

Casting Out Unclean Spirits



David Wilkerson July 11, 2016

There are people today battling things in their lives that are so deep and ferocious they can't be explained. Such things can only be comprehended as unclean spirits. The Bible addresses this supernatural phenomenon and God's response to it in Mark 4-5.

Jesus was teaching a great multitude by the seashore. The crowds were so large and pressing that the Lord had to get into a boat and speak to them from the water. He taught the people patiently, illustrating his truths with many parables. Then toward evening a strange urgency came over him. It literally stopped Jesus in his tracks. He quickly ended his discourse and dismissed the crowd.

This urgent sense in the Lord was so pressing, he didn't even stop to meet with his family, who had journeyed to see him. "Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press [of the crowds]" (Luke 8:19). Jesus sensed he had no time to spare. He pointed across the sea and told his disciples it was time to move out.

Somehow our Lord had heard a wailing from across the sea. It was the tormented cry of a person hurting and in need of great help. The cry Jesus heard was from a demoniac, a man possessed by an unclean spirit. This tormented soul lived in the city graveyard, among the many stone sepulchers that had been carved in the nearby hillside. The man actually made his home in one of those hewn tombs. As he cried out day and night, his awful wails filled the air at all hours.

No one had been able to help this man in his awful condition—no physician, expert or religious leader. He was literally out of control, running around naked, and "neither could any man tame him" (Mark 5:4). He lived in torment daily, "cutting himself with stones" (5:5) and scarring his body. As Jesus taught the religious multitudes on the other side of the sea, he picked up the cry of this desperate, devil-driven man—and he stopped everything to go see him.

Every week we sit next to many crying, tormented people in church.

You may have several such tormented people in your congregation. These could be men or women, teenagers or the elderly, choir members, anyone. Somehow an unclean spirit has taken control of their lives and won't let go.

When I use the phrase "unclean spirit," I mean a spirit that is immoral or lewd, chaining someone to a lust. People who are bound by such spirits are no longer in control of their lives. A powerful habit has taken over. They can't pass by a bar or get on the Internet without being drawn into sin. They're driven, addicted, possessed by an unclean lust, and its hold on them grows stronger every day. Inside they cry out in torment like the Gadarene demoniac, "I'm hooked. My life is totally out of control. Satan has me bound."

If this describes you, then you know it's something far more painful and agonizing than living in a physical tomb. Deep in your soul, you've become a slave to uncleanness. You're driven daily to do things you hate. And now you're haunted by an inner voice that cries out, "You're destroying your body, the temple of God. And the Bible says, 'Whoever destroys the temple, God will destroy him.'" No matter what you do to get free, nothing helps.

I've seen this happen with many of the addicts our ministry has taken in. One tormented young man so hated his habit, he tried to burn away the needle tracks from his arm, using a white-hot pan. Another desperate addict chained himself to a steam radiator to keep himself from going back to his habit. Another young man filled a syringe with his own blood and sprayed a literal cry of "Help" on his bedroom ceiling.

Everybody had given up on this tormented Gadarene man. Luke writes that he'd been in his condition a "long time" (Luke 8:27). He was inhabited by so many demons that he answered to the name Legion. And he was so wild he had to be chained down. Yet he was so utterly possessed he broke every iron fetter (see 8:29).

As I read of this man's chains, I think of what happens to people in self-help programs today. Whenever an addict enters a clinic, agency or hospital, the aim is to try to isolate or chain down that person's addiction. Such programs seek to clean people up from the outside to separate them from their habit. But every program that suggests an enslaved person can be freed through self-will is going to fail. It can't possibly work. Ask any habit-bound person who's been through those programs.

Jesus proves this. He states, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

I think this passage has nothing to do with Christians. If the Holy Ghost has performed a work in someone's heart, the devil can no longer call that person his home. Rather, I see in Jesus' words how people become possessed by even "more wicked" spirits. Simply put, the sweeping and refurbishing of their house wasn't done by God. That's the only reason an unclean spirit could say, "I'm going back to my dwelling." Such people have gotten a temporary fix through self-help. But until Jesus drives out the unclean spirit, the house is under its control.

Jesus doesn't work on the old man. When we're born again, we become a whole new creation. So when the Holy Spirit moves in he pays off the mortgage on the land and tears down the old structure. The house he builds is so new it's unrecognizable to the unclean spirit that once ruled it. Now a sign is up outside: "Under new maintenance. This is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

Jesus was going to answer the man's cry and no demon could stop him.

Scripture says when "they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes...he went forth to land" (Luke 8:26-27). I picture Jesus getting out of the boat, walking onto land, and looking, searching. There in the distance he sees the wild, demon-driven man. Now I picture tears in Jesus' eyes and I see his face growing red-hot with anger at Satan's tormenting work. We know Christ didn't judge this man. He didn't lecture him or ask, "What awful sin did you commit to fall into such a wicked condition?" Instead, he watched as the man fell before him, desperately reaching out for deliverance.

Jesus immediately commanded the unclean spirits to depart from him. At that point, the demons took control of the man's tongue and cried, "What have we to do with you, Jesus?" Matthew's account adds, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29). They were saying, "We know we're going to be judged someday. But why are you here now, Jesus? This isn't the appointed time." The demons then tried to make a deal suggesting, "Let us depart into that herd of swine over there." But Jesus would never bargain with the devil. He knew exactly what those demons had in mind. They wanted a temporary home in the pigs so when the swine were led to slaughter the spirits could leap into other people.

Jesus did send those demons into the herd of swine. But he remained in total control of the whole scene. He immediately caused the pigs to race over a cliff and into the sea. What an image we're given: a herd of unclean, forbidden animals carrying a legion of unclean spirits into an abyss of torment. Later when the townspeople came to see what had happened, they "found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35).

This true story shows us God's desire to set all slaves free.

I want to speak directly to those who've been driven to bondage by an unclean spirit. How often have you turned to a few minutes of empty pleasure knowing it will leave you sick and despairing? These aren't just habits. They're

the work of unclean spirits that have taken dominion over your life. It doesn't matter if you're a well-educated, successful professional who thinks you can quit at any time. You have to face the truth: You've lost control. And unless the unclean spirits are driven out, you'll end up as possessed as the Gadarene man.

The Bible says God has given us all power and authority over the enemy to cast out demons and unclean spirits. Yet Jesus said "these kind" go only when we fast and pray. I want you to know I have fasted and prayed over this message. And if you'll simply do as the Gadarene man did—fall on your knees before Jesus, trust in him, and ask him to deliver you—every unclean spirit will flee. You'll be set free and restored to your right mind.

Now let me address certain Christians who've fallen back into an old habit. You were tempted, and now you're totally caught up in a former bondage. You may be convinced God has given you over to a reprobate mind. You think your heart has grown too hard, too stubborn, too rebellious to ever be set free again.

On several occasions, the Bible says God's chosen people were stubborn, hardened, rebellious, reprobate. Yet God always extended his mercy to them whenever he saw them reaching out to him. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?...mine heart is turned within me...I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man" (Hosea 11:8-9). The Lord was saying, in essence, "Your friends may abandon you thinking you're too far gone. But I don't see you that way. I see the potential in you."

I believe God wants to teach us two things through the Gadarene man's story:

1. Our battle against unclean spirits will continue until Jesus returns. And it will grow ever fiercer as an angry devil increases his seductions on humanity in these last days. We see this ongoing battle throughout the New Testament. Everywhere Christ and the apostles went, they cast out unclean spirits.

Are you baffled as to why Christians seem to have so little authority to cast out spirits from possessed people? I believe there are two reasons for this. First, we're not committed to fasting and praying, as Jesus said is required in certain cases. We have to realize that Satan's forces can be driven out only by true spiritual authority, which comes through prayer and fasting. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Second, the church has become so compromised we're afraid to stand up to devils. We fear we'll end up like the sons of Sceva in the book of Acts. These seven men claimed to have power over demons, but when they tried to cast out an unclean spirit they were attacked and beaten by a devil-possessed man.

If we try to rely on carnal weapons—self-help programs or psychology—we'll end up merely cleaning the outer shell. And we'll open up hurting people's souls to even greater possession. Demons heed only the voices of devout servants who can say with Jesus, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

2. We're to reach out to multitudes, but we can't forget the hurting individual. We cannot allow our ministries to the masses to drown out the cry of a single lost, hurting soul.

It's all too easy not to hear the cry of the homeless man on the corner. It's easy to pass by someone who's unshaven, dirty and sin-enslaved and never see the potential in him. We forget too easily that God can restore every wasted year of a person's life. Instead, we allow ourselves to think, "He's too hardened, too far gone."

But Jesus heard the cry. He saw the potential in the Gadarene man. And that delivered, cleaned-up man became a witness of Christ's power to the whole city of Decapolis, causing "all men (to) marvel" (Mark 5:20). Jesus is telling us, "Don't give up on anyone. That person you think is too far gone could end up preaching the gospel on your street."

If we're fasting and praying for such people, as Jesus instructed, then our ears will be attuned to their cries. And like Christ, we'll be able to hear the Spirit whispering, "Go to that one, and minister God's Word." Lord, give us ears that are attuned to you. We know that nothing can keep you from delivering those you've made up your mind to set free. Amen!

Links

[1] <http://worldchallenge.org/printpdf/12463/>