

HE RAN, AND HE RAN NO 2507

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 7, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 2, 1885.

*“But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.”
Mark 5:6.*

*“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had
compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”
Luke 15:20.*

THESE two texts have a measure of apparent likeness—the man runs to Jesus from afar, and the father runs to the prodigal from afar. They both run—and when two run to meet each other, they soon meet! When a sinner is running to Christ, and the Father is running to the sinner, there shall be a happy meeting before very long, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth, too! I shall begin my discourse by noticing the case of the demoniac, whose story we read—“When he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.” (*Brother Surgeon was referring to his exposition of the Mark text above. Remember, the Exposition was always before the sermon.*)

I. Using that narrative as a kind of parable, I would remark, in the first place, that we have, here, an emblem OF THE SINNER'S PLACE.

He is “afar off” from Christ, and when first of all the Spirit of God begins to open his eyes to his own true condition, one of the chief difficulties in his way is the realization of his distance from the Savior. He begins to cry, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!” The poor man feels as if there were a great and dreadful distance between him and the great Mediator—he can only see “Jesus afar off,” as the demoniac did. He has not yet come to Christ, nor proved His wondrous power to bless.

I daresay there are some in this congregation who feel that they are “afar off” from the Lord Jesus Christ, and “afar off” from the great Father. You are “afar off” as to character. I am not going to bring an accusation against you, for your own heart and conscience accuse you. It is not necessary for me to describe your past life—if you are the person whom Christ has come to bless, then I know that your sin is always before you. You cannot hide it from yourself, it seems to be painted on your very eyeballs! You have to look at everything through the mist and haze of your past guilt, and consequently everything looks dark and dreary to you. The very mercies which God gives you seem to accuse you of your ingratitude to your Benefactor, and any denials of mercy, any chastisements that you are enduring, seem to you to be but premonitions of a coming doom, for you feel yourself to be, by your past life, very far off from Christ! He is perfect, and you are full of sin! He is just, and you are unjust! He is meek, and lowly—you confess that you have been proud and wayward! He is beloved of His Father, the beloved Servant of God, but you have derided God's gospel and you have refused to obey Him. You are, indeed, far off from Christ! It seems to you that if Christ and the penitent thief made a pair, then you, also, might make a pair with your dying Savior, but not otherwise. You feel yourself to be unworthy to be in the same world with Him, much less to be in the same heaven with Him.

Well, now, when our Lord went to Gadara, as far as I can see, He crossed the Sea of Galilee and endured that storm at night in order that He might heal *one man*—and He went back, again, well content when He had worked that one miracle! It may be that you are a man of that kind, as far off from any likeness to Christ as that poor lunatic was, and He may have come here at this good hour with the intent to save *you*! At any rate, His servant will go home as grateful as a man can be, if he is but made the means of saving one such sinner as you are! But, first of all, you must realize that this is your position—“afar off” from Christ as to character.

But what, perhaps, may appear to you to be even worse is that you seem to be “*afar off*” as to any *hope of salvation by Christ*. It may be that you have long been a hearer of the gospel. When you were younger, it seemed as if the kingdom of God had come near to you, but now, the older you grow, the less susceptible you are to holy influences. You used to weep under sermons—you can more easily sleep under them now! Time was when your rest was broken after some kindly admonition from a Christian friend. But now, perhaps, Christian friends scarcely ever admonish you because you have a sarcastic way of repelling what they say! And even while you are sitting here, you are moaning to yourself, “Some in this congregation may be converted, but I shall not be. The Lord Jesus Christ may come here, and deliver some poor soul, but assuredly He will not deliver me. I am an off cast and an outcast—not, perhaps, by open sin—but by an inward hardening of my spirit till my soul has become like the northern iron and steel, and nothing can move me. I am far off from any hope that the Savior will ever bless me.”

Well, now, let me say to you, dear friend, that I am very sorry that it should be so with you, yet am I glad you are here when such a subject as this is being handled, for that Gadarene demoniac seemed to be about as hopeless a man as there was in all the country round about! Apart from Christ, his case was absolutely hopeless. They had doubtless used all the arts for the management of lunatics which they understood in those barbarous days, but no chains of iron, nor bands of brass could hold him—he could not be tamed, or kept in check! And yet, O blessed Christ, You could cross the stormy sea at midnight to save this one man?! It may be that it is so with you, also, dear friends, who are so far away from Christ in the misapprehensions of your lack of hope. Yet it may be that this very hour is the time when you are to be set free from the power of the devil, and brought to sit at Jesus’ feet, clothed, and in your right mind!

Some are also “*afar off*” from Christ as to knowledge of Him. They know but little of the Christ of God. They have heard His name. They have some dim notions about Him, but as yet they only see Him “*afar off*.” In these days, when the gospel is preached at so many street corners, and when there is a sanctuary in almost every street, it is astonishing what gross ignorance there is about Him whom to know is life eternal—by knowledge of whom many are justified, and without knowledge of whom men must perish eternally! O friends, it is terrible to think that there are persons, well instructed in everything else, who know nothing about this salvation which God has provided for the sons of men! You hear them railing against the Bible, and in almost every case the railer has never read the Book! You hear them speak against Christ, and it is almost a proverb that those who speak most against Him are ignorant of the common facts of His life. They have not studied His character, nor have they examined His teaching, yet they cast it all aside as if *they* were infallible, and as if *they* were qualified to judge and to decide without hearing the case at all! This is a wretched mode of action, yet, if any of you who are here know but little of Christ, for all that I am glad you are here, and I only trust that you may be led to do what this poor ignorant demoniac did! Though he must have known very little about Christ, yet he ran to Him, and worshipped Him! A little knowledge, like the star of Bethlehem, may suffice to guide to Christ those who are willing to follow its light. A faint gleaming of what Christ is may burn and glow into a more complete and perfect knowledge of Him, and by that knowledge you may be brought into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

I will not keep you longer in describing the sad state of the sinner in being thus far from Christ, except to say that it may be possible that you feel far from Christ *because you do not feel as if you could get at Him*. You are so unspiritual that you say to yourself, “If Christ were on earth, I would walk till I dropped, but I would get to Him. And if I could speak with Him, so that He could hear my words, and could answer me with actual vocal sounds—if I could see Him, and He would look at me, I would spend the last penny I am worth, and pass over any length of sea and land if I could but get at Him—but somehow I cannot. “If it were a matter of touching the hem of His garment with my finger, I would push through the press to do it. If it were a matter of taking Him up in my arms, as Simeon took the young child Jesus, I would do it, and do it with joy. But I do not know how to get to Him—it seems to be all mist and all cloud to me.” I know what you mean, dear friend, for I was in that state, once, and then, indeed, I also “saw Jesus afar off,” and for a long while I could not get to realize that He was mine. Well, notwithstanding that feeling which possesses you, I shall speak to you, yet further, in the fond hope that you may imitate this poor man who must have been very much like you, only in a worse plight than yours, and it will be my prayer and desire that you may come running to Christ, as he did—and that you, also, may worship Him!

II. Now notice, secondly, THE SINNER’S PRIVILEGE—“He saw Jesus,” though he only saw Him, “*afar off*.”

Those of you who only see Christ in the distance, who do not know much about Him, and cannot get at Him, do at least *know that there is such a Person!* You have heard, and it is the best news you ever

did hear, that the Son of God came down to live among men, and took our flesh, and became man of the substance of His mother, and though He died upon the cross, yet He has risen from the dead, and He still lives. You have heard tell of all that. You have not thought of it as you ought to have done—you have not let it weigh upon your heart, or sought to understand all its holy lessons—but still, you have such a knowledge of Him that you have seen Him “afar off.”

More than that, you have heard, and you believe that *Jesus has done great things for men*. You do not think much about what He has done, but still, it has come to your knowledge that He lived, loved, and died that He might save men. You have often heard that on the cross He made an expiation for human sin. And let me tell you that this is the choicest news you ever heard, or ever will hear! And the day may come when you will look at this truth as the only star of hope in a night which otherwise must be eternal. I hope you will yet clasp that truth to your heart as the brightest jewel and the rarest treasure you have ever met with.

And I believe, further, that some of you have caught the idea that *the Lord Jesus Christ is saving other people*. You have met with some whom you observe to be very much changed, greatly altered from what they used to be, and though you sometimes laugh at them, yet deep down in your heart you do not really mock them—you wish it were yourself! You have, after all, a respect for any one of these wonderful changes, called conversions, when you see them to be real and genuine—and you, perhaps, know some fellows with whom you work, and although you ridicule them, you know that they are better men than they used to be—and you admire the change. And there is a feeling in your inmost heart that though you cannot make out the mystery, there is still something in it. Yes, you can see Jesus, though I still grieve to say that you do but see Him afar off. You have, in your heart, some sort of belief that it may be possible that He will yet save you, and there is some sort of humble desire in your soul that He will look your way, and cast the devils out of you—and make you to be His happy servant.

But, once more, concerning the sinner’s privilege, *Christ has come to the district where he is*. It is a horrible country, full of tombs, and full of pollution—and the man has made it more horrible by his wildness, and his madness—yet there is the Christ, Himself, treading that same Gadarene shore! He who is “mighty to save” has come into the land of death-shade! He who could cast out devils has come into the devil’s own territory! He has come to beard the lion in his den! Herein, also, is the privilege of men today—the Lord Jesus Christ, who made heaven and earth, is still among us—and will be with us to the end of this dispensation. He who could raise the dead, and heal the lepers, and cast out demons, is still here working by His Spirit! Though corporeally He is gone, yet in efficacious power to save He still lingers among us, and His lingering means salvation to all who trust Him! Hear it, O sons of men, and as you hear it, may God bless the message to your souls!

III. What did this demoniac do when he saw Jesus afar off? That is the point to which we are coming, and that will teach us THE SINNER’S WISEST COURSE—“He ran and worshipped Him.”

I do not know that he did intelligently, and after the right manner, worship Christ as the disciples worshipped Him. Perhaps at first, when he was up a hill, howling and cutting himself with stones, he spied a boat come near the shore, and he saw a single stranger coming up from the boat, much as the natives of Erromanga saw John Williams landing on that cannibal shore—and his horrible instinct moved him to fly down at once to the beach, perhaps to attack the man who dared, in open daylight, intrude on the wild man’s domain. But as he approached nearer and nearer to this mysterious stranger, quite a new feeling came over him. His steps grew slower, his fierce eyes beamed with a duller fire, the beast-like instinct became calm. The ravening wolf, the roaring lion within him began to tremble, for it perceived its Master—and when he had come near enough to get a fuller view of Christ, who stood there in simple majesty, calm and serene—the very opposite of the poor creature’s mad fury—the man fell down at Jesus’ feet and worshipped Him! Then the devils within him spoke out, and using the man’s voice, said, “What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the most high God?” But for the moment it was the man, and not the devil, who prevailed! For an instant, what little relics there were of manhood made themselves felt, and the man fell down and worshipped under the influence of the mysterious presence of Christ. What I hope and trust may come of our consideration of this subject is that some big sinner here may have a lucid interval—that some mad sinner here, before the devil can speak again, may have just a little quiet time, so that, though he may have come in here fresh from all manner of evil, yet for the moment he may feel a solemn calm steal over his spirit, a sacred hush that shall make him quiet as he has not been for many a day. I pray that some strange influence—strange to him up to this time—may draw him so that he shall run to Christ, and fall at His feet and worship Him!

I am not, just now, saying anything about faith in Christ except that I do not believe any man worships Christ without having some faith in Him. I am just going to take this very low standard, and say

that this man, with all his madness, was wise in what he did—and the Spirit of God was leading him in the right direction when, breaking loose, as it were, from the devil's power for a moment or two, he ran to Christ, and worshipped Him. And to any poor soul in like case, I would say—"I beseech you, for a minute or two, at any rate, worship the Christ of God whom I preach to you."

For consider that, first, *Christ is God as well as man*, and, therefore, worthy to be worshipped. This poor demoniac was wiser than the Socinians or Unitarians of our day—he felt that there was more in Christ than in any mere man. Devil-possessed though he was, yet he fell down, and worshipped Christ. And you, my friend—you also know that Christ is God. Well, then, for a few minutes do yourself the justice to worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. If He shall never save you, yet He is worthy to be worshipped, for He is so great, and so gracious. Therefore, let your mind be still for a moment, and pay your homage before His feet, and from your very heart call Him, "Lord," and "God."

Besides, *Christ died to save sinners*, and being God, and having died to save sinners, I say to you, "Worship Him." I recollect the time when I was afraid that Jesus would never save me, but I used to feel in my heart that even if He did not, I must love Him for what He had done for poor sinners. It seemed to me, as I read the wondrous story of His life and death, that if He spurned me, I would still lie at His feet and say, "You may spurn me, but You are a blessed Christ, for all that, and if You curse me, yet I can only say to You that I well deserve it at Your hands. Do what You will with me, but You saved the dying thief, and You saved her out of whom You did cast seven devils, but if You do not deign to save me, yet You are a blessed Christ, and I cannot rail at You, or find fault with You, but I lie down at Your feet and worship You." Can you speak and act like that? Can you look up at Him through your tears, and as you see the nail prints in His hands and feet, and that great gash in His side which reached His heart; can you not feel that you must lie at His feet and worship Him? Just waive all questions about yourself for a minute, and think only of Him! Forget even your own sin for the time being, and think of what He deserves, and now, at least, for the next few minutes, bow your soul reverently before the Christ of God and worship Him!

I think I may add that you may well worship Him, because there is in that poor, flurried soul of yours, worried and confused and devil-ridden though it is, this thought—that *Christ alone can save you!* You do know *that*. Where else can you go but to Him? What other door is open to you? What other hand was ever pierced for you? What other side ever bled that it might give cleansing for your sin? Where lives there another person who loves as Christ has loved? Therefore, realize that He is unique, One altogether by Himself, and while you cannot and will not worship others, yet, poor devil-possessed soul that you are, fall down and worship Him! Say to Him, "Lord, if my night never ends, yet will I look eastward, for there the sun will rise, if not for me. Lord, if I die of thirst, yet will I linger by the lone well in the desert, for if I ever drink at all, I must drink there. I can but perish if I linger at the cross—and I am resolved to linger there. And if my blood shall stain that blessed tree, then even so it must be, for I am resolved—and it is my last resource—if I must perish, I will die here." O soul, I am not telling you to do any great thing now, am I? I am not urging you to exercise any unreasonable confidence, but I do advise you to fall down and worship at my Lord's dear feet! Mad though you are, and your mad worship so poor and imperfect, yet, nevertheless, He will accept you, and do great things for you!

For remember, next, that *Christ can save you*. Christ can save you! You have gone to the end of your tether, but you have not gone beyond the reach of His power! You have cut yourself, and howled through many a dreary night, and snapped your chains, and cursed the men that bound you. You have driven away friend and helper—and you are altogether undone—but, all the same, Christ can save you! What if the devil is in you? There is no devil in hell, or out of hell who does not tremble at Christ's presence! Oh, that He would come, and lay His cool hands upon your fevered brow, and put His own life into your poor withered heart, and make you live! He can save you—of that I am sure. I cannot speak as my Master can, but yet my Master can make these poor words of mine to bless and comfort you. And I pray that He may. This is the one thing that I bid you do—run to Him and worship Him!

IV. Now, turning to my second text, I must briefly remind you of THE SECRET HOPE FOR SINNERS—that while you are yet a great way off, the Father, Himself, will see you, and will run to you! While you are running to His Son, the Father will run to you—and you and He shall meet in Christ—the only safe meeting place for God and man!

Turn your thoughts for a minute or two from that Gadarene demoniac to the prodigal son. He was coming back, you remember, and when he was a great way off, I should not wonder that his heart began to misgive him. "Oh," he seemed to say, "there is the old house!" He has reached the top of the hill, and he can see it. He recollects those old trees under which he used to play with his brother, and he thinks that he can spy out the very spot where he left his father, and went on that reckless journey into the far

country. "I wonder what father will say to me," he says. "I do not know how I can ever face him. I have treated him so badly, that I must have broken his heart. I fear he is angry with me, and I do not think I can bear his wrath. I am ready to humble myself and say, 'Father, I have sinned,' but, oh, what a wretch I am! He will hardly know me. I do not look like the person I was when I left. What awful times I have been through since last I saw his dear face! I think I must run back again. Bad as it is to perish out in the far country, I do not think I can really face him." He is just turning back when, to his surprise, his father clasps him in his arms, for, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

O dear hearts, if I knew there was a poor soul here beginning to seek the Lord, how glad I should be to speak with him! And there are some of my dear brothers and sisters here, who are always on the lookout for any in whom there is the faintest beginning of a work of grace! But, you see, we cannot see the germs of grace as God can—we cannot spy out returning sinners as He can, for *God has far-reaching eyes*, and if there is only half a wish to repent in any of your hearts, the Father sees it! If you only know that there is a Christ, and that you would gladly worship Him, but you have not gone the length of really trusting Him, and casting your souls upon Him, yet remember that when the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him! When God sees anything, His is a very different sight from yours or mine. We see a thing with our eyes, and then we get a microscope, and look through that, and see it very differently. But God, as it were, always sees everything microscopically and telescopically! He sees the whole of it, sees the very heart and soul of it! God at this moment sees all the sin of the whole of your life. He sees all your brokenness of spirit, all your doubts, all your fears, all the struggles against sin, and all the strivings of His Spirit. He takes it all in with a single glance, and comprehends and understands it all! And though you are a great way off, the Father sees you, and He sees you with a father's eyes, too! How quick a father's eyes are when he looks at his boy who is ill! He spies out that hectic flush before the boy believes there is any trace of consumption in his countenance, for a loving father has a physician's eyes—and a mother's eyes are still quicker to perceive anything wrong.

Moreover, *God sees with compassionate eyes*—"His father saw him, and had compassion" on him. The two things went together. I know a sister in Christ who did me great good one day. I had helped a man many times, poor wretch that he was. I never clothed him, but he sold the garments in a day or two! I never helped him, but he sank into deeper degradation than before, and at last, after he had been rigged out afresh from top to toe, and a job found for him—and he was put into a position for getting on in life—he came here again! And when I saw him, I shrank back from him. I felt indignant with him, but our sister—a better Christian than I—lifted up both hands and began to cry! The man was covered with vermin, and he had evidently been drinking hard. As she lifted up her hands, she cried, "O poor creature, we have done all we can to save you, and you will go to hell." And she stood and cried as if he had been her own child! And I believe that is how God feels for poor sinners, for He cannot bear to see them act as they do! If you are coming back to Him, that is the compassionate way in which He is looking at you. He spies you out, and as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so does the great Father weep over sinners, grieving that they will be as desperately wicked and foolish as to destroy their own souls!

V. Now I must close, for our time has gone. The last point to be noticed is, **THE ACTION OF THE SINNER'S FATHER.**

No sooner did the Father see His son coming back than "He ran." When God runs, it is quick running. "He ran, and fell on his neck." And when God stoops to fall on a sinner's neck, it is wondrous condescension! This is compassion like a God. "And kissed him." God's kiss is the essence of a million kisses all in one! One kiss from God is the soul of heaven laid to the heart of a burdened sinner. "He ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," and so the prodigal was received back into his father's family!

What I am longing for is that God's blessed Spirit may move some of you to run to Christ, if only in the poor way that I have set forth. Just for a few minutes, quietly worship Him, and while you are doing that, may the great Father come in with all His omnipotent love, and put away your sin, and change your nature, and receive you into eternal union with Himself to the praise of the glory of His grace! If I were to say ten thousand things, but God did not bless what I had said, all would be in vain. I hope that you do not need more words, but that you will come at once to Christ. Do not perish, I pray you; do not damn your own souls! There is enough misery in this world without incurring the miseries of the world to come! The Lord Himself says, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die?" In the name of the bleeding Christ, seek His mercy even now! By His bloody sweat and crown of thorns, seek Him now! I know no better argument except it be by His death cry, "It is finished." Come to Christ! Look to Him and live, even now, and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGON:
MARK 5:1-24; 35-43.

Verse 1. *And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.*

They had had a very eventful passage across that small but stormy sea, and Christ had proved Himself to be the Lord High Admiral of the seas. But now that He steps ashore, they are to see His power quite as distinctly displayed as upon the stormy waves.

2, 3. *And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains.*

Those ancient graveyards were in remote places, for the people were too wise to bury their dead inside their cities. Very often the tombs were hewn in caverns in the sides of hills and rocks where the dead were laid. Of course, every man who touched a tomb was thereby ceremonially defiled, so that the tombs were fit places for an unclean person possessed by an unclean spirit. What a ghastly dwelling place! What a grim abode for the man, and yet most fitting, for he was dangerous to all who passed by—a raving lunatic who could not be restrained by any bonds or chains that could be put upon him!

4, 5. *Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.*

Poor creature! His howling must have been right hideous, indeed. Those who passed that way were startled by his unearthly cries, He was a terror to the whole district. Persons could not bear to live anywhere near the places where he resorted. “Night and day” he was a misery to himself, and a terror to all around him—sad type of some whom we know, to our sorrow, who have gone madly into sin. It certainly is madness, whatever else it may be, and when madness and badness go together, what a terror such a man becomes!

6. *But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.*

—There is a wondrous attraction in the person of our Divine Lord and Master. Though He was a long way off, yet a gracious magnetic influence proceeded from Him by which He drew this poor object of pity to Him. “When he saw Jesus afar off, He ran and worshipped Him.”

7. *And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the most high God? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not.*

Who was speaking then—the man, himself, or the devil within him? It is very hard to tell. The man and the devil were two personalities, but they were so effectually blended into one, that it is scarcely possible to tell when it was the man speaking, and when it was the devil. So, when sin enters into a man, it gets so completely into his very nature, that sometimes we feel it must be the evil spirit speaking in the man—and yet it is not easy to be quite sure that it is so—and we cannot free the man, himself, from the guilt of his words and actions.

8. *For He said unto him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.*

Whenever Christ speaks to the devil, His message is a very short, and very sharp one. The Lord treats Him like the dog that he is! “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” Christ has no compliment for devils and it is a pity that some of His servants have such soft words when they are dealing with unbelief, which is but a devil, or one of the devil’s demons.

9. *And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.*

The devil is obliged to tell his name when Christ treats him like a catechized child. And he is compelled to crouch before Christ like a whipped cur at his master’s feet.

10. *And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country.*

Satan clings to this world, and to any place where he has had a signal triumph, as he had among those tombs and those rocky ravines.

11, 12. *Now there was near unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.*

Such is the malice of these evil spirits, that they would rather do mischief among swine than nowhere! But notice their unanimity—with all the faults that can be laid at the door of demons, you cannot find them divided and quarrelling! They are unanimous in evil, and it is a shame that those who are the followers of Christ should often be divided, whereas the kingdom of Satan is not divided against itself. Let us learn from our great enemy at least this one lesson!

13. *And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand).*

It was strange that there should be so many swine in the country where lived God's people, Israel. And as they had no right to be there, and were there contrary to Jewish law, it was well that they should be destroyed.

13-15. *And were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and saw him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

Ah, me! How variously different people look upon the same thing! If you and I, who are Christ's disciples, had gone there, and seen this poor lunatic fully restored, we would have been filled with holy joy! And we would have composed new hymns of praise in honor of the great Physician who had cured him! But these people, in their alienation of heart from the Lord Jesus Christ, "were afraid." They feared and trembled in the presence of almighty mercy! Omnipotent love awoke no joy in their hearts, but the spirit of bondage was upon them.

16. *And they that saw it, told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.*

You may be sure that they dwelt upon the latter part of the story, for the loss of the swine touched them more than the healing of the demoniac!

17. *And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts.*

O dear friends, let none of us ever get into such a state of mind and heart as to pray Christ to go away from us! Yet we have known people act in such a dreadful way as that—a person troubled in conscience has said, "I will never go and hear that preacher again! I cannot sleep at night after listening to him. I will never read such-and-such a book again, it disturbs me so that I cannot enjoy myself." This is, in effect, to pray Christ to depart out of your coasts! What? Is salvation worth so little that you have no care to possess it? Is Christ Himself so small a blessing that you even tremble lest He should change your nature and save you? I think there were more lunatics than one on that Gadarene shore—the people were all as mad at heart as that one poor man was mad in brain!

18. *And when He was come into the ship—*

Christ will go from you if you want Him to go. He forces Himself upon no man—the grace of God does not violate the will of man—it acts in accordance with man's nature, and achieves the divine purpose without disturbing the individuality of the man. So Christ went from Gadara. "And when He was come into the ship."—

18. *He that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him.*

Was not that a proper prayer? I think, dear friends, that not only nature, but the man's *new* nature must have suggested this petition. He prayed Christ that he might be with Him. In our day it is very natural that as soon as we are converted, we should wish to go home to heaven. But what is the reason why we should not do so? It is in order that we may *bear witness* for Christ here on earth, and gather in others unto Him!

19. *Howbeit Jesus permitted (NKJV) him not, but said unto him, Go home to your friends, and tell them how great things the Lord has done for you, and has had compassion on you.*

That is one of the chief points on which we ought always to speak—not only to tell of the greatness of the change which the grace of God has worked in us, but especially to testify to the tenderness of God to us! Oh, how gently did He handle our broken bones! That good Physician of ours has a lion's heart, but He has a lady's hand! He does not spare us necessary pain, but He never inflicts even a twinge that is unnecessary. And, oh, the pity of His heart toward us when He sees the sorrow which our sin has brought upon us!

20. *And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis.*

—In the ten little cities that were in that region. "He departed and began to publish in Decapolis."—

20. *How great things Jesus had done for Him: and all men did marvel.*

This is the kind of ready-made preacher whose service for his Lord is usually most effectual. The man who, though he has studied little on many points, yet knows *by experience* what the grace of God has done for him, and keeps to that one theme, and tells out the story with simple untrained eloquence, is the man who will do much for his Master! As we read here, "all men did marvel." If he had plunged into deep doctrinal subjects, it may be that men would have ridiculed him, but inasmuch as he spoke of what he knew, and told of the greatness and graciousness of God, "all men did marvel."

21, 22. *And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto Him: and He was near unto the sea. And, behold.*

—Wherever we see that word, “behold,” it is like our nota bene, saying to us, “Mark well what is coming.” “Behold”—

22-24. *There came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jarius by name; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death: I pray You, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed Him and thronged Him. 35, 36.* *While He yet spoke, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain men which said, Your daughter is dead: why trouble you the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.*

I can imagine that if Jarius had not been a man of much faith, he would have looked at the Savior with a meaning glance, as much as to say, “‘Only believe?’ Could You ask more of me when my child is dead? Yet You bid me, ‘Only believe.’” But, brothers and sisters, here is the very sphere of faith! Where there is no wading, there must be swimming—and where there is no hope in the creature, then we must throw ourselves upon the Creator. So, the child’s death made room for the father’s faith.

37-39. *And He permitted (NKJV) no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James. And He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He said unto them, Why make you this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleeps.*

She was dead, but not dead as far as Christ’s intention was concerned. She was not so dead as to remain dead. He meant, soon, to bring her back again to life, and therefore to Him it was as if she were but sleeping.

40. *And they laughed Him to scorn.*

What a wonderful picture this must have been—The Lord of glory in the center of a ribald crew who laughed Him to scorn! But it is not the man who is laughed at who is necessarily contemptible, it is often the *laughers* who are the most deserving of scorn. It was so, here, in Christ’s day, and it has often been so since.

40. *But when He had put them all out.*

They were not worthy to be answered in any other fashion.

40-42. *He took the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto you, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.*

How very often persons were “astonished” in Christ’s day! Sometimes it is put, “they marveled.” At other times, “they were amazed,” or, “they wondered.” It would have been well if wonder had always turned to faith—but sometimes it corrupted into hate! God grant that our wonder at Christ may always be of that kind which crystallizes into love!

43. *And He charged them strictly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.*

Life must be nourished. Young life, especially, needs frequent food. If Christ has spiritually quickened your child, see that you feed the child with convenient food. If you have won a convert to Christ in the Sunday school, take care that the unadulterated milk of the Word is brought forth, that the new-born child may be fed and nourished till it comes unto the perfect stature of a man in Christ Jesus!

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