

Sermon by Philip C. Herrmann April 9, 1972

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I'd like to take up two incidents in the life of the Lord, and one in the life of the apostle Paul, taking place all within 20 to 25 years, I believe, and all have a special significance, a special feature about them. If you'll turn to the Gospel of Matthew, in the eighth chapter, we'll see what the first one is. In the 28th verse, Matthew 8:28, the Lord had just completed the incident of the journey over the water, over the Sea of Galilee, in which a storm had been raging and the disciples came to him worried that they were going to perish, and he caused the winds and the sea to subside, and there was a great calm, causing them to say, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

This brings us into the incident that I have in mind. "Then when the Lord was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes," (which is really the Gadarenes, where the tribe of Gad in the time of Moses had settled, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee), "there met him two possessed with devils." The word devils, in most instances in the New Testament, should really have been translated demons, because there's only one Devil, but there are untold numbers of unclean spirit, evil spirits, and these in the Gospels, and in the book of Acts, are termed demons. "Coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And behold they cried out saying, What are we do do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God. Art thou come hither to torment us, before the times? There was a good way off from them, a herd of many swine, feeding, so the devils, or the demons, besought him, saying 'If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.' And the Lord said to them, 'Go.' And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine. And behold the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their way into the city and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the demons." And this is the point that I had in mind, especially, "And behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coast."

And if you'll turn to the first chapter of the gospel of Mark, the second gospel of the four, we'll read a few verses there, starting with the 21st verse. "And they went into Capernaum..." Capernaum was the second home of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was born in Bethlehem, he was brought up in the city of Nazareth, in Galilee, many miles away. But he left Nazareth, as we read in the fourth chapter of Luke, and settled in the city of Capernaum.

"And they went into Capernaum" (verse 21) "and straightway, on the Sabbath day, the Lord entered into the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished as his doctrine. for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit" (a demon) "and he cried, saying 'Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us?'" I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying 'Hold thy peace, and come out of him.' And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves saying, what thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority, commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad, throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Then verse 32, skipping over a few verses. “At even,” or in the evening, I take it that it’s the evening of the same day which he cast out the demon from this person in the synagogue. “At evening when the sun did set, they brought onto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with demons,” and notice this again, “and all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of various diseases, and cast out many demons, and suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew him. Then turning to the book of Acts, the 13th chapter, we’ll see that the message still went on. In the 13th chapter of Acts and the 14th verse, this is now the Apostle Paul and his company in another synagogue, many miles away from Capernaum.

“When they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia. and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down. An interesting thing is that the Jews were present in almost every city in the near east, not like today, in which they are gathered mostly in their own land. But in those days they were spread abroad, and in every city they formed synagogues, where they worshipped on the sabbath day. They would read the scriptures, and this is the occasion for the Apostle Paul coming into this particular synagogue, which was located in what is now the country of Turkey, perhaps in the southern part of Turkey. And there was a city there by the name of Antioch. He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down. “And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying, men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said ‘Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience.’” And then the gist of the message that he gave follows in the next 20 verses or so, so we’ll pass on to verse 38.

“Be it known unto you,” (this is the summation of his address to them in that synagogue) “Be it known unto you men and brethren, that through this man,” (he’d been speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ) “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him” (that is, by Christ) “all that believe,” notice this, it’s not addressed just to the Jew but all, following what the Lord had said in John 3:16 “Whosoever shall believe in me shall not perish, but receive everlasting life.”

So the Apostle Paul is continuing this now to Jew and Gentile, “by him all that believe are justified from all things.” That is justified is to be considered righteous before God. from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses. “Beware therefore lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, behold ye despisers and wonder and perish, for I work the work in you a days???, a work in which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it onto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them, the next Sabbath.” And skipping over to verse 44, “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city, together to hear the word of God.”

I think it’d be a profitable study to look into these three instances, and ask, what was it that brought a whole city, two of them to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the last case, to hear the word of God from the lips of a man, a man who himself had been an enemy of God, had been the means of murdering, and slaying many Christians, but was converted miraculously, and then went forward to preach the very message that he was out, before, to destroy.

Some of you may remember, if you’ve read a tract, a gospel tract, there was one published some years ago that was entitled, “What awoke them?” It’s based on a story of an incident that happened in England some years ago, in a mining town, that ran the machinery continuously. And so that when

persons were used to this noise, they could go about their business and pay no attention to it. They didn't hear if after a while. But one day, the machinery broke down. Everything stopped, and those who were asleep at the time immediately awoke. And the rest of the gospel tract goes on to say how true this is, how this is going to be verified, how this is going to be enacted again in a much larger way, when the Lord comes and takes millions of people out of this scene, in an instant. For I Corinthians 15 tells us that this will be done in the twinkling of an eye. It won't be something that's gradual, the Lord will transfer us to heaven in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, when he calls his people home. And that will awake the unbelievers, all that have heard the gospel in past years, all who are living at that time, and have not accepted the Lord as their Savior. They will instantly wake up, to their great loss.

Well the world will go on, and if you are interested in knowing what will transpire after the coming of the Lord, you have to read the book of Revelation. There will be a period of judgment, for seven years the world will be judged. There will be a series of catastrophies, that will decimate, I believe, the population. And men, instead of repenting, as they had an opportunity to do before the Lord came for his people, they will then have an opportunity to repent, but they won't. No repentance, in the book of Revelation, it's an astounding fact. All that are there, all that are living in that time, except those who are looking for the Messiah to come, as the Jewish nation will be doing, the faithful ones, the remnant of that nation, they will be looking for the Messiah, but the rest will go unrepentant on into eternity, judged.

I said that we might ask the question, what brought these people, first to the Lord and then to hear the word of God. In the first instance we have the Lord coming into a place that he had never been before. There is no record that he went there before, or ever went there again. Naturally you wouldn't expect anyone that was beseeched by a whole city of people, to depart out of their coast, to leave them, to turn away from them, to leave them alone, that he would go back again. But I'm sure that after the Lord was risen and the Holy Spirit came down, there were plenty more preachers that went back to that place, perhaps reminding them of the treatment they had accorded the Lord, and giving them another chance. But the treatment the Lord received there, is the same treatment that he is receiving now. Although for three and a half years the Lord went up and down the land of Israel, it must have been mile after mile, and he preached the gospel of the kingdom, he preached to men that they should repent, they should believe on him, they should turn to God, for Israel had a record of 1500 years before the Lord came to earth, of having forgotten Him, of having forsaken Him, turned away from Him, served other gods, which were no gods, and had committed many crimes, I believe the worst of which was offering up their unwanted children to the god Moloch. This was a fire-heated god, and they would throw their unwanted children, boys and girls, that's recorded a number of times in the Old Testament, this was their record.

Of course when the Lord was living on earth, the Israelites had ceased worshipping other gods. I think they had been cured of that by their treatment in the land of Babylon. 500 years before the Lord came, they were in captivity for 70 years, and their treatment was so terrible, and they saw what their forsaking of God had done to them, that they were cured from that time on. I don't believe that they ever returned to the worship of idols, that is idols made of wood and stone, idols of the heathen around them. Now men worship intangible things, they worship fame, and money, and glory, and honor, a great many things. Ambition rules in the hearts of most men, and that often becomes their god. Well for three and a half years the Lord went up and down the land of Israel, and though he did not always

receive this kind of treatment, that is to beg him to go away, they heard his message, for that was the purpose he had come. They heard the wonderful Gospel that is still being proclaimed today, that by believing, simple believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting upon him as their Savior, committing their lives to him, turning to him for guidance, experiencing the effect of the Holy Spirit upon their lives, following him in his word, keeping his commandments, not the commandment of Moses, but the commandments of the New Testament the chief one of which is to love one another, because we can't love God, as He commanded the Israelites in the days of Moses, we can't love God as He demands or He requires because we would have to be perfect, as God, to do that. But God has found a way, through the death and resurrection of His Son, for what Christ did upon the cross of Calvary to enable you and me to be justified, not only forgiven of our sins, but declared righteous before Him. God sees us, if we are believers in Christ, He sees us in Christ, and when He sees us He sees Christ, and when He sees Christ He sees us.

So for three and a half years the Lord received the constant experience of rejection. There were few that believed on him. I believe that there were only some 500 followers, the figure that is given by the Apostle Paul in the 15th of I Corinthians is the extent to which the Lord received converts. There were not more than 500, which was a small amount, considering what developed after the Lord returned back to Heaven, and sent down the Holy Spirit, and then the Holy Spirit energized the Apostles, and the converts, the believers then, saw that the then-known world received the message of the word of God, although they did not all receive the word of God.

The Lord received constant rejection, and in one of the epistles, the expression is "he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." [Hebrews 12:3] Just think of it: here is God Himself, in the form of a Man, God taking human flesh, becoming a man, body, soul and spirit, just like we, though without sin, for he could do no sin, he knew no sin, he did no sin. And he received from man all the accumulation of hatred, and animosity, of scorn, and contempt, all that man and Satan could devise. And it ended with that statement, just before the Lord was crucified, the people said "we will not have this man to reign over us."

Not only was it rejection, but it was insult, not only contradiction, but insult. And men could not answer the Lord's words, or his questions, or his charges, his statements against them. So they resorted to the usual way of man today, it has continued right from the beginning, when you can't answer a person call him names. And these are some of the names he was called. A blasphemer, and that was about as bad a name as a Jew, an Orthodox Jew could be called. And that called for death, death by stoning. He was called a blasphemer, a deceiver, a Samaritan, and talk about prejudice, the Jews hated the Samaritans, because they were a mixed race, they were Jew and Gentile combined. They had not remained Jews. They had been taken captive by the Assyrians 750 years before Christ, and were continuing as part Jew, and part Gentile. Then they spoke of the Lord as possessed of a demon. Just think of it, the holiest person, the holy Son of God. The demons recognized that; that's the only name by which they called him, holy, the Son of God.

Men called Jesus possessed of a demon. Here was another term of approbation, or disapprobation, friend of publicans, and sinners. In other words they were putting the Lord on the same level as the traitors to the Jewish race, as the publicans, the tax-gatherers were considered. And sinners, the immoral, the openly immoral. And they charged him with perverting the nation, forbidding to give

tribute to Caesar, although that was absolutely untrue. He had said, when that question was put to him, "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, and what belongs to God give to God." [Luke 20:25]

But the worst charge of all was that he cast out demons by the Prince of the demons, and the Lord said that that was the unforgivable sin. That was charging the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, with unholiness, with the worst kind of sin. I haven't recounted all; this was only part of what the Lord received. How would any of us, receiving such treatment for the better part of three and a half years, what would have been our response? We would have rejected them out of hand. We wouldn't have lasted probably three and a half months, instead of three and a half years. But the Lord just kept on preaching his love to man, and the fact that by believing on him, putting in their lot with him, they would receive eternal life. That was God's best promise, God's best gift.

What we've read in the first instance, in the Gospel of Matthew, doesn't tell us the whole story. For that we would have to go to the Gospels of Mark and Luke. For they tell us that these men, these men infested with demons, were unclothed, they were cutting themselves with stones, they were crying out, and they were such a menace that no one dared go near them. But they evidently were no trouble for the swine, for the hogs that were there. By the way, that is something that should never have been there, for the Israelite was forbidden to deal in unclean animals. And while the pig had one quality that would have made him acceptable, he didn't have the other. The Jew in the old testament was not allowed to eat any animal that did not have a cloven hoof, or that chewed the cud. Now we don't know the reason for that. I suppose the reason was largely sanitary. They didn't have the means in those days of refrigeration such as we have, and beside it was hot country, so that disease in hogs would probably be very disastrous to human consumption.

At any rate, these animals shouldn't have been there. And the reason why the tribe of Gad and Reuben, and the half tribe of Manassah chose this country, on the other side, or the west side of the Jordan River, or the Sea of Galilee, was because it was good country for raising cattle. And they waited until the land was fully possessed, when Israel had exterminated, or rather had cast out many of the nations in the land of Canaan, so that they went back to this place. The Lord didn't forget them, although they were the first to go into captivity, even before 750 BC. They were taken captive by the Assyrians, showing that if we do not carry out the Lord's word, if we don't go by the Scriptures, if what the Lord has fully revealed is not kept, we will not avoid disastrous consequences.

And here these men were delivered from the demons, and the demons asked to be sent into the herd of swine. The Lord granted this, and the herd of swine, It's a remarkable thing, that they should do what they did. Evidently men can be infested, have demons or unclean spirits within them, and they can live comfortably, or even in pain with it, but when these spirits, 2000 of them it was said, or rather the 2000 hogs, these spirits infested the hogs, the hogs could not stand it, they rather chose death. They ran down this slope and into the sea.

Well this of course was, I believe, one of the first times that the Lord had cast out demons. There are other instances in the New Testament, in the Gospels, that tell us about this, and they are remarkable in each case. The demons confessed that they were in the presence of God, the Son of God, the Holy One who had come, and who would eventually dispose of them. Where the Lord said on a later occasion, that Hell was not made for man, but for the Devil and his angels, and I suppose these demons would be part of Satan's army.

Well in the second instance that we looked at, the Lord cures, [fadeout in recording] or casts out another demon. And he said on another occasion that “If I by the finger of God, cast out demons, then be sure that the kingdom of God has come upon you” [Luke 11:20]. You see the Lord brought into the world his kingdom, but it was refused, and that kingdom now is a spiritual thing. The kingdom that the Lord was to bring was for Israel, and he will eventually bring them a kingdom, but at the time 1900 years ago when he was here, he offered the kingdom, but it was not accepted. The first statement he made, the first command he gave was, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of God has drawn nigh,” but man would not have it.

So in this second instance we have the Lord, curing in Peter’s house, and all the city, we don’t know how many it was, it must have been a tremendous number, everyone that had persons that were sick, or troubled with diseases, or had demons, they came to him to be healed. It says that he healed them, but that that very night, he went out and prayed to his Father. He needed refreshment. A work like that, one can imagine what it would mean for any house, to have a whole city approach its doors, with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of cases of the sick. Even if the Lord just touched each one, as he usually did, or spoke to them, rebuked the disease or the demon, just think how long that would take. It was a mighty work, and this is something that the Gospels, if you read the Gospel of Matthew especially, you will be impressed with the tremendous number of persons that were healed, that were cured, were delivered.

[fadeout in recording] This is one of the great works of God, and the very place of Capernaum, where the miracles were done. The Lord said on a later occasion, in the 11th of Matthew, [Matt 11:23] that if the mighty works that were done in Capernaum, had been done in Sodom, that terrible place, place of iniquity, where everyone was a degenerate, if the gospel had been preached there, if those mighty works had been done there, they would have repented in dust and ashes. That was the condemnation of Capernaum, having been so close to the Son of God, and yet to have rejected him. I wish I could speak on this a little longer, but I want to get to the third case, now.

What brought them, in the last case, in the previous one, was their need of healing. And how true it is that men want God to heal their bodies, but their souls, no. That’s the last thing they are worried about. The first thing they should be worried about is the last thing they are. But here, in the little town of Perga, or Antioch, a city in the region of Perga, in what is now the land of Turkey, 1900 years ago the Apostles, now preaching this wonderful gospel that the Lord began, and the Lord is using them to heal too, casting out demons. But Paul and Peter and all the others were instrumental in saving many souls, and giving people a proof of the validity of the word of God, that it was the word of God, and not just man’s word. And so we have this wonderful message in this synagogue. The reason I didn’t read it is that I feared that I would get too close to closing time.

So I trust that you will read this this afternoon, or at your leisure, the 13th chapter of Acts where Paul extemporaneously, just gets up and without any preparation, gives this wonderful message, tells the Jewish people, and doubtless some proselytes, because the groups wanted to hear the same message, their own people, he tells them the history of the nation of Israel, from the time the fathers were chosen, that is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then Moses and the successors of Moses, up through Samuel the prophet, and then David. Saul first, the first king, and then David, and then he goes right on into the wonderful promise of the Old Testament that out of the loins of David, out of the seed of David, the

descendants of David, would come this person, who would change things for the whole world. He was the Saviour God was raising up, bringing into the world, a new thing, a man who could save the world. How people want that today, don't they. They want peace. They want a leader, someone that can bring peace and blessing out of the chaos that we're in, or getting into, but they won't turn to Christ. And Christ alone can help. He is to be the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, but now first of all, he wants to be man's Savior. And that can be so easily achieved, just by, as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 10, "If thou shalt believe with thy heart, and confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," or Jesus as Lord, "and believe that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." [Romans 10:9]

There's no difficulty about the way of salvation. The thing is that man doesn't want it. I can remember listening to preaching for some years, before it dawned on me that I had to take some action. I couldn't just sit there and listen and be told I must believe, but I must take a definite act of it. I must cast myself at the feet of this person who died for me upon Calvary's cross. Thank God I did, one day.

Well the message that the Apostle Paul brings them is that this person who has come into the world, who died and God raised him from the dead, he is now at the right hand of God and this is his message. By this man, that is Christ Jesus, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Well that wasn't so wonderful, because every Jew knew that by means of sacrifices sin would be covered. But here was a forgiveness of sins in God's sight for eternity. But he adds, not only the forgiveness of sins, but by him, all that believe, are justified from all things. For you couldn't be justified by the Law of Moses. That was the trouble of the Old Testament. One of Job's questions was "How can man be just before God?" [Job 25:4] How can God consider him righteous when he is so unrighteous, and has no way of improving himself.

David says, "in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." [Psalm 143:2] That was the complaint, that was the trouble, with the people of the Old Testament. But all of those who put their trust in the Lord were justified, But here is the first time it's preached into the Gentiles in the New Testament. Well this is a wonderful message for those people. These were idolators, every one of them. They were worshipping the Gods of Greece and Rome, all mythical persons, as we know today. If you're studied mythology at all you know that these were just figments of the imagination. These gods Jupiter, and Zeus and Apollo and so on were just figments of the imagination, and hundreds of others. The Apostle came across them in the 17th of Acts, and there was one inscription "To the Unknown God." In their desire not to offend any god that they had omitted, they raised an alter to the unknown god, and that gave him the message for his address there.

Well this message was so wonderful, this was what would elevate them, this was what would liberate them, from the bondage they were in, the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death, what was beyond death, this was God's answer to them. And it says almost the whole city came to hear the word of God. That's what should bring man, that should bring every person living, to hear the word of God. Is there anything more stable? Is there anything better that man could have? Yet here it is, God's word. God has gone to infinite lengths to give us this word. What a pity we don't avail ourselves of it. What a pity that we don't treat it as the word of God. We think that we can do with everything else, and leave this aside. This word of God will judge us in the coming day. This is what we will have to face, if we are believers, our works will come into judgment. We will be appraised for what we have done, since we have been saved. But for those who are still unbelievers, that could change, in an instant, if they would

just believe. Those who still remain unbelievers will come unto the judgment of the word of God and it will be the person who was here 1900 years ago who said, “if any man hear my words and reject them, there is one who judges him. The word I have spoken, it shall judge him at the last day.” [John 12:48] What a solemn thing; I trust no one here is in that category, but if you are, repent, turn to God, for that’s why Christ died. He died for us, he died for sinners, he died for the ungodly, he died for all, he died for you.

Shall we pray. Gracious God our Father we thank Thee for instances in Thy word that show that men were concerned, but perhaps not with the right thing. We pray that each one here may be concerned with the eternal whereabouts, the eternal destiny of their souls, and that those that believe, will be more impressed with the certainty of these things, and the blessedness of having the forgiveness of sins, and being justified, considered righteous, in Thy sight. We ask Thy blessing upon the Sunday school downstairs, and for the teachers, that the word of God may penetrate the young hearts of every scholar downstairs, and wherever the word of God is preached, the seed of the word may find a lodgment in souls, we ask it in Christ’s precious name, amen.

The meeting is over.