

Don't Tell Me What To Do!

Jim Elliff

Christianity is a hard sell. For people who think of Christ as the Divine Killjoy, nothing could be worse than to be made to submit to Him. But suppose the person finds life unbearable when submitting to himself?



The man from the region of the Gerasenes was such a man.

He was a wild man who screamed night and day while roaming around the tombs and the mountains beside the Sea of Galilee. Many times men tried to bind him with chains, but he tore the chains apart and ran free again. Nobody was strong enough to control him. Mark, the author of the book of the Bible called by his name, said that he was a man who had an “unclean spirit.”

But Jesus, who had just gotten off a boat and was walking toward him, used his authority to make him free in a way he had never known. He said, repeatedly, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” Mark had already reminded his readers of Jesus’ authority by telling the story of the winds and sea obeying Him on the boat ride over to this eastern side of the Sea. Jesus *commanded* the demon to come out.

And he did. Actually, we can say “they” did, for the name of the demon was “Legion,” meaning that there were many demons possessing this mad man of the Gerasenes.

The possessed man begged that the demons not leave the country, but be sent into the pigs nearby. This was the Gentile side of the Sea, so pigs could be raised there. Jesus sent the demons into the herd and they went careening down the slope, tumbling down a steep bank, and into the water to drown—2000 of them! All this sent the herdsman into town and the surrounding area to report. A crowd soon gathered.

To everyone’s surprise, when the people gathered they found the once mad man that no one could control, sitting peacefully before them, “clothed and in his right mind.”

Rather than appreciating that Christ did what no one could do for this man, however, their consternation led to fear. And their fear led to an earnest request. “They began to implore Him to leave their region.”

This Man who had such authority was too much for them. Who knows, He might tell *them* what to do. No one was going to have that privilege. So, they begged Him to leave.

What about the man who was set free from the legion of demons? Mark says that he did some imploring of his own. “As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him.” He was finished with the life he had gotten himself into through his own anarchical attitude. Unfettered liberty always leads to bondage of one sort or another. He longed for the new authority of Christ.

Interestingly, Christ didn’t let him go along. Rather, he said, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.”

Christ was his new Master, so the freed man gladly did exactly what Jesus said. “And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis [another name for the larger region] what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed” (Mark 5:1-20).

It’s true that Christianity is a hard sell to all those who think their lives are just fine now. It’s only when they realize that their end will be worse than a watery grave in the bottom of the Sea of Galilee that they understand. The end of it all for people who do not willingly embrace Christ’s sovereignty over them is eternity in hell. And on earth they forfeit what they simply cannot now imagine—freedom from guilt, purpose in life, hope for the future, confidence in trials, community with true believers, and much more.

Those who come to Christ, like the Geresene demoniac, follow Christ because they *want* to. They make the authority that is already in Christ, the authority under which they gladly live their lives. Though no Christian submits to His authority perfectly, they do substantively and happily. This, after all, is the definition of the Christian. He or she is a follower of Christ the Lord.

If you wish to continue saying that “nobody tells me what to do,” realize that you will one day bow to Jesus anyway. You’re rejecting what you will one day experience, though not with the consequences you could have had.

God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Copyright © 2011 Jim Elliff. Permission granted for reproduction in exact form. All other uses require written permission. Find more free articles at www.BulletinInserts.org, a ministry of Christian Communicators Worldwide: www.CCWtoday.org