

## **5. Jesus' Authority over Demons**

### **If God is for Us Who Can be Against Us? (Romans 8:31)**

After marrying my American wife, Sandy, we left the United States arriving in England in 1981. Although we were young Christians, we wanted to give our lives to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. We were both thrust into our first encounter with a demonized person within a few months of arrival. It happened about the same time that we and another couple started gathering people into small groups in my hometown of Harwich, Essex, England.

We met a person who had grown up under the influence of his mother who was a practicing Jehovah Witness, and his father who had been into Spiritualism. We both felt that there was something odd or different about him. At this time in our lives Sandy and I were quite naive to such things as demonization, but we knew enough to know that Jesus could help him, so we decided to take him to church with us. We had a little mini Cooper at the time, so we started driving with his sitting in the backseat the twenty-eight miles to the church, which we were attending.

As we were driving, he started opening up about himself. First of all, he told us that he was the Antichrist, the evil world ruler who is prophesied to rule on the Earth in the last days. Then, he went on to tell us that there were male and female voices inside him telling him that he needed to persecute Sandy and myself in order "to drive us closer together." When we got half way to church, I remember it became quite foggy, and he said that something could happen to us on the way. Sure enough, right after he said that, a car hit us from behind and totaled our car. None of us were hurt, and we still managed to get to church with him where the leadership of the church ministered to him, but at that time, we were so inexperienced in dealing with this sort of thing. This man probably needed both psychological and spiritual help. There was definitely a spiritual oppression that was very evident.

We had a couple of other confrontations, which were similar in that people reacted against the Gospel or the name of Jesus in an unusual way. I realized that I needed to learn how to help people in need like him. So, I began to read all kinds of books on the subject. This is a topic about which we all need to learn more, so in this session we want to take a closer look at Jesus' power over demons.

#### **Where Do Demons Originate?**

In our last two studies, we looked closely at Ephesians 6:12 and discovered that Paul the Apostle taught that Satan has with him at least four different categories of evil spirits that do his bidding. We also looked at evil angels infiltrating into the earth sphere in order to corrupt the human race. The lower levels of Satan's hierarchy of evil, the demons that have the task of hindering the growth of the Kingdom of God in the world, continue the work of trying to corrupt the human race by temptation to sin, seeking to bring about deeper levels of control by dark evil forces. Scripture does not clearly tell us from where these demons come. There are a few theories, but we cannot be dogmatic that either theory is correct. Josephus, the Jewish historian that lived just

after the time of Christ, believed that demons were the spirits of wicked people who had died.<sup>1</sup> Another traditional theory is that demons are the disembodied spirits of people that lived before Adam. I hasten to add that there is no supporting Scripture to back that tradition. Then, there are those who believe that demons are unconfined fallen angels. Others also say that demons are the offspring of the fallen angelic beings who mated with women before the flood and were killed by the flood (Genesis 6:1-8). I personally do not care from where they come! My only concern is how to live free of their evil influence and how to seize back the territory that they have claimed in people's lives. Our focus in this study is how to live an overcoming life as Jesus intends. This means that we will encounter enemy forces as we advance with Christ into enemy territory. We will overcome them by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11), i.e. the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ putting us into right relationship with God, and by the word of our testimony.

We need to understand that we Christians are in conflict with evil. During the Second World War, if you had been living in France in 1941 after the Germans had overrun the country, you would have been living in enemy-occupied country. You were in the war, whether you liked it or not. A state of war existed, and you were on the other side to the Germans who had occupied your country. If you are a Christian, you are living in enemy-occupied country, and as long as you are no threat to the enemy, he will let you continue to sleep. However, as soon as you awaken to the call to fight on the side of right, you will find a new sense of joy and inner fulfillment that you have, perhaps, been missing—a cause for which to fight. There are no civilians in a time of war, no fence between one kingdom and another to which you can cling. You are either for Him or against Him (Matthew 12:30). There are many that are still asleep in this war. They are not aware of the battle that they are experiencing. What we need to understand is that this is how Satan wants it! He wants the people of God to be asleep.

As soon as Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He entered into the war. Right away, He was confronted with Satanic temptations in the wilderness as He fasted for forty days. He came out of that trial in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). We also, are called to walk in the power of God's Spirit, for every skirmish that we, the people of God, encounter makes us stronger in faith. The book of Mark indicates that Christ's first sermon in the Capernaum synagogue was interrupted by a man with an evil spirit in him:

<sup>21</sup>They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup>The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. <sup>23</sup>Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup>“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” <sup>25</sup>“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” <sup>26</sup>The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. <sup>27</sup>The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup>News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (Mark 1:21-28).

Imagine that, your first sermon which you preach and a demon manifests in the middle of the talk. Satan, for the most part, would like to keep his work invisible, but he fears the authority of

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<sup>1</sup> Notes from Spiritual Warfare seminar with John Wimber on Demonization.

Christ, and cannot stay hidden when the Light of the World shines in the darkness. Every advance of the Kingdom of God will get a reaction from the kingdom of darkness. Satan fears men and women of God who bring his work out into the open, for it shows the supremacy of God over Satan's kingdom. Before the day of Christ's first sermon in Capernaum was over, the whole area was excitedly sharing with one another that God's Champion had arrived on the scene. They brought their sick and demonized friends to the house where Jesus had just healed Peter's mother-in-law:

<sup>32</sup>That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

<sup>33</sup>The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup>and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was (Mark 1:32-34).

Question 1) What was it that brought the whole town to the door? Why did Jesus forbid the demons to speak? Try to describe the scene you see in your mind's eye from Mark's testimony.

Wherever Jesus went, there was a conflict, a battle. Sometimes, it was evident through the reaction of the religious rulers of the day, viz. those who did not believe, and at other times, there were demonic reactions. Jesus responded by bringing the rule of God into people's lives as He met their need. That could be a need for healing or deliverance from evil spirits. Often in Scripture, it appears that these two things were linked. In my opinion, the reason that Jesus did not let the demons speak about His identity was because His time had not yet come. The faster his ministry progressed, He knew that it was leading to an appointed end. Remember what the Pharisees accused Jesus of doing? They said that He cast out demons through the prince of demons (demonic power). This does not make sense because, as Jesus explained, "a house divided against itself will not stand" (Mark 3:25). For whatever reason, Jesus would not permit the enemy to utter truth. He silenced the demons and cast them out. Where He brought light and life, the darkness had to flee!

The important thing to realize is that disembodied spirits are real and that Jesus has authority over all the power of the evil one. John the Apostle tells us, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8). Jesus came to root out, destroy, and deliver Man from every work of the enemy. There is nothing that the enemy has done in your life that Jesus can't undo! He has the last and the final word over the enemy.

### **What Are Demons Like and How Do They Express Themselves?**

As we said in the first talk on this subject, evil spirits occupy an unseen realm beyond our physical sight. They are constantly seeking opportunities to enter a home, which they can inhabit and through which they can express their will, mind, emotions, and evil nature. They operate from outside a person and try to gain an entrance to a life by habitual sin. One cannot tell at what point they actually gain an entrance into a life to further drive a person to a compulsion toward a particular sin. They have intelligence and have their own will about how they do things. Being disembodied spirits, their longing is to have some kind of host. Without a host, they have no rest until they find one:

<sup>24</sup>When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, “I will return to the house I left” <sup>25</sup>When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. <sup>26</sup>Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first (Luke 11:24-26).

Question 2) Why is the final condition of this man worse if the house was swept clean and put in order?

A clean house speaks of self-reformation, i.e. the cleaning up of one’s life by stopping certain habits that bring a person to a downward spiral in the first place. The enemy would love for you just to clean up your life and to try by your own strength to be free from sin. Self – righteousness is just a stratagem of the enemy. If the goal is just self-reformation, then a person often feels “empty” and unfulfilled.

We are created with a God-shaped void in our lives that only the Lord sitting on the throne of your life will satisfy. Once the natural barrier (the hedge as in Job 1:10) over our lives is broken down by sin and the infestation of demons, the only spirit that will bring wholeness, cleanness and holiness is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. The good news of the Gospel is not that He has come to give us a reformed life but, rather, an exchange of life! It is an exchange of our life for His life! The Holy Spirit dwells within us when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives. Self-reformation is not enough. Without Christ occupying the throne at the center of our lives, a demon that has had to leave can come back with one or more stronger spirits. Speaking to Christians, Paul the Apostle says:

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received of God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Paul was writing to the believers in Corinth. He told them that their bodies were temples to the Holy Spirit. You were created with a place for God Himself to rule and reign in the temple of your spirit. Until we meet Christ, self is sitting on the throne of our lives. I don’t know about you, but I did a poor job of directing and managing my life before Christ came to sit there on the throne (Galatians 2:20).

### **Demons Can Cause Physical Sickness.**

Not every physical sickness is caused by demons, but there are Scriptures that indicate that in *some* cases there is more to the physical condition than is seen from a surface view of the symptoms. For instance, in Mark’s Gospel, Chapter 9, Jesus casts out a spirit from a child whose father testified that his son was deaf because of a spirit’s demonizing him:

<sup>17</sup>A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup>Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” <sup>19</sup>“O unbelieving generation,” Jesus

replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”<sup>20</sup> So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered.<sup>22</sup> “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”<sup>23</sup> “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.”<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “**You deaf and mute spirit,**” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”<sup>26</sup> **The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out.** The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.”<sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”<sup>29</sup> He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (Mark 9:17-29).

Today, most physicians would say that the father was blaming the boy’s condition on some physical condition, but the boy was also foaming at the mouth, gnashing his teeth, and becoming rigid while lying on the ground. How did Jesus handle the situation? He *rebuked* the demon saying, “**You deaf and mute spirit,** he said, **I command you to come out of him and never enter him again**” (Mark 9:25). It is easy to go by the word “rebuked” without taking a look at what it means to rebuke. The Greek word that Mark uses when he writes (The New Testament was written in Greek) is the word *Epitimaō*. My Key Word Study Bible says that this word means, “to blame, censure, chide, rebuke, warn or berate. It is an abrupt, curt, and biting charge, pointedly expressing disapproval, the taking to task of someone for a fault, and connotes a sharp or harsh tone.”<sup>2</sup>

So what is my point? I can’t ever imagine Jesus speaking in such a way to a boy, and in any case, the boy was deaf as well as mute. He couldn’t hear what Jesus was saying. The spirit to which Jesus was speaking heard Him and came out at His word of command. The Lord Jesus was taking authority over an evil spirit that had robbed the boy of the ability to speak and hear. When the evil spirit came out, the boy was healed. We will come back to this passage at a later session, for there is much more for us to learn than time will allow today. Let’s look at another passage found in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter nine:

<sup>32</sup>While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. <sup>33</sup>And **when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke.** The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”<sup>34</sup> But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons” (Matthew 9:32-34).

This was obviously a different occasion, for in this passage, Matthew writes about a fully grown man. Notice that it doesn’t say that Jesus healed the man. Christ cast out the spirit, and the consequence of the spirit’s departing was that the man could talk again. How does a spirit manage to hinder a person from speaking? I don’t know. All I can tell you from Scripture is that spirits are able to affect physical bodies. Let’s look at another example in Luke chapter thirteen:

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<sup>2</sup> Key Word Study Bible, AMG Publishers, Page 1626.

<sup>10</sup>On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup>and a woman was there who had been **crippled by a spirit** for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup>When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are **set free** from your infirmity." <sup>13</sup>Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. <sup>14</sup>Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." <sup>15</sup>The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? <sup>16</sup>Then should not this woman, **a daughter of Abraham**, whom **Satan has kept bound** for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" <sup>17</sup>When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing (Luke 13:10-17).

Question 3) What things stand out as you read this passage?

This wonderful deliverance did not come about by the evil spirit's manifesting itself and drawing attention to the woman. The spirit had tried to stay silent and invisible. It is possible that the woman herself did not know that her illness was caused by a spirit that had managed to gain access into her life. The spirit in this woman had no problem with her attending church (synagogue), and as far as we know, there were no other manifestations of the evil spirit's presence in the life of the woman.

It was Jesus who saw beyond the physical condition to a spirit that was causing this deformity. He went to her. He saw her ailment, and even though He knew that it would open Him up to attack by his religious enemies, He still bravely ministered to the woman's need, speaking a word of wisdom to those who opposed healing on the Sabbath at the same time. If this woman had been in one of our churches today, most people would attribute her condition to a disease that had caused the problem. Jesus told us that it was a spirit that had bound her with unseen chains. He didn't say, "Woman, you are healed from your infirmity," but, "**Woman, you are set free from your infirmity**" (Verse 12). The Greek word that is translated *bound* in verse 16, means to bind, fasten or to tie as with a chain or rope. Don't you love it that Jesus didn't care about the scorn of the religious leaders as He delivered this woman? He cared so much that not another day should pass before this woman should be released from the oppression of the enemy.

Question 4) Have you ever had a time in your life where you felt under a cloud of depression, doubt, or darkness? What caused it? Could there have been a spiritual root? If not, have you ever tried speaking to someone about Christ and been aware of a veil or a heaviness that seemed to prevent him or her from understanding or praying?

Not all depression and heaviness in people's lives is because of being demonized by a spirit that has managed to gain access to a person's life. Many times, there are problems caused by a poor diet, lack of exercise, or being deficient in many minerals and nutrients that we no longer get through the way our food is produced. I am saying that, in some cases, people have oppression launched at them from outside of their lives. One of the world's greatest preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was plagued by severe depression, which I believe was spiritual opposition that was demonic in nature.

In the above passage of Scripture, the spirit had gained access and was causing deformity of the spinal column. One further thing that Jesus mentions is that the woman was a believer; He calls her a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound (Verse 16). Paul the Apostle is very clear that those who believe are children of Abraham, Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:6-9; Romans 4:16). This woman, a daughter of Abraham, was demonized. This raises a big question:

### **Can a Christian be Demonized?**

I do not believe that a spirit can gain access into a Christian who is walking in the Spirit, one whose life is laid down at the foot of the cross. Not all Christians live their lives in such a way, though. There are some who are led away from the purity and holiness of a godly life; either that or they have never been taught how to live a Christ-centered life. When temptation is listened to and obeyed, we are “open season” to the enemy who seeks opportunity through our sin and darkness to lead us away from intimacy with Christ. Don’t get me wrong, I believe in the eternal security of the believer (John 6:39; John 5:24), but the enemy is able to limit our effectiveness as we live as believers in this world.

I have a friend in England, who I do not doubt has been a believer since his youth, but there was a time when he was so filled with oppressive thoughts that had plagued him, driving him to depression and anxiety. When I prayed for him, he fell to the floor and was literally slithering about on the floor like a snake as a demon manifested itself at the presence of Jesus in the room. The Lord showed up and completely delivered him. I am still in touch with him, and he continues to walk with and serve the Lord.

I don’t believe that a Christian or a non-Christian, either, can be possessed in the full sense of the word. The word *possession* gives us an image of a person under complete and absolute control by demons. However, even the most terrible demonic case in Scripture, i.e. the man under control by Legion (Mark 5:1-20), was able to run to Jesus as soon as he saw Him. If the demons had full control of the man, they would have caused him to run the opposite way! They are terrified of Jesus! John Wimber, the man whom God used to start the network of Vineyard Churches, commented on this question:

I do not believe that demons may own people absolutely while they still live on earth; even when demons gain a high degree of control, people are still able to exercise a degree of free will that may lead to deliverance and salvation. The Greek word used for having a demon (*daimonizomenoi*) is more literally translated “demonized” (See Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:32; Luke 8:36; John 10:21), which means to be influenced, afflicted, or tormented in some way by demonic power.<sup>3</sup>

We see this happening in the life of Saul, Israel’s first king. Scripture tells us that, “**God changed Saul’s heart**” (1 Samuel 10:9), with the next verse saying that “**the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying**” (1 Samuel 10:10). However, a few chapters later, as he began to disobey and refused to listen to God’s voice, and even to reject the Word of the

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<sup>3</sup> John Wimber, *Power Healing*, Harper Collins, Page 109.

Lord (1 Samuel 15:26), we are told that an evil spirit tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14). It is my belief that a Christian can be demonized and influenced.

### **Demons Influence People Through their Thoughts**

Demons can influence the thoughts of both Christians and not-yet believers. We are told not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are of God (1 John 4:1). Paul the Apostle writes to his young disciple, Timothy, who is being trained for the ministry, instructing him to gently instruct his opponents, in the hope that they may be released from the devil's grip:

<sup>25</sup>Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, **who has taken them captive to do his will** (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

There are those in the media and around us who seek to influence our decision-making by manipulation and deception. People do not realize that evil spiritual forces implant thoughts into their minds, hoping to bend their decision making. Paul talks about those who have been **"taken captive to do his will"** (2 Timothy 2:26). Demons will speak even through those in our family and friendships. Often, they will not even know why they have said such things that issue from their mouths. Be spiritually aware in the midst of such attacks! The enemy will use those who are influential in our family to try to dissuade us from walking closely with Christ. Isn't this what happened to Jesus through Peter the Apostle? When Jesus began to tell the disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to die in place of guilty man, Peter began to rebuke Him. "'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'"

Guess whose thoughts were being sown into his mind at that point? Jesus knew exactly from where that thought came. He said to Peter (or the spirit that was speaking through him), **"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men"** (Matthew 16:23). All these words were spoken just after the Spirit of God had revealed to Peter who Jesus really was, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"** (Matthew 16:16). Take care of your thought life.

In another place, the Father directs Jesus to get into a boat in order to deliver a man from a classic case of a territorial spirit that ruled over an area to the east of the Sea of Galilee. The enemy tried to head off the attack by manipulation of the wind and the sea.

<sup>35</sup>That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."  
<sup>36</sup>Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup>A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup>Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" <sup>39</sup>He got up, **rebuked the wind** and said to the waves, **"Quiet! Be still!"** Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. <sup>40</sup>He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" <sup>41</sup>They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? **Even the wind and the waves obey him!**" (Mark 4:35-41).

Let me ask you a question—Have you ever before spoken to an inanimate object? Don't you think it kind of odd to have a chat with the wind and the waves? Being an ex-fisherman from England, I can confidently tell you that there are many days when it was stormy on the North Sea, and yet I never cursed the wind and the waves for blowing hard. The word *rebuked* (v.39) is the same Greek word *Epitimaō*, that Jesus spoke to the demonized boy in the passage of Scripture that we mentioned earlier. Why would Jesus use such strong words to speak to the wind and the waves? It was because the Father had sent Him to deliver the man called Legion in the following passage.

Satan guessed that he had better try and stop Jesus from the deliverance that actually happened (Mark 5:1-20). It was so supernatural that even the waves became instantly still. Take a moment to picture this! That is not natural phenomenon at all. When the wind stops, the wave movement still carries on for several hours depending on the strength of the wind. Four of the disciples, possibly five, were fisherman who had fished that water for some time and yet they were terrified at such a supernatural thing as the waves becoming still. Jesus speaking authoritatively to the wind and waves was a resistance to demonic attack.

Let's now take a look at the passage of Scripture just after the supernatural stopping of the winds and the waves:

<sup>1</sup>They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup>When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup>This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, **not even with a chain.** <sup>4</sup>For **he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet.** No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup>Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. <sup>6</sup>**When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.** <sup>7</sup>He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" <sup>8</sup>For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" <sup>9</sup>Then Jesus asked him, **"What is your name?"** "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." <sup>10</sup>And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. <sup>11</sup>A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup>The demons begged Jesus, **"Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."** <sup>13</sup>He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. <sup>14</sup>Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup>When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup>Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup>Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5:1-17).

Question 5) What do we learn about the destructive life this man was experiencing? Why did the people of the nearby town plead with Jesus to leave? What causes people to respond with fear when they see a power encounter like this?

I notice that Jesus commanded the spirit to tell Him his name (verse 9). Those that have a lot of experience in ministering deliverance believe that being forced to reveal its name and nature by a greater spiritual power weakens the demon's hold. Luke in his Gospel also mentions the story about Legion, adding that this man for a long time had not worn clothes or lived in a house (Luke 8:27). He had lived naked in the tombs. Mark tells us that, night and day among the tombs, he had been crying out and cutting himself with stones in order to destroy himself, such was the torment of the man's inner life. I love that the Lord had heard his cry and went across the Sea of Galilee to minister to Him. I love the fact that, as soon as the man saw Jesus, he ran to Him. There was a battle going on for his soul, for as soon as he came before Jesus, he fell on his knees, recognizing his need. It seems to have been the demons that spoke through him, though, begging that they wouldn't be tortured. I notice that they still wanted to reside in a host, even though it was pigs, two thousand in number (Verse 13).

I do not know why Jesus allowed them to go into the pigs, except that, perhaps, it was a visual reminder to the man delivered that the spirits had indeed left him: he saw what happened to the pigs. It is likely that the Jews in the area were compromising God's law for economic reasons. Jews were not allowed to eat pork, and a large herd of pigs is a lot of bacon, which would be worth a lot of money. It is a possibility that they were not eating it themselves but selling it to the Gentiles (non-Jews) in the area. The city of Damascus, the Syrian capital, was just a few miles away. It would have been a good reason why the people in the area did not want Jesus around but asked him to leave, i.e. they were afraid of more loss of revenue. Unfortunately, there are many that reject Christ for economic reasons, putting money as more of a priority in their lives than Jesus.

What about you? Who comes first in your life? Is Jesus your Lord? He left the safe shores of Western Galilee to release a man who was naked and crying out in torment. He cares about every one of us. What need do you have in your life that is causing you pain and torment? Call out to Him with all your heart. I am convinced that He will leave the 99 that are safe and look for the one who is lost:

*‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? (Luke 15:4)*

You are never beyond our Lord's eyes or the compassion of His heart. He sees, He knows, He loves. Cry out to Him with all your heart, and if you are not in the family yet, come to Him and learn of Him, for He is gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul (Matthew 11:29).

We have not been sent to battle without protection. When we sense that we are in the midst of warfare, there are two things we need to remember. One is that the battle is the Lord's and, secondly, that He is victorious over all the works of the enemy. We are citizens of His Kingdom, and as His citizens, we take His kingdom with us wherever we go. When we are praying for those who do not know Christ, be aware that you are in a battle. As you pray for them, ask for them to be released from any spiritual forces that would blind them. People who are in darkness do not know that they are in darkness. It is possible for people to even read the Scriptures and

still be blinded to the truth contained in them. We can take authority as we pray because Jesus is victorious and the battle is the Lord's!

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38).

Prayer: Father, I pray that you will deliver me from every evil work and deed. Grant me power to live a life of purity and freedom from all demonic forces. Deliver me from evil, for yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, Amen!

Keith Thomas

Email: [keiththomas7@gmail.com](mailto:keiththomas7@gmail.com)

Website: [www.groupbiblestudy.com](http://www.groupbiblestudy.com)