

Your Savior has Power Over Demons

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Well, this morning we are finally back at the Gospel of Luke. The problem is [that] for Mother's Day it's the text of the Gerasene demoniac. I was trying to think how [I] could work that in and I thought, "You know, the Gerasene demoniac had a mother." So, there you go. That's the connection. It stops there. If you have your Bibles you can turn to Luke 8:26–39. [This] will be our text for this morning.

The day after Christmas, December 26, 1973, the movie *The Exorcist* was released. The plot was [that a] Roman Catholic priest goes toe-to-toe with the devil, using all sorts of Roman Catholic superstitious gimmickry to try to cast the devil out of this young girl. Since that time, there has pretty much been a never-ending stream of books, movies, and TV programs that have portrayed demonic possession and control of different people. The problem is [that] all of these programs, movies, and books have unbiblical views of Satan. They never really portray God accurately. In fact, most of the time, God is absent, or He is unconcerned, or maybe not even powerful enough to do anything about what's going on. Sometimes God is portrayed as a weak counterpart, a kind of good counterpart to Satan, but Satan is so powerful—maybe even more powerful than God—that God can't even do anything to help out whoever is suffering. These things teach us that Satan is at least equal [in] power [to] God and if not equal [in] power, then [Satan has] greater power than God. Jesus is usually never mentioned. If

He appears, it's always in the form of some emaciated, scrawny person crucified on a cross that is used as a scare-the-demon-away thing, which never works.

But, like everything the world teaches us about God and Jesus, it's always wrong—about 180 degrees opposite of the truth. It's true that Jesus, while in the flesh, allowed Satan to tempt and oppose Him for our sakes, but when you read the account, it says, “The *Holy Spirit* led Jesus into the wilderness to [be] tempt[ed]” [see Matthew 4:1, emphasis added]. So, yes, Satan opposes the will of God, but only under God's complete control. The Father allowed Satan to tempt His Son so that He could be tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin and be our sympathetic high priest [see Hebrews 4:15]. But at no time was Satan ever in control of God, or more powerful than God, or was God ever worried about trying to get control of [Satan]. Even today, the Triune God allows evil men, and Satan, and demons to oppose His will, but *only* when He allows it. He has a good purpose for allowing them to rebel. And be assured, it will come to an abrupt and final end.

This morning, as we look at the Gospel of Luke and the story of the Gerasene demoniac, we come to [a] text [that] has many implications. That's why we took a six-week rabbit trail to address [many of] those [implications]. So, this morning we're going to do big-picture things from [Luke 8:26–39] and even though there are some things I didn't mention that are very tempting to look at in detail, I'm not going to do it. We're just going to take the big picture of what's happening in this passage.

Earlier in Luke's Gospel, Luke focused on Jesus' teaching. Now, Luke has switched and he is emphasizing Jesus' miraculous acts. And though the theme of Luke is Jesus the Son of Man, these acts show that Jesus is also the Son of God. Now, if you remember, when we were back in Luke, Jesus gave the parable[s] of the soils, [the lamp on a stand, the growing seed, and the mustard seed]. After that, Mark says [Jesus and the disciples] set out to cross the Sea of Galilee [see Mark 4:36]. They were heading northeast, going across the lake and a fierce gale came upon the lake, [the

disciples] were so frightened and they thought they were going to die. Jesus was asleep in the front of the boat, and they said, “Wake up! Don’t you even care that we’re perishing?” And Jesus woke up and He rebuked the wind, rebuked the waves, it became perfectly calm, and then, with terror [the disciples] asked among themselves, “Who is this guy that even the wind and the waves obey Him?” And so, Luke leaves it there, and then they land on the shore near a place called the Gerasenes. That is where our story takes place.

So, if you have your Bible, look at Luke 8:26 and follow along as I read down through [verse] 39:

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.” For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city

and out in the country. The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, “Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

All right. Well, that is a very interesting story, isn't it? The Gerasene demoniac. I have to admit that I was tempted to go on major rabbit trails. Even though we've covered all those things there are many fun things here. But, what we're going to do is focus on three realities in this text. Three realities that everyone needs to know, everyone needs to understand, and everyone needs to respond to if they are going to live their lives in a way that brings glory to God.

The first point is this: Every unbeliever is in bondage to Satan. Look at verse 26: “Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.” Now, immediately after the calming of the sea, we don't know if [Jesus and the disciples] were blown off-course by the providence of God or what, but they show up at this place [in the] northeast corner [of the Sea of Galilee]. And that was the country of the Gerasenes, or as Matthew has it, the Gadarenes [see Matthew 8:28]. The reason for this apparent discrepancy is [that] the largest city of that area was Gadara, [and] the capital city was Gerasa. So it was common to call people in that region either the Gadarenes or the Gerasenes after one of those two cities.

Look at verse 27: “And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons.” The Greek literally reads, “He was met by a man who had demons.” Now, get this in your mind. They’ve been sailing, they’ve had the storm, it got calm, they finally got to the shore, they’re pulling the boat up, they’re getting out, and there’s this demon-possessed guy who, apparently, makes it his hobby to scare the [day]lights out of people. And this demon-possessed man goes, “Bwa ha ha! Some fisherman! Let’s go scare them!” So he runs down to scare Jesus and the disciples. But, something happens which we’re going to get to in a minute. (We’re going to do a little skipping around.) By the way, Matthew records two men—he says two men were demon-possessed [see Matthew 8:28]. But apparently one was more prominent. I don’t know what the details were, but Luke only mentions one, so we’re just going to focus on [that] one [man].

Look at the middle of verse 27. [Luke] says the man “had not put on any clothing for a long time.” Now we begin to get a picture of this man. Not only did he have demons, not only did he meet [the disciples and Jesus at the shore], but he hadn’t put on any clothing for a long time. He had been naked for a long time. No clothing. He was like the demonic streaker. And not only that, look at the end of verse 27: “and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.” [The account] said he was a man from the town or from the city, but he was living among the tombs, which means everybody in the town knew him. But he had made up his abode among the dead, which is usually outside the town, on the outskirts of the town. How demons got into this man the text does not say, but what is clear is [that] he was immodest, and he was living in the tombs, the place of the dead—a place that was considered unclean. So the demons, these unclean spirits, drove him to an unclean place to live.

Skip down to the middle of verse 29—we’ll get back to verse 28 in a bit. Verse 29: “For it,” that is, the demon or demons, “had seized him many times.” What Luke is describing here are violent seizures. We have a couple

of examples of this. If you look over at Luke 9:38, there is an instance of some similar behavior. Luke 9:38[-39]:

And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, "Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves.

Now, if you were to describe this behavior to a medical doctor who didn't believe in demon possession or anything, he would say this young man is having what? Seizures—grand mal seizures. It's interesting, isn't it, that a lot of times when demons would possess people they would cause things that [were] thought [to be] medical problems. Turn over to Matthew 17, [where] we see a little bit more description. Matthew 17:15, there is a crowd there, and verse 15 [says]: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water"—self-destructive behavior.

"I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him." And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. [17:16–18]

Notice that the parents thought that he had some sort of mental disorder, but he was actually possessed by a demon. And so, Jesus sees [the son], casts out the demon, and he is made well.

Well, in the case of the Gerasene demoniac you have something similar. You have a man with no clothes on, he is unclean, he is living among the dead, and he's having seizures. And, not only that, look at the middle of

[Luke 8:29]: “And he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds.” Now, what’s going on here? Well, obviously, when someone is demon-possessed, the demons can give [that person] supernatural strength. This man was a maniac. He was a deranged, naked, screaming—as we shall see—maniac and they tried to chain him up like a dog. But he kept breaking his chains. Nothing could bind him. Mark 5:4 says, “No one was strong enough to subdue him.” Mark 5:5 gives a little bit more description. Just see if you’d like this guy as a next-door neighbor: “Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones.” You think that dog next door is bad? How would you like this guy? You’re trying to sleep at night and all you hear is this guy in the graveyard, “Aaaaaaah! Aaaaaaah!” screaming, yelling. You’re on your way to synagogue and here he comes, naked, he’s bleeding—he has gashed himself with stones. The guy is a mess! If there ever was a person who was possessed, this is the guy to a maximum degree. Everyone knew about this destructive maniac guy. He’d be hard to miss.

At the end of verse 29 after the demon-possessed man would break his bonds, Luke tells us, he would be driven by the demons into the desert. So, the demons would sometimes isolate him from anybody who might have any mercy or compassion on him. He was in a *pitiful* situation. The demons were totally in control of him from within. He was naked, he was screaming, he was gashing himself with stones, he was living among the tombs, [he was] perpetually unclean. Sometimes he’d be driven away into the desert, and it’s obvious from this instance [with Jesus and the disciples] that he would go around scaring people.

Look at verse 30: “And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him.” Legion? Do you know how many are in a legion? Four to six thousand. Legion? Now, you may think, “This might be hyperbole.” Well, as we’re going to look at in just a second, Mark tells us that when the demons are cast out of this guy into the swine, there are 2,000 swine [see Mark 5:13]. So even if it was only a third as [many] as a legion, that’s [still] a lot of demons. It makes you want to

ask, “How’d they all get in there?” Obviously demons have different spatial parameters—that’s why there’s discussion about how many angels can fit on the head of a pin. How many can you get on there? How many demons can you stuff into one person?

Do you remember when Jesus was in the garden [and] was about to be arrested, Peter took out his sword, he cut off Malchus’ ear and Jesus had to heal it? Jesus said to [Peter] right after that, in Matthew 26:53, “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” Do the math. That’s a lot of angels. There are a lot of demons and there are a lot of angels. And this one calls himself “Legion”—6,000, or 4,000 if you want to use the smallest number. An entire legion of demons took control of this man from within so that he was living in a way that was just antithetical to what God would want him to do—[he was] immodest, self-destructive, perpetually unclean, scaring people, screaming, out of control.

And what do we see here? What does God want us to learn from this man? I think it’s this: this man was the worst-case scenario of a demon-possessed person. That’s what we want to learn here. This story appears in Luke because this guy is the worst-case scenario of anybody who could be demon-possessed. He wasn’t like Mary [Magdalene] who was possessed by seven demons [see Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2]—this guy had a whole legion.

Now, you may be sitting out there thinking, “Well, Jack, this is a very interesting story and all, but you know, I’ve never encountered any naked people, screaming, living in tombs, gashing themselves with stones. I’m not demon-possessed, so what does this have to do with me?” It has *everything* to do with you. Granted, this guy is the worst-case scenario, but every unbeliever—you before you came to Christ or maybe you right now who don’t know Christ—is in bondage to Satan like this man.

You may think, “How could that be? I seem to be in control.” Turn to John 8. [We’re going to] look at a few texts here. [In] John 8 Jesus is talking to the unbelieving religious leaders, and He slowly begins to reveal to them who is really in control of their lives. He says in verse 23: “And He was

saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." Look down at verse 38: "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." Look at verse 41: "'You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.'"

What's interesting here is [that] Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders and He keeps making these radical contrasts: "I am from above; you are from below. I have heard and am doing the things of My Father; you are doing the things of your father." And they're thinking, "This guy is accusing our mothers of being prostitutes and He's saying we're illegitimate children! That maybe we're not Jews." They have no clue what He's talking about. So He tells them flat out. Look at John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning," implying that they were trying to murder Him, "and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies." Bingo. That is who you are and that is why you do what you do—because you have a father, the devil, and you do the desires of your father the devil because he is the one who controls your life.

Do you remember when Jesus interprets the parable of the tares and the wheat? He says [that] the tares are what? The "sons of the evil one" [Matthew 13:38]. Turn over to Ephesians 2, a familiar text. Here, Paul is going to remind the Ephesians of where they came from—what they were before coming to Christ. And he says this [in] Ephesians 2:1–2:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Did you see that? He says, "All of you, universally, before coming to Christ, were enslaved to Satan, walking according to his will. He was work-

ing in your lives to accomplish his will, that is, defiance against God. All of you were there.”

In 2 Timothy 2:26, Paul is speaking to Timothy about speaking to unbelievers who are in opposition to the gospel, trying to share the gospel with those who hate God and oppose God, and he says, “You know, you need to do this with patience.” Why? [So that] “they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.” What does that tell you? It tells you that all unbelievers are held captive by Satan—in bondage to Satan—to do Satan’s will.

Do you remember what John says in 1 John 3:8? He says, “The one who practices sin is of the devil.” Then in verse 10 he says, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” Again, and again, and again we see in the Scriptures that those who don’t know Christ are of “their father the devil” and that is why they do the deeds of their father the devil because they are “held captive by him to do his will” [2 Timothy 2:26]. He is working in the “sons of disobedience” [Ephesians 2:2].

So, you may not be the naked, raving, maniacal, gashing person, but if you don’t know Christ, you are at this time held captive by Satan to do his will. You may be thinking, “Well, hey, I’m in control of myself.” No, you’re deceived, because if you knew the truth, you would worship and follow God. It’s why Paul says in Romans 6:20, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.” That means you *never* did what was right. You were *always* opposing God because even when you did “a good deed,” it was never for the glory of God and the honor of Christ and so it didn’t count. It was a wicked deed that appeared to the world to be good, but it was wicked. It’s why Paul says in Titus 3:3, “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.” “*Enslaved*,” he says, “to various lusts and pleasures.” You talk to

people who say, “I just can’t stop. I can’t say ‘no.’ I am enslaved to this sin.” It’s true. If you’re an unbeliever, it’s true—you can’t say “no.”

Now, there are people who are unbelievers who get all worked up and say, “Hey, I’m stopping this,” and then they switch to another [sin]. They just trade one sin for another. Then often times fall back into both. So, all unbelievers may not be demon-possessed, like [the Gerasene demoniac], but all of them are “held captive by [Satan] to do his will.” All of them are deceived, and all of them are in bondage and need to be freed. Male, female, old, young—it doesn’t matter. [If] you don’t know Christ, you’re in bondage, just like [the demoniac]. That is why Jesus said to Nicodemus—the Pharisee who came to him by night, [saying,] “We know you’re a teacher from God”—right off the bat, “Nicodemus, listen. You need to be born again.”

“What do you mean born again? How can I enter a second time into my mother’s womb?” [see John 3:4].

“No. No. You must be born again or you cannot enter the kingdom of God.” What is Jesus saying? “You are of your father the devil” and you need to have rebirth—spiritual rebirth—so you can become a child of God. If that doesn’t happen to you by God’s Spirit, you *cannot* enter the kingdom of heaven. There are people—I’m sure there are some here this morning—who say to themselves, “You know, I’ve thought about becoming a Christian,” or “I *want* to become a Christian, but I just can’t believe that God would forgive somebody as sinful and wretched as me. I mean, I may look good on the outside, but you don’t know me. You don’t know how sinful I am. You don’t know what I’ve done. You don’t know the depths of my depravity. God could never ever forgive somebody as wicked as me.” I just want you to know: That is a lie. That is a full-blown lie.

There’s only one kind of person that Jesus saves and it’s people like that. God’s message is that Christ came to heal the sick, not those who are well [see Mark 2:17]. He came to heal the poor, and the outcast, and those who are in bondage to sin and Satan. Christ died for His enemy [see Romans 5:10]. He came to justify the ungodly. It is *only* wicked people who

get saved. If you're saved, it's because you're wicked. If all of the people here who are righteous could get up and leave, no one would leave. Jesus *only* saves people who are desperate, who have sinned a great deal, who are totally depraved. But Satan will say, "Oh, but you are way worse. And I'm not letting go of you."

And some people even think, "You know, I don't think Satan will let go of me. He has a hold of me and he's not going to give me up for adoption." Well, you know what? He just doesn't have a say in it. And don't think he does. Look at the text before us and as we work down through here, look at what the Word of God teaches us. Doesn't this text say that the Gerasene demoniac was possessed [by] demons in verse 27? Yeah. Doesn't our text tell us that the man was forced by Satan to be immodest and to roam around naked? Sure. Does not verse 27 say he was forced to live in the tombs? Yes. And, in verse 29, [that] the man was unable to be bound in his rebellion? Yes. And that he was driven into the desert? And doesn't our text tell us in verse 30 that several thousand demons had entered into this man and totally taken control of him from within? Yes.

Why did God allow this? This guy was swamped with demons, controlled [by] demons. You couldn't be any more demon infested than this guy. But you know why he appears here? Second point: Jesus can free you from bondage. He alone can do it. Let this text encourage you.

We skipped verse 28. Look at it now. Luke describes the horrible fate of this demon-possessed man to let us know that this man is the worst-case scenario demon-possessed man. This man approaches Jesus—runs down [to the shore]. I'm sure there was [an] incredible look on the naked man's face. He's thinking, "Oh, there are some fishermen. I'm going to go scare them. Ha!" He runs down there, Jesus turns around, and what happens? Verse 28: "Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him." Now, does that sound like Satan is on equal par with Jesus? Does that sound to you like there is [a] battle that's going on and that Satan is pretty much just as powerful as God or maybe more powerful? That Jesus has no ability to help somebody who is in bondage? Is that what it seems like? This man is on

the ground. He is *groveling* before Jesus. Just at the sight of Jesus. [Jesus] hasn't even said anything yet. *That* is biblical. There is no contest here. There is no equal power here. There are thousands of demons in this man against one Jesus and they're on the ground. The guy is on the ground because he is standing before God Almighty incarnate.

Look in the middle of verse 28. Luke says the man cried out after he did this face plant and said [in] verse 28 [the demoniac] cries out in a loud voice—literally in the Greek it says he's screaming—“What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.” That's what the guy said. It's in the imperfect tense, which means this: the guy kept saying it over and over. “Please, please, please, I beg You! Don't torment me! Don't! Don't!” Does that sound like Jesus isn't in control? That there is some sort of equal balance of power? This, people, is biblical. God created Satan and all the demons. They exist at this present time because He upholds them by the “word of His power” [Hebrews 1:3]. Any energy they have, any freedoms they have, any abilities they have, they have because God Almighty sustains them every moment—just like he sustains us, the universe, and all it contains. God is sovereign. And when you read a book or see a TV show and you see the exact opposite just scoff. It's worth scoffing at. There is an infinite gulf between God's [power] and Satan's power.

Turn back to Luke 4. Do you remember when we were back here, years ago? Verse 33—same thing, Jesus is cruising into the synagogue, and it just so happens the demon-possessed man isn't out in the desert. This one here is infiltrating. Verse 33: “In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,” same thing, “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” [4:34]. They were *terrified*. Terrified at the *sight* of Jesus. Just seeing Him terrified them. Satan cannot stop *anyone* from being saved. Ever. And never has. God can save anyone He desires to save, and Satan is not standing to oppose God. [Does] God say, “I chose you before the

foundation of the world [see Ephesians 1:4], and now you're lost forever"? No. Jesus, with a word, like Martin Luther said, "One little word shall fell him" [from "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"]. And that is exactly true.

Look at Luke 8:29, where Luke informs us why these demons were so terrified. We read, "For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man." See, what Luke doesn't explain, [but] which all the demons knew, is this. Why were they so scared? Well, they knew Jesus was God Almighty in human flesh. That's scary enough. But, this is why they were really scared: because back in the days of Noah, there were certain demons who acted very wickedly, left their proper domain, and committed great acts of sin. They are spoken of in two places in the New Testament.

One is 2 Peter 2:4, where, speaking of the judgment of false teachers and why it's certain, Peter mentions these demons: "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment." The "pits of darkness" there is Tartarus. Jude 6, in a parallel text, says almost the same thing: "And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day." These demons knew this—that with a word, Jesus could cast them into this holding, hellish tank of a dungeon called Tartarus, [which] is borrowed from Greek mythology. [It is in] this place [that] demons are kept in torment, isolated, confined. They can't roam around, they can't tempt anybody, they can't do anything but wait until the "judgment of the great day" when they will go from torment to judgment and worse torment in the lake of fire. That is why these demons, they believe in hell. That should teach us something. Demons believe in hell, and they're scared—*really* scared.

[In] Luke 8:31 notice that [the demons] were imploring [Jesus] not to command them to go away in the Abyss. They didn't want to go to this pit of darkness to be reserved for "judgment of the great day." They didn't want to go there. Now, there is a huge irony here, isn't there? What have these demons done? Well, ever since creation they've rebelled against God. What

have they done [to] this man, [the demoniac]? Tormented him, shamed him, caused him to be treated like an animal, [forced him into] self-destructive behavior [and] isolation. All they've ever done is evil, and now they're asking what from Jesus? Mercy. Mercy! Really? You would think Jesus would say, "Into the pit, you fiends!" But what does He do? He gives them mercy! He grants them *mercy*. It says they kept on imploring Him—that is that imperfect tense. They begged, beseeched, requested not to go into the Abyss.

Look at verse 32: "Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons were imploring Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission." Mark 5:13 tells us there were about 2,000 pigs. That is a big herd of pigs. And it makes you wonder, just as a side note here, what were these Jews doing raising pigs? Is this contraband bacon and pork chops? Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 say that [Jews] were not allowed to eat swine. So why were these people raising swine? They were considered unclean animals and now here's a herd of 2,000 of them. Which, because they're herdsman, you know there's a market for them. Or maybe they're raising them to see how many they can get in a herd?

Look at verse 33. [The demons] implore Jesus to allow them to enter into the swine, which is a good place for them—unclean spirits go into unclean animals. He gave them permission, and in verse 33: "The demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned." Think about this. This is strange. Can you imagine being one of the herdsman? [They] just happened to be there. (It's neat how the providence of God works.) [They] just happened to be there in the vicinity with [their] herd of 2,000-plus pigs, and [they're] herding [their] pigs along so they can forage along the lake. All of a sudden [they] see these guys getting out [of a boat] and [they] see the naked maniac. And [they] go, "Oh, no." Then [they] see the maniac running toward the fishermen, and one herdsman says to the other, "This is going to be fun." And all of a sudden, they see the maniac on his face in front of Jesus. They can hear what's going on because they can hear the demonic

man saying, “Have you come here to torment [me]? I know who you are!” I mean, [the demons are] giving testimony to Jesus and the herdsmen are watching all of this. And then, [the demons say to] Jesus, “Send us into the swine.”

Now, you can imagine what the herdsmen are doing at this point. “Hey! Hey! Hey! Don’t [send] them into *my* pigs!” They’re standing there, they’re watching all of this, “We don’t want demons in our pigs.” (Someone said this is the first case of deviled ham.) They’re probably terrified of the whole exchange. And then Jesus says, “OK.” And immediately, the demons all leave the man and these pigs. . . . Now, I don’t know if you’ve ever raised pigs. I’ve raised pigs, and I’m telling you just one pig can make a lot of noise. When you start making even one pig do what it doesn’t want to do, it makes some serious squealing noises. Now, you multiply that times 2,000—it just must have been a nightmare for the herders. All of a sudden all of the pigs just go psychotic simultaneously. They all begin squealing and snorting, [then] they all just rush down in a big mass and do what is totally contrary to their nature: they jump in the water and drown themselves. Would that be scary? These guys must have just been freaked out!

Now, why would the demons ask this? Well, they would ask this because there are two options: either go into the Abyss, or be set free. So they asked to go into the pigs so that then they could be free to roam around and torment us today. But there is another great irony here. The demons have been tormenting this man and this town he lived in through this man, they ask for mercy, and Jesus grants them mercy. And the whole herd perishes. Look at verse 34: “When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country.” They went directly to the nearest city and said, “You won’t believe what happened! We were there!” And they told the whole situation. Then, as they went back, they ran out in the countryside and said, “Joe! Listen, this is what happened.” And they caused this whole crowd to leave the city and the whole crowd is gravitating toward the site of this incident. Look at verse 35:

The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.

Why? Well, because the herdsmen had already gone out, they had already rushed out into the town and the countryside, told everybody what had happened, and people were [asking], “The maniac? The naked maniac? That guy?”

“Yeah! He was full of demons! He called Jesus ‘Son of the Most High God’! He asked them if the demons could be cast into our pigs and He said ‘OK.’ And then our pigs drowned themselves in the lake.”

And you know what the people are saying: “I’ve got to see this!” So they go out and they see the guy clothed in his right mind and they became frightened. They’re scared. Why? What do they see there? They see the disciples, Jesus, and this man now clothed in his right mind. In the lake are all these carcasses of pigs floating around. Some have washed up on the shore—the flies are starting to have a feast on them. How could you deny it? It was obvious what happened. It was irrefutable. I mean, 2,000 pigs just don’t run into a lake and kill themselves. And [the people] became frightened. Look at verse 36: “Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.” So, in other words, this whole crowd gets there and the herdsmen then become the narrators. “OK. Let me tell you what happened. We were here, our herd was here, we saw the guy run down there, we saw Jesus, He did this, they cried out and said this, Jesus asked them this, [they] said this, Jesus said that, they said this, then Jesus said, ‘OK,’ then they went into our pigs. Our pigs ran down—look it! They’re still in the lake!”

And everybody’s looking, “Wow! Wow!” The scene must have been incredible.

And all the while, Jesus and His disciples are [saying], “Yeah, that’s what happened.”

And notice how [the people] responded in verse 37—[it's] very interesting. "And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped," grabbed, choked, "with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned." Now, this is interesting, too, and it's interesting because of this: That when you look in the Bible—this happens with believers and unbelievers, but more with unbelievers—whenever God does some sort of great, miraculous thing, how do unbelievers respond? With fear. Why? Why? This is why: Because when God breaks through the normal happenings of things, [and] people see that, they get scared because of judgment. Because men live their lives denying God: "Oh, God doesn't exist," or, "If He does exist, I'm a good person. He's not involved in my life. I've never seen a miracle so God can't exist."

God wants us to believe in Him by faith, and so people go through their lives rebelling against God, doing their own things, sinning, whatever it is. And all of a sudden, God breaks through, does some miracle, which is beyond the natural, which is irrefutable, which is obvious to all, they see it and the first thought is: "God exists." The second thought is: "God is really powerful." And the third thought is: "I'm not living for Him and so I'm going to be judged." And they get scared.

It even happens with believers. Do you remember when Jesus was in the boat on the Sea of Galilee [and He tells the fishermen to go out into deep water and cast their nets and they catch so many fish the nets start to break]? And Peter says what? "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" [see Luke 5:8]. That's all he could think of. When he saw the great display of power, [his response was], "Ah! I deserve to be judged!" It's a normal response. So these people, when they hear everything, they see all the evidence, they immediately realize, "This guy is either a prophet of God or, if what the demons said at the top of their voice—'Son of the Most High God'—is true, we've got the Son of God here. We haven't been living for Him, we're actually raising *pigs*! And we deserve to be judged." They're terrified. They're terrified.

But don't miss the big lesson of the entire story here. The big lesson is: This guy is the worst-case scenario, bondage to Satan person and was freed with a word. *Freed with a word*. Christ is far more powerful than Satan and even an entire army of demons. All of the forces of hell cannot stop Christ from saving a single person. *Ever*. Do not believe that lie. If Jesus says, "Let go," one "little word shall fell him." [Satan and demons] only have power to do what God grants them permission to do.

Turn over to Luke 22. This is in the upper room, and even in the upper room the disciples are still trying to find out who is going to be greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus has talked to them about this before, but they just kind of want to make sure who's going to be the boss up there. So, He's finishing up addressing this issue of being the greatest, saying, "If you want to be great, you need to be a servant." But look at verses 31–32 of Luke 22: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Did you see that? Jesus tells Peter, "Peter, Satan is demanding permission to sift you like wheat," which tells us that demons and Satan can never do *anything* unless they have what? Permission. We see this same thing in Job as the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord—give an account—and Satan is among them and he has to give an account: "Where have you been?"

"I've been roaming around in the earth" [see Job 1:7, 2:2]. OK. He has to give an account. Satan had to ask permission. And what's interesting is Jesus [in Luke 22:31–32] granted it. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well, it's implied in the text: "and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Do you remember what Peter said right before this? "Lord, I will never deny you. Though *all* may fall away, *I* will never deny you" [see Matthew 26:33, emphasis added].

And Satan says, "Please, *please* let me have him. Please!"

And Jesus says, "All right." And you know? Peter needed to be humbled, and so he denied Christ three times. But then, he repented of his sins,

he turned, and what happened? He strengthened his brothers, right? Yeah, that's exactly how it happened. The point, though, is [that] demons and Satan aren't free agents to roam about and do what they want. They only do what God gives them permission to do. And when God gives them permission to do something it is for a purpose. Satan and demons are accountable to God, who rules over them.

The third and final [point is:] Jesus frees you from slavery to Satan unto obedience to God. Look at Luke 8:38: "But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him," that is, Jesus, "that he might accompany Him." Now, is this weird? No. People, when they come to Christ, want to do what? Follow Christ. That is what being a Christian is. Do you remember what Jesus said in John 10:27? "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they," what? "follow Me." That is what a Christian is. Jesus gives that as a definition of Christian: one who follows Him. Not one who professes Him, one who says he's a Christian, but one who *follows* Him. Remember in the house built upon the rock and the sand? The Christian is defined as "he who hears these words of mine and," what? "acts upon them" [see Matthew 7:24, 26, etc.].

Look at the end of Luke 8:38: "But He sent him away, saying, 'Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." Mark 5:20 says, "And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis. . . and everyone was amazed." What is the "Decapolis"? [It] just means ten cities. "Polis" is "cities" and "deca" is "ten." Ten cities. During Alexander the Great's reign there were ten cities in that area and they were called the "Decapolis." Now, do you see what's neat about here? The people were scared of Jesus. They could tell that the miracle happened, it was irrefutable. There were the pigs, there was the man clothed in his right mind that they all knew as the screaming maniac guy. And they all knew the truth, but they were so terrified of Jesus that they said, "Leave us."

And so Jesus says, “OK.” But what does he leave behind? An evangelist. He has mercy on him. And this man then goes to his hometown first, where all the people know him; all the people have had to put up with his screaming, and yelling, and scare tactics, and whatever; and he becomes a testimony of Jesus. And what’s interesting is, notice what the text says, “Go tell them what great things *God* has done for you.” And so he goes and tells them what great things *Jesus*, the Son of God, did for him.

And notice in verse 39, Jesus says, “Return to your house and describe” these things. In other words, does He say, “I want you to go take an evangelism class. I want you to memorize this series of Old Testament scriptures”? What does He tell him to do? He says, “All I want you to do is go around and say, ‘This is what happened to me, and this is who did it, and I’m giving Him the glory, and I’m living for Him.’” You know, sometimes we can be so paralyzed [when] sharing the gospel because we don’t have all the verses memorized or we don’t know what to say. Tell people what great things God has done for you. That is good enough. “This is what Jesus has done for me.” Testify about what God has done for you—those “great things.”

Now, if you’re out there and you’re thinking, “Well, He hasn’t done any great things.” Well, then, you need Jesus! If God has not done any great things in your life, you aren’t a believer! Because as soon as He comes into your life, you *change*. You think about God all the time. You think about His Word all the time. You’re comparing things with the Scriptures all the time. You like reading the Bible, you like the people of God, you like serving God, you like praying, you like doing these things. Why? Because that’s what happens when you become a Christian. And if you’re out there thinking, “Well, now, these things just aren’t that big a deal to me, [but] I have gone to church all my life,” you need to become saved. You’re in bondage. And there’s only one person who *can* save you. And that person is Christ. Only He can set you free. And He will do it *right now*. If you’re willing to turn from your sin and to receive Christ as your Savior, if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, He will save you. He says so right in His

Word, which “cannot be broken” [John 10:35]. He gave to all those who believe in Him the free gift of eternal life [see Romans 3:22, 6:23]. He’s ready. The question is: Are you?

And if you’re out there saying, “Well, Jack, listen. God has done great things for me and I know I’m saved.” So, are you telling people in your hometown about the great things God has done for you? There’s application here for believers and unbelievers. If you’re an unbeliever, Jesus can free you from Satan’s bondage and change you. If you’re a believer, go tell other people about the great things God has done for you. Unshackle your tongue and just *tell* people.

Just recently a person came to me and he was all distressed, and I just told him about how I came to the Lord. [I] got out one of the little Dave Hintz micro-pamphlets, showed him it, and the guy said, “I want this.”

“You mean you want to give your life to Christ and follow Christ?”

“Yes!”

“OK. Done.” That’s it. It’s a commitment of the heart. When God wants somebody saved, He saves him. And you know the salvation is genuine because God does great things for him. Christians are those who, having had great things done for them, go around and tell people about the great things God does for them, and then people [ask], “Well, how did this happen?” You tell them and then they become saved and tell other people. And that’s how Christianity perpetuates itself.

So, this text is here in Luke to show us [that] it doesn’t matter how bad of an unbeliever you are—how much you’ve sinned, how much in bondage to Satan and his ways you are—God’s “grace is sufficient for you” [2 Corinthians 12:9]. Christ will still save you; He will still forgive you. And once you come to know Him, go out and do His will. Tell the people in your hometown the great things God has done for you.

One of the things I like to do sometimes is I like to read *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts*. Isaac Watts was a Puritan. Some people see him as kind of the enemy of the Bible, but he was the first guy who got this idea in his head: let’s take the psalms of the Bible and make hymns out of them so

that they rhyme. The Bible is written in Hebrew and if you speak English, when [the Hebrew is translated into English], the cadence is kind of lost. And so, he thought, “Well, let’s just put [the psalms in English].” So, you can buy *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts* where every psalm is broken down. And this is what he wrote for Psalm 13. This could be entitled “The Gerasene Demoniac’s Hymn.” He wrote:

How long wilt thou conceal thy face?
My God, how long delay?
When shall I feel those heav’nly rays
That chase my fears away?

How long shall my poor lab’ring soul
Wrestle and toil in vain?
Thy word can all my foes control,
And ease my raging pain.

See how the prince of darkness tries
All his malicious arts.
He spreads a mist around my eyes,
And throws his fiery darts.

Be thou my sun, and thou my shield,
My soul in safety keep;
Make haste, before mine eyes are sealed
In death’s eternal sleep.

How would the tempter boast aloud
If I become his prey!
Behold, the sons of hell grow proud
At thy so long delay.

But they shall fly at thy rebuke,
And Satan hide his head;
He knows the terrors of thy look,
And hears thy voice with dread.

Thou wilt display that sovereign grace,
Where all my hopes have hung;
I shall employ my lips in praise,
And victory shall be sung¹

That can be everybody's song, who comes to know Christ, because it's true of everyone who knows Christ. You may think, "Oh, I've been a long time in this rebellion." Well, maybe it's time to end it right now. Jesus will save you. He'll do it right now. You don't have to raise your hand, you don't have to come forward. You have to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and He will make you new. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this text. What a great testimony it is and a reminder that we serve an all-powerful God, that Satan is a defeated foe, and though he is allowed for a time to roam about, You have a purpose for this that men may choose You. That they may receive You and Your Son, who lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day, conquering death so that all who desire to receive Him as their Savior will have the free gift of eternal life granted to them. [They] will be forgiven and will escape judgment forevermore. Father, we thank You for that. We thank You for the story of the demoniac that teaches us that You are a great Savior though we are great sinners and that You desire to save us and put us into service to do Your will. Help us all who know You to leave here telling others what great things You have done for us. And for those who don't know You, Father, I pray right now they would

¹The entire text of *The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts* can be found at:
<http://www.threemacs.org/music/hymns/psalmshymns-IsaacWatts.pdf>

come to repentance and faith, cry out to You, [and] that You would change them and save them forevermore. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.