

When Pigs are Preferred

Wonder-Working Power – Part II

Mark 5:1-20

Introduction

I want to turn your attention to Mark, chapter 5. We will continue our study on the sovereignty of Christ and today, we will see His sovereignty over the demon world.

Jesus is going to confront one of the most terrifying men in His part of the country. This is one of the most frightening experiences that I have read in the New Testament. Yet, Jesus Christ handles this problem situation with the calm of a sovereign Christ.

Christ's Sovereignty Over Demons

Let us begin by looking at Mark 5:1.

They came over to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Garasenes [the city of Gadara].

You may remember, from our last discussion on Mark, chapter 4, that Jesus and His disciples have just made a trip across the Sea of Galilee. There arose a storm and Jesus Christ stilled the storm, showing His sovereignty over nature. It is still nighttime and they have now come over to the other side. Our text today tells what happens next.

I do not know how well you take interruptions. I do not take them very well. My wife and I think life is probably made more of interruptions than planned events! The disciples and Jesus Christ are about to have another interruption.

You may remember that they have come away for a retreat. The disciples and Jesus have come away for some rest and a little relaxation. They have left the busy crowds, gotten into the boat, and have come over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They have stepped on shore, but this will not be a time of rest.

Look at Mark 5:2, which tells what happens next.

When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him,

This is a man who is demon possessed or demonized, as the New Testament refers to him.

Facts revealed about demons

Now there is no doubt that you would agree that the demon world is a terrifying reality. There is no passage in scripture that I think, elucidates that point more clearly than Mark, chapter 5. I want to give to you, three facts that are revealed to us about demons.

1. The first fact is that demons have superhuman strength.

Look at Mark 5:3-4.

And he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.

The word “subdue” is the same word that is used to refer to the subduing or taming of a wild animal. It was impossible. I would imagine, in that day, he was known as “The Madman of Gadara.”

I went back in my imagination to that town. There is no doubt in my mind that children would wake crying as they would hear the screams of that man echoing from cavern to cavern. The coastline of Gadara is a place filled with caves; caves dot that land site. These caves are literally, tombs. They bury the dead there. It is a place of death. If you lived in the city of Gadara and wanted to go to the seashore, you would bypass this area because it was a graveyard.

You would avoid this seashore area even more because there was the madman there. Everyone knew of him. The blacksmiths in town would hold up chains that they had just forged and think, “Surely these chains will hold the madman.” The rope makers would bind ropes and make them a little stronger, and say, “Surely, these ropes will hold the madman.” They would gather parties of men on occasion, implied in this passage, and they would capture this man, who ran naked, with wild hair and beard, screaming at the top of his voice.

The text says, in Mark 5:5,

Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.

What a ghastly picture this is. They would literally, attack this man. They would hold him down and bind him with chains. He would snap them aside, as if they were twigs. The demons in that man gave superhuman strength to his flesh.

2. Secondly, demons were persistently cruel.

You should underline, in Mark 5:5, the word “constantly”.

Constantly, night and day . . .

This is continuously. There was no rest and no peace to this individual who was demon possessed. The demons were so cruel.

3. Thirdly, demons had destructive tendencies.

It says, in the last part of Mark 5:5, that this demon possessed man was always,

. . . gashing himself with stones.

This man was lacerating his body with stones. Perhaps it was akin to demon worship.

Do you remember what happened when the prophet Elijah took on all of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18)? Baal’s prophets began to cut themselves with stones and sharp instruments. That was part of the demon worship.

It seems that the demons that had inhabited this man of Gadara actually used him as a living sacrifice. They were always using him, as if he were being sacrificed continually to the demon world. So, from head to toe, there were gashes and open sores. How cruel.

What a terrible picture this is for us.

The sovereignty of Christ recognized by demons

Now, let us put this picture on pause and step back and take a look at all that is happening. The disciples and Jesus have gotten off the boat and almost, as Mark says, “immediately,” when Jesus’ foot hits the shore, they hear a scream. On the hillside, through the dim light, they can see running toward them, this “Madman of Gadara”. They had probably already heard of him.

Visualize this scene. Jesus is standing on the seashore, watching this madman rush toward Him. There are also twelve men – running the other way! I can just see Peter knocking James and John down to get into the boat. They are trying to get out of there. They have heard of this guy, “The Madman of Gadara”. They are ready to leave.

Perhaps this demon possessed man did not recognize Jesus from far off, and he rushes up to Him. I do not know when he recognized who He was, but instead of jumping on Him and tearing at Him, he falls prostrate. Look at Mark 5:6-7a.

Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? . . .”

His reaction to Jesus reveals a couple of things about the demon world. We see the supremacy of Christ in this.

1. First, demons recognize deity.

This demon possessed man said,

. . . “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? . . .”

This is a phrase used in the Old Testament time and time again. It was a title that referred to the awesome majesty of God. The demons recognized, in the person of Jesus Christ, nothing less than deity.

When I see people today, denying the deity of Jesus Christ, I think they are more foolish than the demons. The demons knew exactly who Jesus was.

2. Secondly, demons tremble at Jesus' power.

Look at the last part of verse 7.

... "I implore You by God, do not torment me!"

In other words, he was, in effect, trying to put Jesus under an oath. He was literally saying, "Swear by God, You won't torment me."

Now if he had been able to do that and Jesus had said, "I swear by God," then Jesus would have sinned. So perhaps this is a demonic trick to try to get Jesus to commit sin.

He says, "Swear by God, that You won't torment me!"

We would have guess at what the torment is. Perhaps Mark 5:10 gives an indication,

And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

The demon world knows of coming judgment. They know that there will come a day when the Son of God will commit them to the abyss forever.

Now this also shows that demons do not know the future and they cannot read the mind of man. If this were so, they would have known that Jesus was coming, not to send them to the abyss, but to establish His kingdom. They did not know whether Jesus Christ was going to send them to the abyss then rather than later. They did not know this; they were limited in their knowledge. As I said, this passage reveals a lot about the demon world.

3. Thirdly, demons are bound by the will of Christ.

Look at verses 7b-8.

... "I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

Jesus had already said, "Come out."

The demons did not come out immediately. Jesus will deal with demoniacs time and time again, and He may say a word and they will flee. In this verse, He

says a word and they argue with Him, even though He is the Christ.

The demons beg Jesus to instead, send them into swine. Look at Mark 5:11-12.

Now there was a large heard of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them."

Then, in verse 13a,

Jesus gave them permission . . .

Jesus Christ literally, said one word. Your translation may say, "Go." He said one word, "Go," and all the demons left the man. Look at what happens in verse 13b,

And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

Mark is giving a snapshot picture. He uses four different verbs in the aorist tense to indicate that everything is happening fast. Jesus says, "Go"; the demons leave; they enter the swine; the swine rush off the cliff. Then, Mark uses a fifth verb and changes the tense to imperfect, which slows things down, as if the camera is now in slow motion. We see a ghastly scene of two thousand pigs drowning, in slow motion.

Jesus teaches through His handling of the demons

Now, when I read this passage, I asked the question that you are perhaps asking, "Come on, Lord, that's cruel. Two thousand pigs off a cliff – why?"

Why didn't Jesus just commit these demons to the abyss? Why didn't He just say, "Go to the place that I've reserved for punishment."

Let me suggest three reasons that may clear up the problem.

1. Number one, I believe that Jesus was giving proof to all who were observing that deliverance had indeed taken place – especially to this man.

Jesus gave wonderful assurance to this man – as he saw those pigs rushing off the cliff. There was no doubt that he was delivered. When the people in the city came out, they had no doubt that he, in fact, had been delivered of all of the demons. So, it was a visual story, at best, that deliverance had been given.

2. Number two, it was a vivid object lesson to the city.

Notice in this passage that it was a vivid object lesson to the city that to Satan, a pig is as good as a man.

Now, isn't it interesting that the demons do not want to be disembodied? We do not have time to thoroughly discuss this, but they do not want to be in a disembodied state. If they cannot have a man, they will take a pig. It does not matter. They will be just as happy, just as content, just as fulfilled as a demon can be, to dwell inside a pig.

What a picture this gave of the demon world to that town. What a picture this gives to all who would follow anyone but Christ – they are as insignificant to Satan and the demons as a pig. It does not matter to him. It is only to Jesus Christ that you are really worth anything. When He comes to indwell you, you are a precious object to Him. But when you follow Satan, you are totally insignificant – except that his way may be had.

3. Number three, it was an act of judgment.

Understand that it was unlawful to have pigs. So, what were these people doing? They were dealing in the black market. Evidently, Gadara was supplying all of these Jewish towns and all of these Jewish rebels with pork. To them, this was an early slaughter because I am sure they got the pigs out of the water, cut them up, cured them, and everything else. I think this was an act of judgment.

Jesus Christ was saying, "Hey, what's going on here? Two thousand swine? You're not even supposed to have them. You're watching all those barbecued ribs out there, those BLT's, and all of that. You're not even supposed to be eating it. You're not supposed to have it."

That helped me to understand, as I considered this an act of judgment on this city, that all Jesus Christ actually did was clean up their act. He got rid of things they were not supposed to have; that is, two thousand swine.

The saving work of Christ

Notice next, the saving work of Christ as a transforming experience. Look at this wonderful text, in Mark 5:14-15.

Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people

came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened.

The wonderful thing about this is when, in verse 9, Jesus asked the man,

... ***"What is your name?"*** ...

I think that Jesus was trying to awaken in him the sense of personality because he was so overcome with another force – demons. He answered, interestingly, in verse 9b, and that is when, I think, the demons took over and said,

... ***"My name is Legion . . ."***

Now, this territory was occupied and there were legions of Roman soldiers. A legion was 6,000 soldiers. There is a debate as to whether there were literally, 6,000 demons, or this was simply an idiom for, as verse 9b says,

" . . . we are many."

We do not know, but we do know there were 2,000 swine that went rushing off that cliff.

So, the swine responded and Jesus exorcised the man.

Notice in Mark 5:15,

... ***the man who had been demon-possessed [was] sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion" . . .***

The man is clothed, probably for the first time in a long time. And he is seated. That means he is content for the first time in a long time. He is also in his right mind.

Notice the way the people of the city responded, in the last part of verse 15.

... ***they became frightened.***

Skip to verses 18-19. Jesus is ready to leave.

As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "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."

This is the man who was "The Madman of Gadara". Everyone feared him. Mothers would draw

their children close at night because the children were frightened by the screams that they heard echoing from cavern to cavern. This is the crazy man, that people feared, now transformed. Jesus Christ will now use him as one of His evangelists. What a transforming experience!

There are a lot of changes taking place in America today. One area in which the fastest changes are taking place is in the business world. All of the changes in machinery and computers are amazing! I love to see all of the changes with transportation – cars and airplanes. To think that my grandfather saw all of that taking place in just his lifetime. There are amazing changes that have taken place that we have observed.

I recently read that Andrew Jackson wrote in his diary, “We’ve finally arrived in Washington and we’re very much fatigued because we’ve been traveling for two days and have actually covered 70 miles.”

Think of the changes that have occurred in the last hundred years. However, when we read the story of an individual like this man, we realize that there is no greater change than the change that comes when Jesus Christ invades your life and my life. When we allow Him to take up residency; when we invite Him in, the transformation is incredible.

Now, the man begged Jesus to allow him to go with Him. Notice that Jesus says two very key words. You should underline them, in verse 19,

... ***“Go home . . .”***

It is fascinating that this city would echo in chorus, as verse 17 tells us,

. . . ***they began to implore Him [Jesus] to leave their region.***

In other words, the people of this city are saying, “Jesus leave. Leave.”

Finally, He left because He will never stay where He is not wanted. But when He left, He gave them instead, a missionary; an evangelist.

Notice that Jesus tells this man first, to,

... ***“Go home . . .”***

Now that is not very intriguing. In fact, it would be hard to be impressive by going home, wouldn't it? They know your nickname. They know your reputation. They say, “Oh, we remember you.”

Jesus is telling him to go home. Ladies and gentlemen, I really believe that your testimony and my

testimony must invade our homes. Some of you were saved after you left home. You have relatives who are lost. You may have people who were best of friends with you and perhaps, they do not even know you have been reborn. However, they will listen to your voice.

It is interesting that Jesus Christ did not take time to go to this man's home. He knew that his testimony would be enough, so He sent him home.

I think one of the burdens that should be in our hearts is the burden for relatives and for close friends back home. Maybe a card this season; maybe a letter; maybe a phone call might be just what Jesus Christ will use to bring that individual to Him.

We need to take this message to “Go home . . .” for ourselves. It might be to a father or mother, a son or daughter, a friend, a co-worker, a teacher or principal, a relative who needs to hear the message – if we will only go home.

Application – How to Allow Christ to Defeat Satan's Advances in Us

Let us apply this to our own lives. The sovereignty of Christ is an incredible thing as it is revealed in our study today, over demons. Let me give four ways to allow Christ to defeat Satan's advances in our own lives.

Now, if you are a believer, you never have to fear possession because the Spirit of God resides in your personality and He will not make room for demons. However, the advances of Satan can so obsess you that your testimony is stymied. The temptation brought on by the demon world – perhaps the world of flesh or whatever it might be – can stop what God wants to do in your life. So, what can we do to make sure that the sovereignty of Christ is advanced by our testimony?

1. Number one, be aware.

In II Corinthians 2:11, the apostle Paul says, one of three times, “I don't want us to be ignorant of . . .” something. One of the things that he says we are not to be ignorant of is,

. . . ***we are not ignorant of his [Satan's] schemes.***

The word translated “schemes” is “methodia,” from method. In other words, “I don't want us to be ignorant of Satan's methods.”

Be aware! Know what is going on. Satan is a roaring lion and he always comes in disguise, especially to those who are believers. He will disguise his schemes.

2. Secondly, be prepared.

Turn to Ephesians, chapter 6. We are given, in this classic passage of scripture, the armor that we, as believers, are to wear so that the cause of Christ might be advanced. Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 6:10-11.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

In other words, we are to stand firm against “the schemes,” the “methodia,” the methods, the snares, the wiles, the strategies of the devil.

It is not enough, ladies and gentlemen, to be aware that he is out there. It is not enough to be aware that there is temptation. You must go one step further and be prepared to take the attack. God gives us the armor.

3. Thirdly, be disciplined.

Look at Ephesians 6:18.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance . . .

It is not enough to simply be prepared. Paul says, “with all prayer and petition pray at all times”. Literally, he says to pray on every occasion “with all prayer,” or with all kinds of prayer – that is general. He then says, “and petition” – that is specific. We are to do this “in the Spirit”. And we are to “be on the alert with all perseverance”. In other words, we are to literally “wake up,” wake up to the advance; to the dart; to the oncoming enemy.

We need to be aware, we need to be prepared, but let us be disciplined in our prayer. Let us be disciplined in the relationship with *our* God, so that when the attack comes, we will be ready.

4. Fourthly, be encouraged.

James 4:7, says,

. . . Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

The word “resist” literally means, “to take a stand against”. “Resist” is in the present tense, which means to continuously take a stand against.

How do we take a stand against? By being aware, by being prepared, by being disciplined. When these things are in operation, we can be encouraged because by resisting continuously, every moment of every day, we can take a stand against. And we can be encouraged.

Now, look again briefly at Mark 5:16-17. Notice the reaction of the city that is very tragic.

Those who had seen it described to them [the city] how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. And they began to implore Him to leave their region.

In verse 17, the word “implore” means that they literally, begged over and over and over and over again for Jesus to leave. The people of this city began to beg Jesus, “Please, leave. Leave our city. Leave Gadara. Never come back.”

Why? I think Jesus had made that city very uncomfortable because He had invaded their possessions; He had invaded their investments; He had invaded their religion; He had exposed them. They begged, “Leave.”

How tragic this is because what they were saying, in effect, was, “Lord, it is time to choose and we would rather have the swine than the Savior. We would rather have sausage on our plates than the Son of God in our city. We would rather hear the grunt of hogs than see the goodness of God in Gadara.”

In my study this week, I came across a rather startling fact. If you were to go to Gadara today, to that seacoast, you would find the tombs; the graveyards, and you would find the bones of men who have been dead for centuries. You would also find a people, wild and savage, called troglodytes, who are dwellers in tombs. They are the descendants of the people who said to Jesus one day, “Leave our city.” We have no record in scripture that Jesus Christ ever came back.

If you are without Jesus Christ today, my friend, He has landed on your coast. He has come and He is available. It is a dangerous thing to tell Jesus Christ, “No.” It is an awful thing to have the Holy Spirit speaking to your personality; to your mind; to your heart, and to have the convicting work of God there, and say, “No.”

For those of us who believe, what a challenge this demon possessed man is to us – this “Madman of Gadara,” who has been liberated and is now an

evangelist; a missionary. The text goes on, in verse 20, to say,

And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

This man not only gave the gospel in that city, but he gave it in the Decapolis, or in the ten cities. This guy was on fire! You could not stop him! He started at home and his ministry expanded to ten Greek cities. What a story!

I wonder if we have started at home?

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