

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B. A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
VICAR OF STRADBROOKE, SUFFOLK;

Author of "Home Truths," etc.

ST. LUKE. VOL. I.

LONDON:
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY, 23, HOLLES STREET.
CAVENDISH SQUARE

IPSWICH: WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

MDCCCLVIII.

LUKE VIII. 37–40.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him: for they were all waiting for him.

WE see in this passage two requests made to our Lord Jesus Christ. They were widely different one from the other, and were preferred by persons of widely different character. We see, moreover, how these requests were received by our Lord Jesus Christ. In either case the request received a most remarkable answer. The whole passage is singularly instructive.

Let us observe, in the first place, that *the Gadarenes besought our Lord to depart from them, and their request was granted*. We read these painfully solemn words—“He went up into the ship, and returned back again.”

Now why did these unhappy men desire the Son of God to leave them? Why, after the amazing miracle of mercy which had just been wrought among them, did they feel no wish to know more of Him who wrought it? Why, in a word, did they become their own enemies, forsake their own mercies, and shut the door against the Gospel?—There is but one answer to these questions. The Gadarenes loved the world, and the things of the world, and were determined not to give them up. They felt convinced, in their own consciences, that they could not receive Christ among them and keep their sins, and their sins they were resolved to keep. They saw, at a glance, that there was something about Jesus with which their habits of life would never agree, and having to choose between the new ways and their own old ones, they refused the new and chose the old.

And why did our Lord Jesus Christ grant the request of the Gadarenes, and leave them? He did it in judgment, to testify His sense of the greatness of their sin. He did it in mercy to His Church in every age, to show how great is the wickedness of those who wilfully reject the truth. It seems an eternal law of His government, that those who obstinately refuse to walk in the light shall have the light taken from them. Great is Christ’s patience and longsuffering! His mercy endureth for ever. His offers and invitations are wide, and broad, and sweeping, and universal. He gives every church its day of grace and time of visitation. (Luke xix. 44.) But if men persist in refusing His counsel, He has nowhere promised to persist in forcing it upon them. People who have the Gospel, and yet refuse to obey it, must not be surprised if the Gospel is removed from them. Hundreds of churches, and parishes, and families, are at this moment in the state of the Gadarenes. They said to

Christ, "Depart from us," and he has taken them at their word. They were joined to idols, and are now "let alone." (Job xxi. 14; Hosea iv. 17.)

Let us take heed that we do not sin the sin of the Gadarenes. Let us beware lest by coldness, and inattention, and worldliness, we drive Jesus from our doors, and compel Him to forsake us entirely. Of all sins which we can sin, this is the most sinful. Of all states of soul into which we can fall, none is so fearful as to be "let alone."—Let it rather be our daily prayer that Christ may never leave us to ourselves. The old wreck, high and dry on the sand-bank, is not a more wretched sight, than the man whose heart Christ has visited with mercies and judgments, but has at last ceased to visit, because He was not received. The barred door is a door at which Jesus will not always knock. The Gadarene mind must not be surprised to see Christ leaving it and going away.

Let us observe, in the second place, that *the man out of whom the devils were departed, besought our Lord that he might be with Him;—but his request was not granted.* We read that Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."

We can easily understand the request that this man made. He felt deeply grateful for the amazing mercy which he had just received in being cured. He felt full of love and warm affection toward Him, who had so wonderfully and graciously cured him. He felt that he could not see too much of Him, be too much in His company, cleave to Him too closely. He forgot everything else under the influence of these feelings. Family, relations, friends, home, house, country, all seemed as nothing in his eyes. He felt that he cared for nothing but to be with Christ.—And we cannot blame him for his feelings. They may have been tinged with something of enthusiasm and inconsideration. There may have been about them a zeal not according to knowledge. In the first excitement of a newly felt cure, he may not have been fit to judge what his future line of life should be. But excited feelings in religion are far better than no feelings at all. In the petition he made, there was far more to praise than to blame.

But why did our Lord Jesus Christ refuse to grant this man's request? Why, at a time when he had few disciples did he send this man away? Why, instead of allowing him to take place with Peter and James and John, did he bid him return to his own house?—Our Lord did what He did in infinite wisdom. He did it for the benefit of the man's own soul. He saw it was more for his good to be a witness for the Gospel at home than a disciple abroad.—He did it in mercy to the Gadarenes. He left among them one standing testimony of the truth of His own divine mission.—He did it, above all, for the perpetual instruction of His whole church. He would have us know that there are various ways of glorifying Him, that He may be honoured in private life as well as in the apostolic office, and that the first place in which

we should witness for Christ is our own house.

There is a lesson of deep experimental wisdom in this little incident, which all true Christians would do well to lay to heart. That lesson is our own utter ignorance of what position is good for us in this world, and the necessity of submitting our own wills to the will of Christ. The place that we wish to fill is not always the place that is best for us. The line of life that we want to take up, is not always that which Christ sees to be most for the benefit of our souls. The place that we are obliged to fill is sometimes very distasteful, and yet it may be needful to our sanctification. The position we are compelled to occupy may be very disagreeable to flesh and blood, and yet it may be the very one that is necessary to keep us in our right mind. It is better to be sent away from Christ's bodily presence, by Christ Himself, than to remain in Christ's bodily presence without His consent.

Let us pray for the spirit of "contentment with such things as we have." Let us be fearful of choosing for ourselves in this life without Christ's consent, or moving in this world, when the pillar of cloud and fire is not moving before us. Let us ask the Lord to choose everything for us. Let our daily prayer be, "Give me what Thou wilt. Place me where Thou wilt. Only let me be Thy disciple, and abide in Thee."

NOTES. LUKE. VIII. 37-40.

37.—[*Besought him to depart.*] It has been remarked by many commentators, that these Gadarenes are an exact type of the men of this world. They saw the miraculous deliverance of a fellow creature from Satan's power, and took no interest in it. But they saw the loss of their swine with deep concern. In a word, they cared more for the loss of swine, than the saving of a soul. There are thousands like them. Tell them of the success of missionaries, and the conversion of souls at home or abroad, they hear it with indifference, if not with a sneer. But if you tell them of the loss of property, or a change in the value of money, they are all anxiety and excitement. Truly the generation of the Gadarenes is not yet extinct!

38.—[*Jesus sent him away.*] Let us note here, that a literal following of Christ, and literal forsaking of relations, friends, and homes, are evidently not essential to salvation. It may be necessary for some persons, and at some times, and under some circumstances. But it is plain from the case before us, that it is not necessary for all. Gualter has some useful remarks on this subject, in his Homily on this passage.

39.—[*Return to thine own house and show, &c.*] It is interesting and instructive to remark how differently our Lord addressed different people, and how different are the commands we find Him laying upon them according to their characters. The young ruler, in Mark x. 21, was commanded to "take up his cross and follow" Christ.—The leper, mentioned in St. Mark i. 43, was strictly charged to "say nothing to any man."—The man, who was called in Luke ix. 19, was not allowed even to go home and bury his father.—The man before us, on the contrary, was commanded to return home, and show every one what Christ had done for him!

Now how shall we account for this strange diversity? There is one simple answer. Our Lord dealt with every case according to what He saw it *needed*. He knew what was in every man's heart. He prescribed to every man, like a wise physician, the very course of conduct which his state of soul required.

We should surely learn, from our Lord's conduct, not to treat all cases of persons needing spiritual advice, in precisely the same way. All, of course, need the same great doctrines, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and thorough holiness to be pressed upon them. But all ought not to have one precise rule laid down for their particular course of action, and their particular line of duty. We must consider peculiarities of circumstances, characters, and cases, and advise accordingly. Counsel which may be very good for one man, may not be good for another. A parent's path of duty is one thing, and a child's is another. A master's position is one, and a servant's another. These things are not sufficiently considered. The wise variety of our Lord's counsels, is a subject which deserves close study.