to save your soul He had to obey God's law perfectly and to die on the cross for your sins. For you to be given the gift of the Holy Spirit; grace, mercy, and peace; He had to lay down His life. If He has done so much for you; such great things for your soul, cannot you speak a word of witness to what He has done for you to others? That is how it begins for you as a witness. It begins as a desire to be with Him in regard to what He is doing in the world to save people from their sins. He is always with You when you believe, but we may not always desire to be with Him in this way of which I speak. But he who is forgiven much, loves much. When was the last time that you prayed to share a word of witness, a word of what Christ has done for you to a friend or a relative or a co-worker? Perhaps your desire to be with Christ has fallen low? Let it not continue, but come back to your first love and remember what great things that He has done for you.

Then the 3rd and final Lesson is that when you are savingly converted to Christ you should not be ashamed to declare all that He has done for you. (Verse 20)

"And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled." This is just another step further in the way of being a witness for Christ. It is not only we speak to others of the great things that He has done for our souls, but we also are not ashamed to declare all that He has done for us. The many things that He has done for us are always on our minds and they easily flow upon our lips. One of the greatest witnesses to my unconverted soul in the days that I was at the University of Iowa was when I went to a Campus Crusade for Christ meeting and the young man leading the meeting stood up and said, "What has the Lord been doing in your life?" And many of these 20-30 young people spoke up and told everyone what the Lord had been doing in their life. I slunk down in my chair afraid that I would be called upon. I knew that the Lord was not doing anything in my life. But O what a witness it was to me to realize that many of the young people in that room were not afraid to speak up and to declare what the Lord had been doing for them. Once you become a Christian never be afraid to declare all that the Lord has done for you. I fear for the strength of a person's faith and whether they are growing in grace at all when the name of the Lord is never upon their lips. Speak of the little things that he does for you every day, as well as the great things that He has done for you in your conversion. This one of the great ways that Christ's kingdom will advance.