

Broken Yokes and Burst Bonds: Come to Jesus
Mark 5:1-20

I. The Inherent Danger of Spiritual Drift

A. Genuine Concern

I got a note this week from an old friend I have not seen for several years. It was a simple little note, a request for help. Difficult circumstances tied with the effects of COVID isolation were taking their toll on my friend. “Dale,” my friend said, “I’m reaching out because I feel like I’ve been led away from my faith and I so desperately want to have that close relationship with God that I had not too long ago. Can you help me?”

A note like that is both a pastoral joy and a marker for concern. If there is any single effect of COVID on the church that worries me most, it is this one, that isolated from each other, hidden away from encouragement and accountability, people I know and love will fall into the spiritual condition the author of Hebrews warns us against: spiritual drifting. This spiritual malaise includes losing sight of Christ, devaluing personal devotion, falling away from faith, quenching the Spirit, drifting away from God, returning to habits of the flesh and the sinful nature that have not helped us in the past and will not help us now. And it comes, usually, not as much as an act of open rebellion but as a continual effect of ongoing neglect.

Many years ago, in my junior year in college I was working out with a friend who was fond of saying, “No pain, no gain,” as he’d make me do one more rep with the weights than I wanted to. Well, Christian, the same principle applies to your life of faith in Christ, no effort, no progress. In the spiritual realm as in the natural, drifting is a formula for defeat.

B. A Biblical Admonition

The author of Hebrews, inspired by the Holy Spirit, knew there were some dangers every Christian would face at various seasons and under various circumstances in our lives. He writes at the opening of the second chapter:

Hebrews 2:1 (ESV) *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*

He further exhorts us in chapter 3:

Hebrews 3:12-14 (ESV) ¹² *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* ¹³ *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* ¹⁴ *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

It is this same concern, that through neglect and indifference to the practice of faith God’s people will fall away from vital faith, that Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, ***Lead us not into***

temptation, but deliver us from evil. It is a plea and petition that God in His mercy will protect us from the influences and conditions that lead to spiritual drift, broken spirits, altered wills, and cold, dead hearts.

C. A Course of Action

What can we do? How can we avoid spiritual drift? How can we make the most of the time we have? This passage in Mark 5:1-20 gives us the answer: **Come to Jesus.**

II. Three Ways to Come to Jesus

A. Come to Jesus Like the Demon Possessed Man

1. The passage provides two sets of descriptions about this man who came to Jesus.
 - a. The weakness of the man
 - (1) He is a gentile
 - (2) He lived among the tombs
 - (a) Outcast from his family and friends
 - (b) More at home among the dead than the living
 - (c) He is possessed by an unclean spirit
 - (3) Here is an unclean man from an unclean land living in an unclean place possessed by an unclean spirit.
 - (4) Perpetually tormented by the evil within
 - (a) Crying out
 - (b) Cutting himself - attempts to end his suffering on his own
 - (5) This man's condition is our worst nightmare, and yet, he comes to Jesus.
 - b. The strength of the demons
 - (1) Multiple attempts to contain him
 - (2) No one was able to subdue him
 - (a) **James 3:7-8 (ESV)** ⁷ *For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*
 - (b) The evil within this man was more dangerous and stronger than any wild animal, and yet, he comes to Jesus.
2. What happens when we come to Jesus in our sin and weakness?
 - a. The man comes and falls down before Jesus, not in worship but in reluctant recognition of superior authority
 - b. Jesus overrules the enemy
 - (1) Accusers accused even Jesus of stepping out of time
 - (2) Jesus remains unmoved by the demonic effort
 - (3) Jesus gives the demons permission without which they can do nothing!

- c. When we come to Jesus, Jesus sets us free
 - (1) The demons left the man
 - (a) “The greater the strength of the demoniac, and he was indeed very strong, the greater must be the strength and power of Jesus, the demon’s conqueror.” (Stein, 252)
 - (b) Just as Jesus authority over nature was greater than the strength of the storm, Jesus authority over the supernatural powers that exist in the world is greater than the combined powers of that world.
 - (2) The demons entered the pigs
 - (a) The demons entered the pigs
 - (b) The pigs killed themselves
 - (c) The pigs reveal the demonic agenda
 - i) Evil never seeks human benefit
 - ii) Evil always seeks to deny the mission of God by destroying the means through which God’s mission is accomplished.
- 3. This is a worst case scenario: come to Jesus!
 - a. You will find forgiveness
 - b. You will find him capable of doing more than you can ask or imagine
 - c. You will find him ready and willing to extend mercy and compassion

B. Come to Jesus Like the Fear Filled People

- 1. They come out of curiosity - “to see what happened”
 - a. They discover a man utterly transformed
 - b. They discover real fear
- 2. Fear motivates their response to Jesus
 - a. They are not angry at the loss of the pigs
 - b. They are not vengeful at economic inconvenience
 - c. They are afraid
 - (1) They could not bind the demon possessed man
 - (2) No power they could muster could change their situation or neutralize the threat
 - (a) Suddenly, here appears this man with divine power
 - i) They don’t know his intentions
 - ii) They don’t know his motivation
 - iii) These are not Jewish people who have been anticipating a Messiah
 - (b) All these pagan Gentiles know is if Jesus could overpower demons and contribute to the demise of a herd of pigs, what could he do to them
 - (c) People living in a fear based culture naturally respond to the unusual and powerful with fear

3. **Fear caused them to reject Jesus, but their fear did not cause Jesus to reject them.**

C. Come to Jesus Like the Man Set Free

1. Christian, this man is the one who are most like.
 - a. Free from oppression
 - b. In love with Jesus:
 - (1) Let me come with you
 - (2) Let me be near you
2. Jesus sends him home. Why?
 - a. To complete his personal restoration
 - b. For a witness among a fearful, unbelieving community, who need to understand who Jesus is and what He offers them.
 - (1) Though Jesus is leaving, he will not abandon these people to their fear
 - (2) Instead, he provides one of them who has personally encountered the mercy Jesus offers, to live among them and tell them what they can gain through faith in Jesus.

III. The Message of Jesus

A. Mercy

1. Mercy is the message of Jesus.
 - a. No matter the condition of your life, your heart, your soul, if you will but come to Jesus and put your faith in Him, you will find mercy.
 - b. His power and His mercy will change your life, no matter what condition you are in
 - (1) Oppressed
 - (2) Afraid
 - (3) Drifting
2. The message of this encounter with Jesus is this: if Jesus acts with mercy upon this man, whose life is the worst nightmare you can imagine, then think what mercy He has for you!

B. Come to Jesus

1. Just as each of these left their place and moved toward Jesus, so must we.
2. We come today by faith, we come in prayer, we come in worship, we come in devotion, we come through the word, we come in obedience
3. The point is, we must come. We can't just do nothing. We must come.
 - a. The Father draws us
 - b. The Spirit draws us
 - c. Christ welcomes us
 - d. Come back, come home, come to Jesus
 - (1) Are you drifting?
 - (a) Throw out an anchor
 - (b) Confess, repent
 - (c) Come back
 - (2) Are you rebelling?

- (a) Caught in habits and sin you think to bad to be forgiven?
- (b) Nonsense.
 - i) There is no sin that will not be forgiven the sons of men.
 - ii) Come home.