

## A Revival Challenge

In **Luke 8:26**; one can find a most perplexing reaction to a miracle performed by Jesus Christ. Let's turn there to see what occurred.

**Luke 8:26:** *"They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27: When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28: When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29: For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. 30: Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied because many demons had gone into him. 31: And he begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. 32: A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. 33: When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. 34: When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35: and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36: Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37: Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. 38: The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away saying, 39: "Return home and tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.*

There are many elements to this story that make it very remarkable. The most wonderful is the element of the power of Jesus Christ. We see that he has the ultimate dominion over even the most rebellious of demonic spirits. In His presence they are at His mercy and subject to His authority. That means His power and control is absolute.

Here is a man who was unmercifully tormented by many demons for a long time. He had become completely in bondage to Satan and his henchmen. His life had been destroyed, as he was driven from family and friends. He was absolutely possessed and reduced to an existence that was worse than that of a wild beast. He was a walking dead man, spiritually deceased, living among the tombs. He was subjected to the deepest despair and was totally dysfunctional. Well, not totally, praise God! For he was still able to fall at the feet of Jesus and cry out for mercy.

And the demons begged right there with him. They understood the authority of God. The demons know the truth of who Jesus is, better than most humans, so they confessed Jesus as "Son of the Most High God." Then they begged Jesus for permission to enter the hogs rather than be driven to that place of torment where demons apparently must dwell. So the demons

entered the hogs, raced into the lake and drowned, likely sending the demons straight off to that dreaded place of torment. Now I don't know why Jesus sent them into the hogs, causing the destruction of valuable livestock. One commentary suggested that these people may have been Jews and shouldn't have been raising hogs, per Jewish law. Pigs were considered unclean beasts. But another commentary says this was a Gentile region. So I think it was something more important than that. Jesus likes to work in picture stories or parables. Even the real events throughout the Word, I believe God causes to happen, to make a spiritual point. Sort of a living parable, so to speak. Could it be it was a test, to examine and expose the hearts of those townspeople?

The next thing that happens is the saddest thing to hear. The pig-herders run to tell the townsfolk, who in turn come out to tell Jesus to leave them and depart from their area. They do this, despite the fact that they see the miraculous and merciful deliverance of the man, who is now seated before them, in his right mind. You would think they would have rejoiced to see one of their own community, now delivered. Instead, they are the ones in bondage, gripped with fear and terror and dread. (Makes one wonder if the demons went to torment the townsfolk, when the pigs died...)

Well now, what can we learn from this, as we seek a revival for our community? First of all, do we really want it? I mean, do we want it bad enough that we will get the unclean pigs out of our lives and hearts and repent of anything that displeases God? Or do we prefer to harbor unforgiveness, judgment, envy, jealousy, strife, anger and the like and dare think we will be blessed with a visitation of our Lord and a blessing of His Holy Spirit? Will we pray, travail and even fast for this revival, or will we do our usual thing and just show up for our favorite preachers, if we have nothing better to do?

If we are granted revival and the resulting harvest of souls, are we willing to take in those who were once considered "untouchables" as was the demon-possessed man? Will we "put ourselves out" for the unlovable, dirty, broken men and women that God sends us, and love them unconditionally with a sacrificial love? Will we thank God for the needy hungry and the poor widow's mite or will we hope and pray that God will only send wealthy and respectable businessmen and women who faithfully tithe, to our church? Are we willing to endure the turmoil and upheaval that naturally occurs when Jesus does supernatural things? I tell you that a great revival IS coming to this world. A great final harvest of souls. Are we willing to embrace the disruption and sacrifice that is certain to accompany a harvest of great magnitude?

Or will we just tell Jesus to go away? Will we tell Him we don't want His frightening changes in our lives, our communities, our hearts. Will we send the Savior away because what we really want is our comfortable status quo? **Do we really want to become the church or do we just want to continue going to church?** I have seen revivals in recent years that flair up then die out faster than a lightning bug on a summer's night. What is a revival when there are no miraculous numbers added to the body of Christ? It's a mockery, that's what it is. People get a touch of the Holy Spirit, praise God, and then preacher and congregation all go on about their usual way. Any real change only barely lasts a week. **Folks, don't trifle with God.** If you don't really want a revival, if you really don't want to see an outpouring of His Spirit and the interruption that serving Him will bring to your "business as usual" then don't pray for revival. You might just as

well tell Jesus to go away.

There was a good side to the story in Luke 8:26-39. The man who had been delivered from the demons was a very grateful man. He wanted to follow Jesus forever. But Jesus assigned him to stay in that needy town of hardened hearts. For the townspeople were now the walking dead, they were the ones in deep bondage and in need of deliverance. Well, you can be sure there was no stopping that man's testimony. He didn't have any "pigs." Not anymore! He had tasted and seen that the Lord was good. When Jesus delivered a person, it was genuine and good! That man was squeaky CLEAN! No impure thoughts and motives in His heart! No list of worldly things to do on his mind! He didn't want just a status quo any more. He saw that there really is no such thing. Sooner or later, things are going to get ripped out from under you, one way or another. So, despite the uncaring attitude of the rest of the town, the gospel DID get preached. And I believe that revival came to some of those Gerasenes. Now if we want revival, we need to get serious about it, like that desperate man. So get rid of your pigs. And let go of your lives, and be ready to give up everything you have for the salvation of souls. When will we consider saving a human soul from the grip of hell as more important than any other priority in our lives?

Please, repent. Don't be like those Gerasenes who begged Jesus to move on, to move away. They valued their pigs, their unclean thoughts, their jobs, their homes, their hobbies, their lawns, their possessions, their ball games, their "other plans," their daily status quo lives. They valued these things far above the desire to see souls saved and captives set free.

So if it's revival you want, make sure you really mean for Jesus to come. Because when Jesus comes there is disruption. Lives are changed and NEVER the same again. Be cleansed and sanctified, prepared, set apart and made holy and available for His visitation. We want to be holy and purged so that we can be a vessel to honor, sanctified and useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

When He comes, in all His power and glory, stirring up a spiritual commotion, let's welcome Him to stay.