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## Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

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## Homiletics

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### Outlines on the Standard Epistle Lessons

#### REMINISCERE SUNDAY

##### 1 THESS. 4:1-7

We live in a paradoxical age. Loyalty to God is called bigoted dogmatism, but fanatic liberalism in doctrine and life is applauded. Our text pleads for an ever-increasing, unyielding loyalty to God and presents God's power and plan for such a life.

#### GOD-PLEASING WILLFULNESS

##### I. Its source

##### II. Its manifestations

#### I

Willfulness in negative sense: man by nature (Gen. 6:5; Acts 7:51). In their former state also the Thessalonians had been willful against God. Now they should be as determined in the sanctifying of their lives, even more so.

They possessed the necessary power. The exhortation is "by the Lord Jesus," διὰ τοῦ κυρίου. The Apostle appeals not merely as Christ's representative (2 Cor. 5:20), but on the basis of the atonement "by Jesus Christ" (cf. Eph. 1:5). Since Christ had perfectly kept the Law for them and redeemed them from the curse of the Law, they could say with the Apostle: Phil. 4:13. The redemption through Jesus Christ is the power and motivation unto sanctification.

They were elect of God (ch. 1:4). As such they were called (v. 7). Not only a turning to a life in God, but also a life for God follows.

This sanctification is willed by God (v. 3 a). He insists on it. He works faith in us, and thereby "the new man" is created (Eph. 4:24). This inward man delights in the Law of God (Rom. 7:22). We do the good works, but the initiative lies with God (2 Cor. 3:5), and He works through us (Phil. 2:13). If the slogan *deus vult* at the convention in Clermont could stir up the masses of Europe to forsake occupation, land, and family to engage in the Crusades, how much more should the will of God persuade us unto sanctification.

As the Thessalonians, so we. We need continued encour-

agement to increase in sanctification (v. 1 b; *Triglot*, p. 907: "Form. Con., Sol. Decl.," II, 68). Having been redeemed by Christ, having been made Christians, and knowing not only that sanctification is God's will, but that He Himself works in us both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13), we Christians are well equipped, in utter disregard of our rebellious nature, peevish flesh, and inflated reason and in the most willful manner, to go about those things which tend evermore to the sanctifying of our lives.

## II

It took God-pleasing willfulness to manifest sanctification in Thessalonica. The city was known for its unblushing unchastity, depraved debauchery, and dishonesty in business. Cf. the moral laxness of our age.

God-pleasing willfulness manifests itself in various actions of believers. Sanctification is used as a general term (v. 3 a; ch. 3:13). The life of Christians is to be a state of doing good works, *προϊστασθαι* (Titus 3:8). It is to be for "necessary uses" (Titus 3:14).

Specific manifestations: a. Purity. Avoid every form of sexual irregularity (v. 3 b). Not only public scandals, but also those things done in secret are to be avoided. The positive side of the Sixth Commandment is to be stressed. Personal purity becomes saints (Eph. 5:3). Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). We are to sanctify ourselves (Lev. 20:7). Not merely the outward decency, but also the chaste inward attitude belongs to the proper concept of God-pleasing willfulness (v. 5 a). Since the heathen know not God, they delight in carnal desires (v. 5 b); but we who know the God of Holiness have higher ideals. Impurity and holiness are opposites (v. 7).

b. Honesty (v. 6). The Thessalonians were to be honest even in a city known for its fraud. With God as the Avenger, dishonesty is not even shrewd business. Especially in business connections with each other they were to be a light in the unscrupulous economic setup of this city. Applications: Not only in business dealings, labor relations, and tax payments, but also in our church contributions.

In a world which is infatuated with sexual licentiousness and obstinate in its greed for wealth and power because it deifies materialism, we Christians are firmly to set our will on holiness in the power from on high. VICTOR MENNICKE

## OCULI SUNDAY

EPH. 5:1-9

Christians, though living in this world, are not of the world (John 17:14-16). They have experienced a remarkable change (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:23). This change manifests itself, and must do so, in their entire conduct. They must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called (Eph. 4:1). In our text the Apostle uses the believer's high calling of God in Christ Jesus as the motivation for his exhortation to holiness and good works.

### WALK WORTHY OF YOUR VOCATION IN CHRIST JESUS

- I. *As God's dear children through Christ walk in love*
- II. *As saints in the Kingdom of Christ avoid all uncleanness and covetousness*
- III. *As lights in the Lord Jesus walk as children of light*

#### I

A. V. 1. Christians are dear children, beloved of the Father, who has in His marvelous loving-kindness adopted them; beloved of the Son, who gave Himself for them and thus made it possible for them to become children (v. 2); beloved of the Holy Spirit, who regenerated them into sonship (cp. Eph. 2:18-22; 3:16; 4:30). What an honor to be a child of God, dear to Him!

B. Therefore be followers, imitators of God and of His love. Children imitate their father, so imitate your Father, the Triune God; and as He is love, so let your whole life be love, love toward God (1 John 4:19) and His commandments (1 John 5:3); love toward your fellow Christians (1 John 4:10-12, 20-21; 5:1-2); toward all men (Matt. 5:43-48). As children of the God of love walk in love! (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 397.)

#### II

A. Christians are saints (v. 3), not by nature, but because they have by the Holy Spirit been made citizens in the kingdom of Christ and God (v. 5). The Apostle had addressed them as saints (1:1); he had told them how they were made saints (1:3-14; 2:1-22). They were saints having been washed in the blood of Jesus and having received forgiveness of all their sins (1:7); in Baptism (5:25 b-27) having been

regenerated by the Holy Spirit and endowed with the strength and willingness to do good works (2:5, 6, 10). Saints indeed.

B. Therefore walk as saints in a life of purity and holiness. The Apostle warns particularly against two sins prevalent in his day and ours. a) Immorality of every sort. What cesspools of sexual filthiness and sensuality in our cities! What filthy jokes and immoral books and lewd pictures seen and heard round about us! b) Covetousness, love of money, of filthy lucre. Is there a sin more prevalent in our country than worship of the dollar?

C. Such things are not convenient, do not agree with the Christian's calling into sainthood. They exclude from membership in Christ's kingdom (v. 5), subject man to God's eternal wrath (v. 6). Examples!

D. Be not deceived! Our wily flesh will seek to seduce us also. Then remember: We are saints, and filthiness of immorality and covetousness should never be named as having been committed among us. We are pure, holy, saints, by the grace of God. Let us walk in purity of life.

### III

A. Christians are a light in the Lord (v. 8). Formerly they were darkness, not only living in the darkness of sin and shame and vice, knowing neither God nor His will, but being themselves darkness, from whom no light, no good could proceed. In the Lord, having been united with Christ, the Light of the world (John 1:4, 9), they are a light (John 8:12). Like Christ they know God (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18). Like Him they know and love God's will (Ps. 40:8; John 4:34; 9:4, 5). Blessed, happy people, a light in the Lord!

B. Therefore they must walk as children of light (v. 8 b) and bring forth the fruits of light (v. 9). a) Goodness. As God is good (Ps. 25:8), so Christians must practice goodness, be good to all, good Christians, good neighbors, good citizens. b) Righteousness. They must not permit their "goodness" toward others to connive at sin, but all their deeds and words must be in keeping with the norm of God's Law. c) Truth. Their righteousness is not merely a cloak; no, they are true, loyal, sincere in all they do and speak, true friends, loyal citizens, sincere Christians. We are a light in the Lord. Let us walk as children of light in the strength the Lord provides through Word and Sacrament.

THEO. LAETSCH

## LAETARE SUNDAY

GAL. 4: 21-31

To that lawyer who wanted to know how he might inherit eternal life and then cited correctly the sum of God's Law, Jesus said, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:28). But John 3 Jesus repeatedly says, "Whosoever believeth in Him, etc." Two ways; may we take our choice? To the Galatians had come Judaistic teachers who said: "Both are required; faith in the Savior is not enough; you must also keep the Law of Moses."—The natural man wants to go to heaven by way of the Law. Ask people to come to church, and you often get the answer: "You go your way, we go ours; we live a respectable life; we'll probably all come out even."

St. Paul in the text wants to set the Galatians (and us) right. He does this in an allegory, by comparing

## SONS OF HAGAR AND OF SARAH

## I

V. 21. St. Paul says we must, in the first place, know what we are talking about. God has two kinds of children, as Abraham had. Story. All men are in a sense children of God (creation, preservation). As such they are bound by the Law of God; obliged to keep it perfectly (Rom. 2:13; Gal. 3:12) as bondmen subject to punishment if they do not, entitled only to board and keep if they do.—But there is another relationship to God: that of being true sons of God through the promise and the fulfillment of the promise of Christ. They do the Father's will not by constraint, but of their own free will. They are heirs not because they have earned it, but by virtue of their relationship to God.—The two relationships exclude each other; you can't be both bond and free.—Let everyone who still hopes to gain anything by works be sure he understands the Law: No merely "respectable" life or "doing my best" will pass muster (James 2:10).

## II

What will they find who aim to live by the Law? The evidence that they are bondmen. By the Law is the knowledge of sin. It cannot justify; it can only show that we lack the required righteousness. Hence it urges on to ever new

attempts to keep it, enslaving its followers, filling them with dread at the consequences of their failings. — That is not the Lord's fault. Attempting to live by the Law is like a crippled man's trying to cross a river: swimming is a good way to do that; but it's not possible *for him*. Keeping the Law is a way to heaven, but not for man as he is now born into the world. The lame man needs to be carried across the river, and sinful man needs a new covenant to be saved. He must be born again as a child of promise, a free son of God (v. 31). Christ has made that possible (Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5). — Even so the Law has its use (Gal. 3:24; Ps. 119:9, 105); but the bondage is gone (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:25), and the curse is lifted (Gal. 3:13).

### III

Sons are heirs. — They who base their relationship to God on the Law will inherit under the Law (Lev. 18:5; Luke 10:28; Rom. 10:5. — Deut. 27:26; Ps. 119:21; Jer. 11:3; Gal. 3:10). The actual result, then, is v. 30. — They will not have it so; claim to be the true heirs; make life miserable to the children of promise (v. 29); but Matt. 7:21-23; Eph. 2:8, 9. The inheritance, by the Father's disposal, belongs to the sons of promise.

The application to ourselves now is: Can we say v. 31? Isaac is the prototype of a Christian. But we all have an Ishmael in our heart, too — our old flesh, self-righteousness — struggling for the mastery. How necessary, then, the admonition Gal. 5:1.

THEO. HOYER

## JUDICA SUNDAY

HEB. 9:11-15

What is Christianity? Well to consider this question during Lent. Our answer will reflect what the sacrifice means to us individually. With deadening regularity the cry is heard that Christianity means a better man, a better society, one world. In a sense this is true — if we mean a better man, conforming to the will of God; a better society, a regenerated society; one world, all citizens of the kingdom of God. If, however, we think merely of a law-abiding citizen, a society with less poverty and crime, a world at peace, then we are

confusing a fruit of Christianity with Christianity itself, the effect for the cause. — A generation interested in a *diesseits* view of life will not become interested in a *jenseits* philosophy. The Christian with his feet firmly planted on the ground is also looking up, setting his "affection on things above." He is interested in a better man, a finer society, "one world," but in a more complete sense than natural man can envisage.

What is Christianity? What does the sacrifice of Jesus, the Center of Christianity, mean to me?

#### WHAT DO I OWE THE ATONING SACRIFICE OF CHRIST?

##### *I. The cleansing from sin (vv. 11-14).*

The sacrifice of Jesus is just what a sin-enslaved world needs most. The foolish may make light of sin, call it "the color element in life," "an invention of the priestcraft," but the realist who examines self and the world and compares his findings with the Law is amazed at the blindness of those who would not see.

As little as the world can successfully deny sin, still less can it atone for it. But Christ fully satisfied the demands of eternal justice. He came as the heaven-sent High Priest to sacrifice, not something else, but Himself. This He did by means of His body, "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" than even the Jew could boast. And the blood thus shed was offered as the ransom which was acceptable to God. By its very nature this blood was able to accomplish what the world lacked. If the blood on Jewish altars slain could effect something in a ceremonial or symbolical way (v. 13), surely the blood of the Holy One of God, offered through His spirit, could purge us from sin, dead works, an evil conscience (v. 14).

Whatever sins may burden us: sins of weakness, sins which have trafficked upon our life, "pet sins" which burn our conscience, this sacrifice has atoned for all and won for all men a Mediator, a "Go-Between." He points to His sacrifice, and we are declared free by virtue of the atonement of our High Priest.

##### *II. The power to walk righteously, to "serve the living God" (v. 14 c).*

With sins atoned for by His sacrifice, with God satisfied, reconciled, with every obstacle removed for me to approach



God, with this sacrifice accepted in faith, I can now walk with Him. I am united with Him. No sacrifices for sin are necessary, but I can and will want to offer thankofferings. With the Spirit in my heart, there arises now a willingness to serve Him. Sin I will shun as that loathsome, despicable power which would enslave me and make the forgiveness of God of no effect. Now there can be fruits which lead to a better man, a better community, a more perfect world. Through the preaching of the Gospel I can beat back the powers of darkness and find new places to conquer in His name. By sanctified, fruitful living, Christianity's fruits in me will have a practical effect in this world. As a child of the heavenly Father I have at my disposal all the resources of Heaven by the simple process of prayer.

### *III. The hope of eternal life (v. 15).*

Christ earned "good things to come" (v. 11). He did save not merely to save, but that as holy beings we might serve Him in everlasting life. With sins forgiven, we are prepared for an eternal bliss with Him. He had made a testament for us which necessitated His death before we might effectively be His heirs (v. 15). With this death accomplished, we have a sure hope that we shall enter eternal life.

This hope can't be taken away from us, since it is based on His sacrifice, rather than the sacrifice of animals by human priests. Built on the solid rock of a divine promise, we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8: 37-39).

The Father, having accepted us, every vestige of doubt which our enemies may try to implant vanishes (Rom. 8: 31b-33).

Beholding the chaos of this world—nations the playthings of strife, suspicion, and greed; the individual ground under the heel of sin's undoing; every human hope dashed—the Christian thanks God that his is a sure hope of a better city "which hath foundation, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11: 10). This is the hope of eternal life springing forth from the sacrifice of Jesus.

This sacrifice is the heart of Christianity. It assures me of forgiveness of sins, the power to serve the living God, and seals for me the hope of eternal heritage.

ARTHUR C. REPP

**PALM SUNDAY**

**PHIL. 2:5-11**

In a few days we shall again gather in our churches for services on Good Friday. On that day we shall turn our steps to Calvary. As we look upon the great work which, on that knoll, God performed in Christ Jesus, our eyes at first turn down in grief and shame, but then they rise to the heights of heaven, to the throne of grace. First we see the Redeemer in the depths of ignominy for us, then in the height of glory for us. Let us on the threshold of Holy Week consider

**THE TWO STATES IN CHRIST JESUS' REDEEMPTIVE WORK**

*I. The state of humiliation    II. The state of exaltation*

**I**

**A. Christ Jesus' state of humiliation began when He, the incarnate Son of God, "made Himself of no reputation" (v. 7).**

**1. From eternity Christ Jesus was God and possessed the divine nature (John 1:1-3). During His whole sojourn in the flesh Christ Jesus never once laid aside His divine nature (v. 6).**

**2. Nevertheless, He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (v. 6).**

**a. Ancient kings, in fact, potentates of any age, delight in making a display of their power and glory.**

**b. Not so Jesus Christ. Though He, the God-Man, was throughout His life on earth in the form of God and could have made full and constant use of His divine power and majesty according to His human nature also, yet He did not parade His power, make a show of His majesty. Only on certain occasions He let some of His divine power and glory shine forth, namely, when He performed His miracles.**

**B. In the state of humiliation Christ Jesus furthermore "made Himself of no reputation," emptied Himself by "taking upon Himself the form of a servant" (v. 7).**

**1. Though He could have walked in kingly glory and could have exercised His divine power constantly, He chose to become a Servant who had not where to lay His head (Matt. 8:20), who was made under the Law (Gal. 4:4).**

2. He "was made in the likeness of men" (v. 7), according to body and soul taking upon Himself the weakness and frailties of human race, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2:14-18; 5:7-8).

C. His humiliation reached down to death (v. 8).

1. Death, the wages of sin, is a disgrace for all men, yet Christ Jesus became obedient to the will of His Father.

2. The ignominy of death was heightened by the death on the cross, the death of a criminal, of an outcast from society, forsaken of God.

D. Let this mind be in us! (v. 5; cp. vv. 1-4, 12-18).

## II

The humiliation of Christ Jesus was followed by His exaltation.

A. God the Father highly exalted Him (v. 9)

1. In the resurrection.

2. In the ascension.

3. In the session at His right hand.

B. God gave "Him a name that is above every name" (v. 9). He now, according to His human nature also, makes full and uninterrupted use of His divine majesty, of that dominion that holds sway over all dominions (Matt. 28:19). Angels, human beings, fallen spirits, and the damned must bow before Him (v. 10), and confess His Lordship (v. 11), willingly or unwillingly.

Thus did God Himself place the stamp and seal of His approval upon the work of redemption, for which the Son of God was made man and for which the incarnate Lord made Himself of no reputation (vv. 7-8).

Thanks be to Him for His self-effacing love. Let His love be unto us the foundation of our salvation and the wellspring of every Christian virtue.

ALEX W. C. GUEBERT

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

1 COR. 11:23-32

The words "the night in which He was betrayed" take us from the presence of man into the presence of Jesus, of God Himself. Tonight we, too, are in the presence of God

through Word and Sacrament; through the Sacrament in a special way. Jesus says: Words of Institution. To the earthly elements, bread and wine, Jesus adds the heavenly ones, His true body and blood, that same body and blood which took our place on Calvary and paid for the sins of the world, our sins. His sacred body and blood in the Sacrament seal unto us the forgiveness which they won for us. We certainly do not wish to show disrespect for the Savior's feast, nor betray Him, but desire to be prepared in order to receive the blessings of the Lord's Table.

### ST. PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO THE COMMUNICANT

#### I. *St. Paul teaches us the proper reverence.*

A. To come to the Lord's Table is the will of Christ. "Till He come" (v. 26).

B. We must reverently recognize the *Real Presence*. Here we receive the greatest gift that Christ can give us, His own body and His own blood (vv. 24, 25, 27, 29). If we make special preparations as guests invited to an earthly banquet, how much more should we prepare for that heavenly banquet of which Jesus Himself is both the heavenly Host and the heavenly Food. Such preparation demands that every communicant believe the words "This is My body, My blood" and "It is given and shed for you." Therefore, "Soul, adorn thyself with gladness." Not in a spirit of indifference, but in reverent awe and heavenly happiness based upon the eternal Word of God let us approach the Table of our Lord to receive the seal of the "glad tidings of great joy."

#### II. *The Apostle warns against man's desecration of the Holy Supper (vv. 27-29).*

Some consider it just a memorial meal, not realizing that Christ's true body and true blood are present. How sad if it were only a memorial feast! This is a miracle feast. A miracle in itself, it performs a miracle in the hearts of believers. The Apostle warns against mechanical participation in Holy Communion. We are not working merely for a great number of attendants at the Lord's Supper, but for people who believe what the Lord's Supper is and what blessing it gives to the communicant.

**III. *The Apostle exhorts to serious self-examination (v. 28) in a candid and honest spirit, standing, as we do, in His sight, before His eyes.***

Some are weak (v. 30), not sufficiently strong spiritually. They are in danger of falling an easy prey to all kinds of temptations and trials and attacks from within and without and of succumbing finally to spiritual death.

Others are sickly, do not have a healthy Christian sanity and equilibrium. God wants our lives to be well balanced and happy. This spiritual sickness, unless cured, will result in spiritual death.

Others are asleep, no longer spiritually awake. In false security they are apt to doze off into spiritual death. They do not realize that they are walking corpses.

Such self-examination is basic. A communicant must realize the gravity of the situation, lest he become guilty of profaning Jesus' body and blood. By such self-examination he judges himself (v. 31); sees God as a real Father who chastens and disciplines us, so that we may not be judged or condemned eternally.

Helps in preparing and judging ourselves are the so-called preparatory sermon, the Christian Questions and Answers, review of the meaning of the Lord's Supper, other material furnished by the pastor. As the teacher leads pupils from ignorance to knowledge, so the Word of God takes us and diagnoses our case and administers the cure. The aim and goal is not to condemn us with the world, but to save our souls (v. 32).

Having examined ourselves according to the standards of God's Word, we realize our sick and weak condition. Let us then go to Jesus and confess our sins to Him. He forgives them; He has died for them. He gives us the seal of His forgiveness. He says to us, "My son, My daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee," and He seals to us this forgiveness with His body and blood given to us in the Sacrament. May we, then, come with penitent hearts and accept gladly the forgiveness offered there. Then we shall receive the blessings of the Sacrament and be a blessing unto others, for Jesus', our Savior's, sake.

F. L. NEEBE

## Rescued to Serve

Exegetical Digest of Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

### I. The Destroyer

The narrow strip of shore on which we find Jesus, between the sea and the steep mountain, was unsafe for travel. For here a *savage being* might at any time rush out of one of the limestone caves overhead to pierce the air with wild unearthly shrieks and to pounce upon a traveler.

This was the madman of Gerasa. He lived among the unclean remains of the dead (Num. 19:16; Matt. 23:27), for here the unclean guests that possessed him felt most comfortable. The unclean swine were their second choice of a home.

*These spirits delight in destruction.* They dethrone this man's judgment, shatter his power to think, break up his personality. Once they have driven him mad, they grant him no relief, but hunt and haunt him night and day. In a helpless frenzy he bruises and cuts himself with stones and spatters himself with blood.

The beings who here drive a man to madness are not themselves mad. Their prince is capable of undertaking the threefold temptation of Jesus, a master stroke to bring ruin upon all. It may seem stupid to drown the herd of hogs in the sea. But *there was method in it*. The two thousand hogs are his key to the hearts of more than two thousand souls in this territory. The drowning of the hogs moved the people to send their Savior out of the country.

*The destroyer is at large in the world today.* It is unthinkable that human beings would without his driving force inflict such misery as we have seen on themselves and on others. The "dogs of hell" madden men to do as they do. Specters of the unseen world are happy to see the massacre, starvation, and demoralization of millions of this generation before the generation of World War I has left the scene.

Even *when normal people follow them, it is madness and contrary to good thinking.* People are in the power of Satan if without protest they go to their destruction. They are restored to a sound mind only if (like the prodigal, who "came to himself," Luke 15:17) they step out of their downward course and turn to the Physician of their souls.

*The chief objective of our enemy is to keep Jesus out of our life.* Lurking behind beautiful excuses to be endured by missionary workers, in the empty riches of a culture which has no heavenly purpose to pilot it, in an overload of amusements which crowd out holier interests, in the love of hogs and other possessions, he takes the eyes of men from the Crucified. "Then cometh the devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved," Luke 8:12. He reaches his aim in people who live Christless lives, die Christless deaths, and go to a Christless eternity.

*He wants to destroy us.* The misery he inflicted on the madman

and the destruction of the hogs which rushed headlong over the cliff into the sea are examples of what the evil one would bring on us if it were in his power to do so. Peter (1 Pet. 5:8-9) says, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." And Luther says of the Christian, "He will certainly have the devil also about him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace within or without."

And the end is damnation. The unclean spirits beg Jesus "that he would not command them to go out into the depth," Luke 8:31. "The depth" is hell, Rev. 9:1-2. The spokesman of these spirits asks Jesus, "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matt. 8:29. The devil does not deceive himself as unbelievers do; he knows there is an "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. 25:41. He knows he is "reserved unto judgment," 2 Pet. 2:4 (Jude 6). He knows what will happen to him on Judgment Day: "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone," Rev. 20:10. And to that place of torment he will bring everyone of his victims (Luke 16:23, 28) unless someone delivers them from the hands of their destroyer.

## II. The Savior

Only One was found among men who could challenge the destroyer. As He steps on the shore, He is a stranger unknown and unwanted by the people of this land. But the devil instinctively senses who He is. "What have I to do with Thee," he says, "Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God?" Mark 5:7. He knows *our Champion is mightier than he is*. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world," 1 John 4:4. Jesus calls Himself "Lord" and "God" (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39) when He speaks of what He does to these spirits. The evil spirits in the man were strong; they had given him power to tear chains and to break away from the guards who tried to tame and control him, Mark 5:4. But He who drove out seven devils out of Mary Magdalene has the power to subdue a legion of them. The legion was a well-organized unit of the Roman army, the instrument of power that crushed kingdoms, turned cities into a wilderness, and spoke a terror before which Jewish fanaticism had quailed. "Legion" is the name of this horde of devils. But before Jesus speaks, this "legion" runs towards Jesus and bows to the ground before Him. "Though devils all the world should fill," they are at the command of Jesus.

*The devil recognizes Jesus as his Judge.* He knows: here is Righteousness come to right the wrong; and my days are numbered, Matt. 8:29. As he issues from the cave, he may have wished to be as violent as usual. But he instantly realizes that this Traveler is the Herald and Bearer of his coming punishment.

He feels his condemnation, and in terror he begs, "I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not," Mark 5:7 (James 2:19).

*When the devil is judged, man is delivered.* Banishment of the tyrant is liberty for his victims. For the name of the Judge before whom the devil bows is "Jesus," our Savior. And when Jesus tells us, "The prince of this world is judged," John 16:11, and "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," Luke 10:17, our hearts know that these are Gospel messages for us sinners, "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Why does Jesus help this possessed person? This soul is uninviting and dark. There is no spark of a higher life to be fanned into flame, nothing for divine grace to co-operate with. There is no longing for freedom, no cry for redemption, no prayer "Deliver me from evil." Moreover, here was no mind to grasp what was being done to him; but the word of Jesus is effective just the same. The human mind, as we see it in the others, in its saner functioning, in its nobler reaches, is no better than the impulse that controls it: The normal population thinks its way through to reject Jesus. If we want to point out any advantage in the man possessed, it would be this, that he couldn't think as well as the others. He was helped because the power of love and *pity*, Mark 5:19, *reached out to a helpless victim* and was made perfect in weakness.

Less than twenty-four hours ago the waves of the sea — beating against the shore a few yards away — had threatened to swallow the boat of the disciples. They had cried, "Lord, save us, we perish!" Matt. 8:25. At a word from their Creator the waves had calmed down. These spirits also know the voice of their Creator and Lord though they have rebelled against Him. *When Jesus says, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit,"* Mark 5:8, *they obey.*

The madman is mad no more. The impure spirits have yielded their place to the pure Spirit of God. Working by the Blood, this Spirit purges the soul from sin and from the power of sin. The terror of the community has been overcome by something more effective than chains; divine love has taken over the controls. The man is *sitting at the feet of Jesus*. Here he *finds health and happiness* — and good sense: he is clothed.

*To be with Jesus is heaven* here and hereafter (Luke 23:42; Phil. 1:23). And altogether desirable. Peter catches a glimpse of that heaven and quickly makes his choice: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles," Matt. 17:4.

Even though Jesus had less of a home than the foxes and birds, as He had said the day before, *the healed man wants to be with Jesus*. In the company of Jesus the horrors of the past can never return; for these spirits could not even enter the herd of hogs without His permission. With Jesus he can live a decent



life. And there those who knew him when he was "crazy" cannot mock him.

Jesus grants the request — of devils who want to go into the herd of hogs, of the selfish crowd who want him to leave; but the request of this healed man He declines. He tells him to go home. The disciples look on wide-eyed. On the previous day two men whom Jesus had called to follow Him had asked to go home first, and Jesus had refused to let them go (Matt. 8:19-20).

*The granting of a request isn't always a proof of God's love.* It may prove His anger (Ps. 78:29-31; Ex. 10:28-29). And His refusal to grant a request may be a proof of His love (2 Cor. 12:8-9). A Christian possesses a unique privilege. It is this assurance: no shortsighted impulse expressed in my prayers will keep the all-knowing and all-loving God from shaping my life in a way that will make me more fruitful, and in this way happier.

### III. The Missionary

From farm and city the owners of the hogs, when they were told about the loss of the herd, came to see who was responsible for the damage that had been done. What right had Jesus to destroy their property? As a stranger visiting their shore, none. But as the Owner of the cattle on a thousand hills, as the One who wields earthquakes, floods, and wars, shall anyone forbid Him or call Him unjust?

*There may have been a special act of justice in the destruction of this herd.* Perhaps the owners were Jews. (1) This eastern shore was part of the land of Manasseh and now in the tetrarchy of Philip. (2) Josephus tells us that a number of Hellenizing Jews lived here. (3) Directly across the sea were populous Jewish cities. (4) The Gerasene calls Jesus the Son of "the Highest," Mark 5:7; this was a Jewish term, which expressed the superiority of Jehovah over the gods of the Gentiles. (5) If the owners had been non-Jews, it is likely that they would have been sharper towards this Stranger and would have commanded Him to leave; they were afraid, Mark 5:15, and did not scold Him; they act like people who for gain have broken the Law of Moses, who know it is wrong for them to have hogs; they are a large crowd, yet they cannot firmly face this Teacher of the Law. If these people were Jews, their transgression was flagrant and called for a major act of justice, which in this case was executed through devils.

Two thousand hogs in one day was a big blow. The people are panic-stricken by the thought that they may lose the rest of the herds. (See Acts 19:23-29.) Unanimously they ask Jesus to leave. They pray, as it were, Go, Lord Jesus, don't be our Guest, and don't let Thy gifts to us be blest. The full realistic evidence of the salvation that is to be found in Jesus is before them, but no desire for spiritual help stirs within the fat hearts of a stomach-minded people who must eat.

Seeking their life, they lose it. For such selfishness cannot enter heaven. *Jesus* is deeply concerned about them. He therefore gives them a missionary, the man He has healed.

The man had not expected this assignment. But soon we find him joyfully active in the great service which the Savior had outlined for him. He is living to bring to others the Christ he knows. Again he is "possessed," or "enthusiastic," that is, "filled with God." The powers of body and mind, scattered for destruction by the first possession, are now, by the second, harmoniously co-operating for the rescue of men.

His wish to be with Jesus implies a loneliness. He had no friends. Those who by blood or earlier companionship might have been his friends had publicly expressed their preference for the herd. But there was, on the other hand, no social obligation to encumber him. "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord," 1 Cor. 7:32. *With a whole heart he is busy* speaking to relatives, friends, the whole city, the whole territory.

His special qualification as a missionary is that *he knows the value of a soul*. All else is worthless by comparison. Two thousand hogs are a small price to pay for that which is bought by the blood of the Son of God. The whole world of herds and pasture lands would provide no ransom for a soul, nor even a bribe to influence the destroyer to lessen his hold on his victim. An understanding of the price and of the power needed to free us fills us with love for Him who freed us and with zeal to rescue the redeemed that He may not have died in vain.

Jesus startles us as a Master in the ways of teaching. This man needed a clear picture of the power of Jesus to free a soul. He had experienced this power in himself. But he was given more than that. He was permitted to see the herd of hogs rush with a huge splash into the sea. Unforgettable. It was like seeing the bodies of the Egyptians washed upon the shore of the Red Sea. The rod of the oppressor was broken. *And who is there that couldn't tell of it?*

Like the shepherds at Bethlehem, the healed man tells of all he has seen and heard, of all that God has done to him. However uneducated, inexperienced, untrained, socially maladjusted, he penetrates and fills the Ten Cities with his story. (See Mark 7:31 to 8:9.) *For he could tell* in words that rang true of the saving power of Jesus which dissolves chains, gives strength to the helpless, and fills His servants with the joy of living for others.

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