

## What Has He to Do with You?

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he needed to do to be saved, they replied ‘believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.’ Are there, then, people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ but are not saved? In Matthew’s Gospel, the demon says to Christ ‘What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?’ In Mark’s gospel we hear the demon say, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.’ In Luke’s Gospel, the demon says much the same thing. What, then, are we to make of the similarity between the confessions of these demons—that Jesus is the Son of God—and the confession of faith made by that Philippian jailer and by so many of us sitting in this room? I do not know very many Christians who believe that demons go to heaven. So we may assume, then, that there is something more to this issue of being a Christian than merely believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Indeed, the demons themselves show us what that difference is in their very words. Did you notice that in each instance, before even the demon had told us who Christ was, he told us that he didn’t want to have anything to do with Christ. ‘What have you to do with me?’ is the question the devil asks. We assume the answer it begs is ‘nothing, I hope.’ Then, after confessing that Christ is the Son of God, the devil asks Christ not to torment him. So, though the fiends know that Christ is the Son of God, yet it is this very knowledge that makes them aware that they haven’t to do with Christ and that, because he is the son of God, they expect him to torment them. The devils wish to avoid Christ, and believe him a torture.

I have sometimes heard people who teach science or math or logic ask, ‘what does Christianity have to do with my subject?’ In fact, I was once discussing Christianity and education with a man who was both a Christian and an engineering professor. He said to me, with some disdain, ‘fluid mechanics are fluid mechanics whether you are a Christian or not.’ And in a certain sense I understood what he meant. He meant that fluids run down a pipe as they do, irrespective of the state of the soul of the man who laid the pipe. He meant that non-Christians and Christians alike can tell whether they are about to be sprayed in the face by a hose. But I cannot take from this that Christianity and Christ has nothing to do with fluid mechanics, any more than I can say that because carpentry is practiced basically in the same manner by Christians and non-Christians alike that the hammering of the nails into our Savior’s hand had nothing to do with Christianity but only to do with carpentry.

To understand where my engineering friend went wrong, we need some help from St. Paul. In the opening of the letter to the Romans, Paul tells us that what can be known about God is made plain to us in the things that God has made. I don't have time to turn with you to the passage, but you'd see yourself if you did that the apostle is at pains to make it clear that we know a great deal about God from what he has made. Indeed his invisible attributes and divine nature are clearly seen there, though non-Christians keenly suppress this knowledge. Since fluids in a pipe are things that God has made, along with the plumber who laid the pipe and the engineers who study the pipe, I am forced to believe that we can know a great deal about God from fluid mechanics. Now, it is at this point that we can see the similarity between the man who says, 'what has Christ to do with fluid mechanics' and the demon who says 'what have you to do with me, Jesus Christ.' Both are hopeful that they'll be able to keep Christ at arm's length. But Christ will not be so kept. The wonderful thing about Classical Christian Education is that, so far from trying to keep Christ at arm's length (perhaps banished to a Bible class or a chapel program), it plants Christ in the center of the curriculum. Rather than saying, 'what does Christ have to do with Algebra' it says, 'what must I do to see Christ in Algebra.' And, as it turns out, there's very little to do to see Christ in Algebra. The very order Algebra describes is one that Christ made and through it his own mind is partially made known to us. Only—and pathetically—our tendency is more demonic than human. Demons try to treat the world as if they could live in it without having to encounter Christ. They can spill their ruinous existence all over the face of the earth, so they hope, dashing themselves against the rocks, and never have to encounter the God who made them. But humans, who bear the image of God, need not so live. You graduates have enjoyed an education that encourages you not to be demons. Instead, through it, you have discovered how easy it is to see that, in every subject, you study a world that reveals God. Christ has everything in the world to do with everything in the world. And this leads to the second way by which, I hope, we are better than the demons.

Notice, again, that the demons believe Christ to be a torturer. They adjure Christ not to torment them before their time. It matters little whether this was Christ's intention when he met the demon that day. The demon himself would make Christ a torture, whatever Christ's plans had been. Just as the Dwarfs in the Last Battle will not enjoy Aslan's country and imagine it a filthy stable instead, so too the demons imagine Christ to be a tormentor rather than the one who was tormented for our sake. And in that last day, we know, all those who wish to have Christ as a torment will have their wish granted. In the meantime, Christians distinguish themselves by delighting in Christ instead—something we do when we study his world.

Notice something else in common between the Philippian jailer and the demon: the demon fell down before Christ and the jailer fell down before Paul and Silas. But after his conversion, the jailer 'rejoiced, along with his whole household, that he had believed in God.' Indeed, the rest of the night was spent in that jail with feasting and healing of wounds. What about the demon? He asked to be sent away from Christ. And he was given his wish, was drowned with the herd of pigs, and then sent back to hell for a season. So too is it when we encounter Christ in our studies. Study requires kneeling, to be sure. It is hard work and the subjects we study are lofty. We have to look *up* to them. But study does not require groveling—the demon's feigned submission and actual rebellion. Perhaps the common expression, 'this homework is killing me' is a good illustration. Those who say it suggests a submission to the work, but also a rebellion against it. Study may require kneeling, but not of that sort. Rather, it requires reverence and fear and then delight and feasting. And here, too, your educational experience up until this point has prepared you well. Your teachers have tried, perhaps embarrassingly, to make you delight in the subjects you study. How often have your teachers found joy in something that, at first, you found tedious? How often have your teachers said unbelievable things about how fun this or that subject is? This is not because of mere preference. It is not merely that they happen to like Algebra and that you do not. It is because they, who are Christians, find Christ as he makes himself known in Algebra. And they wanted you, who are Christians, to find him there too and delight in him. But this brings with it a strange difficulty in teaching.

I said that it was embarrassing when the teacher said things like, 'Homer is cool' or 'math is fun.' It is embarrassing because they have brought out in public view certain tastes that are not universally shared. If I told you that I actually enjoyed the smell of manure, you would be embarrassed for my saying so. But the reason why this is embarrassing is, I think, well worth enquiry. It is embarrassing because we cannot make people like things. No education can, and attempts to do so make everyone uncomfortable. This is not to say that your teachers haven't hoped and prayed that you *would* like the very best things in this world—the things they taught you about. Indeed, they have compelled you to study those things, often at great pains. But they could not make you like them. This is because the ability to like likable things doesn't lie in us. It lies in Christ. It was Spurgeon who said 'Jesus' College is the only one in which God's truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed, but Christ's alone can show us how to believe it' (*M&E*, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>).

God himself, through the intercessory work of Christ, wishes not only to make himself known in creation, as Paul says in Romans, but to make himself

worshiped thanks to this creation. That is, God wishes us, after we make an interesting breakthrough in our study of Latin grammar or chemistry or history, to rejoice in the God that made the grammar or the chemistry or the history, and who made us so that we could better understand Him in it. Rejoicing—one might call it joy—is the defining characteristic of Christian education and at the same time the only thing it cannot give to you students. What matters here at GCCA is not your classwork or grades or papers or homework or friends or archery or drama or choir. The only thing that has ever mattered is delighting in God as he makes himself known in all of those things. And yet that is one thing your teachers cannot give you because only the Holy Spirit can give it to you. What your teachers have done, however, is the only thing they can do. They have given you every good reason to delight in God rather than ignore him or run from him or find him a torture.

Delighting in God as he is made known in our studies in something that God's Spirit does for us. Does this mean that, just as teachers cannot make students delight in God through their studies, so too we can't make ourselves delight in God through our studies either? St. Paul taught that we suppress the knowledge of God. Elsewhere, he warns not to quench the spirit. So I suppose the answer depends on which end of the business we are looking at. Looked at from God's end, he sends out his Spirit to cause us to delight in our studies. But I find it hard to look at things from that end because the view is so lofty. Taken from our lowly point of view, we know our business pretty well. It is our business to get better at delighting in God as he makes himself known in what we study. I want to spend a moment thinking about how you will do this.

Some of you will be going home, perhaps to homes where mom will be homeschooling many other children. She will not have the time to continually do summersaults while teaching you Algebra, in hopes that you will delight in the glory of God as we see it there. The subject itself will have to do that, combined with the work of God's Spirit. Will you suppress that Spirit? Will you assume, along with the demons, that an encounter with Christ necessarily means torture? Some have described Algebra as torture, you know. Some of you will be going to schools where teachers are not allowed, and students not encouraged, to see Christ in their studies. Will you succumb to this way of thinking and, with the demon, ask yourself, 'what has Christ to do with this?'

I shouldn't pretend that any of this is easy. I study for a living and still sometimes find my studies tedious and boring. I've also learned all sorts of ways to distract myself from the most glorious parts of my study. But on those rare days when Christ is in me most, I know better. I hope those days are numerous for you. At the very least, they will be unnumbered soon—when we are all in

heaven together. There, we will no longer struggle to study God's revealed self, for we shall see him face to face.