

Set Free From Bondage

Luke 8:26-39 NKJ ²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" ²⁹ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. ³⁰ Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. ³² Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. ³³ Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. ³⁴ When those who fed *them* saw what had happened, they fled and told *it* in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ They also who had seen *it* told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. ³⁷ Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Luke 8:26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes

We might consider this a simple account of Jesus casting out one more demon. He's done it before and He will do it again. However both Matthew and Luke treat this as a very special event. In many ways different from the other demon possessions that occur.

For one thing Jesus has come to the land of the Gardarenes. This means that He is bringing the gospel to an area that is largely gentiles.

But probably more importantly Satan confronts Jesus is a battle that the apostles at least see some of. We might think of this as Jesus temptation round two. Scripture tells us that at the end of temptation in the wilderness Satan left "until an opportune time." Here again Satan sees an opportunity to oppose Christ and attempt to stop the preaching of the Gospel to these gentiles. Thus Satan and Christ meet and do battle. The prize of this match the soul of this man and all the people who live in this area.

Luke 8:27 ²⁷ And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs.

This is beyond any doubt the most pitiful man whom we ever meet in the gospel or in real life for that matter. Jesus has healed blind men, and lame men, lepers, and will even raise the dead. But no one is in as bad a shape as this man. He lives in tombs without any clothes. Matthew tells us he would often cut himself and the people could hear him screaming. He was driven by the demons from place to place. Here is man truly without hope, until Jesus comes

If we are to take this account to heart we have to begin by seeing in this man a picture of our own soul. We also are bound to sin and death with sorrow and sin heaped upon us. If anyone thinks this man is not a picture of me, he deceives himself. For this is who we are all helpless, worthless and despicable

This is what we heard in Isaiah, a people who did not seek him who were detestable to the Lord. This is what we heard in our epistle reading that we are slaves to sin just as this man was a slave to the demons, until in the fullness of time Christ came to set him free

Jesus asks his name and the answer is "legion, for we are many." A Legion is anywhere from 4 to 6 thousand soldiers. Perhaps there were that many demons or perhaps there were just a lot. In any case there were many. But many also because there are many who find themselves in the same place as this demon possessed man. Weighed down with sins and suffering to great to bear. Many caught in their own sinful desires, unable to break free but simply suck down again and again into the same sins. Miserable, wretched and poor, we poor sinners are many, and the suffering that afflicts us are many.

Yet here stands Jesus, the son of the most high God, with the power and authority to help.

Luke 8:31-32 ³¹ And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. ³² Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them.

And so the battle begins. Satan scriptures tell us is more cunning than all the beasts of the field. He does not attack Jesus with strength or power. He knows he cannot win that way. He knows that despite the fact that he has 6,000 thousand of his soldiers arrayed against Christ, yet the power belongs to Christ. Even six thousand demons cannot win against him. No but instead as always he seeks through cunning deceit to undermine Christ.

Here Christ has come to share the good news of the gospel also to these gentiles. But Satan wants to make sure they reject him before he even has a chance to speak.

Satan does not attack Him openly but he tries to use His love against Him. "Oh poor us don't throw us into the abyss, have mercy on us let us enter these pigs," the demons say.

Luke 8:33-34 ³³ Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. ³⁴ When those who fed *them* saw what had happened, they fled and told *it* in the city and in the country.

Why did Jesus allow it? Why did He allow the demons to enter the pigs when he knew full well that they would kill them?

Jesus is fighting for the man. In his love for that one pitiful man he would gladly give 2000 pigs. In his love for that man he would gladly give even more, even His own life. Should we be surprised that He does not care about the pigs when He gladly gives even His own life for wretched pitiful men like this one and like us. What are two or four or six thousand pigs in comparison to this one wretched man?

Jesus chooses mercy. So great is His love. So great is His grace that He chooses to be merciful even to the demons. Even though He probably knows that they are simply using His mercy against Him. "Do not send us to the abyss," they plead and Jesus does not.

Jesus chooses His battle. He isn't going to fight with the demons over the pigs. He cares only about that man. "Have the pigs," He says, "this man belongs to me." And remember that man is you also. He chooses you also and wraps you in His arms and says let the demons and the unbelievers have all other things this one belongs to me.

Finally it is the death of the pigs that causes everyone to come out to hear and see Him.

I wonder if the demons even realized what they did when they killed those pigs. It was like a giant alarm bell and all the crowds came out to see Jesus.

Imagine if I called you tomorrow and said, "It's a miracle. Come and see. My daughter is walking and talking." How many would leave your jobs and come? Now imagine if I called you and said, "your house is on fire." Now how many would leave everything and come rushing to see.?

Jesus did not command the pigs to be killed. He did not want the pigs to be killed. The killing of the pigs was all the demons doing. Granted Jesus allowed it, but still it was their doing. Yet look how skillfully Jesus uses evil for good. Because of the killing of the pigs the entire region comes running to see Jesus?

And what did they find? They found a man they knew to be filled with many demons, sitting clothed and in his right mind at the feet of Jesus. What a wonderful picture of Jesus' power and his love.

So Jesus says to us also. When the day is dark. When your sin is piled upon you. When you have no hope left. Come and I will heal you and you will sit at my feet and learn my peace.

Luke 8:37³⁷ Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned.

Why were they all so afraid? Because they saw his great power but not his love. They should have seen His love. They should have seen it in the man sitting at His feet. But as of yet their eyes were blinded so they were afraid of His power, because they did not yet know His love.

We are going to see this truth very dramatically demonstrated next week. We are going to see the fire and the earthquake and the wind, but God is not in the fire or the earthquake or the wind. God came to Elijah in the still small voice. The voice of love and grace.

The children are going to hear of this power and this love in VBS. They will see the power of God in creation and here or His quiet love in the promise He gives to Abraham.

But these people do not yet know that love of God. They can only see the power of God and so they are afraid. And so Jesus leaves, but He leaves behind the quiet voice. He leaves behind the one man who did see the love of God and can share that love with everyone else.

Many of the commentators try and figure out why Jesus won't let this man come with Him. They say well he wasn't a Jew so he can't travel with Jesus. Jesus leaves him behind to be the one quiet voice testifying to the wonderful works of God, to the love of Christ.

So let's see:

Satan trades one man for two thousand pigs but that one man is worth far more than even six thousand pigs. He is worth more to Jesus than His own life.

Satan kills the pigs in order to turn the people against Jesus, but in so doing everyone sees with their own eyes the great thing Christ has done.

Satan fills the people with fear so that they run Jesus out of town, yet Jesus leaves behind the quiet voice which is a constant witness to His love and power.

I would say that in every sense Jesus wins and the victory is His. Thus has he saved us also from bondage to sin and Satan and set us free and made us the children of God.

Amen