

If you take that binding of the strong man as the close of where we were and eliminate the parables, then we come to exactly where we are tonight: the story of the Gerasene demoniac. He is another illustration of this tremendous power that Jesus Christ had at His disposal to plunder the strong man.

When I said to you the other night that the Lord had bound the strong man, I said He bound him with His Word. But I did not say to you, "He bound him with His Word by means of His cross." I know your first response, "But He hadn't been crucified." No, nor had He been resurrected, but Moses parted the Red Sea based on the Lord's resurrection, and we were redeemed, even in eternity past, by the cross of Christ. It is through the power of His resurrection that all things are wrought, because the cross is an eternal matter that is free from and uninhibited by time and space. And even though Satan, Lucifer, was, at the time the Lord began His ministry, alive and well, nonetheless the Lord could come into His realm, his kingdom of darkness, and bind them because of a future cross. Future to time, but not future to God.

I'd like to share one other thing that came out of our meeting afterward here the last time we met. I didn't say it; another brother did, and it was a point well taken. I hope you'll recall that in the last video you saw, the Lord's family came to get Him because they were very concerned about Him. This took place either in Capernaum or in Nazareth. His people, His own immediate family, came to Him, and He said, "These people in this room, here is My brother, here is My mother, here is My sister," and Lance made an observation.

Now, those of you out there who are listening to the video, I'm aware that, you know, Lance is a man who's nearly 90 years old now, but he made this statement back before he was 40. He said, "Isn't it interesting that the Lord did not hold to past relationships?" Many times I have watched Christians deal with past relationships because Joe and John had a wonderful spiritual relationship and grew up together. Sometimes they feel that relationship binds them to the present and into the future, and that previous relationships almost control you. Lance made the point that previous relationships did not bind the Lord; He had been very intimate, very close with a brother, possibly a sister, brothers, and a mother, but He had outgrown them, you might say. I'm sure you'll understand; I say that with qualification. He was presently involved in the ministry of His Father, and here were new people, new to Him less than two years, probably less than one year. But because it was spiritual and focused on the present and the future, He did not look back at the past, nor did it control him. Past relationships did not affect His relationship to brothers and sisters, who, on a spiritual level and because of the present and the future, took precedence over natural and past relationships.

We're in Matthew 8, Mark 4, Luke 8, and we have come to the story of the Lord's time beside the sea and some very packed events. Now, I'm going to talk to the people in the room. Something very interesting is going on here that you probably wouldn't notice. As best I can discern, the day that this happened and either the day following this or certainly the day that is recounted after this are probably the two longest days recorded in the Lord's life up till the day of His crucifixion. If

you will go back and study this closely, you'll see that on the same day and the day that follows, this one seems almost never to end. It must have been packed from the moment He got up until the wee hours of the night.

It gives us some insight into why John said all the libraries in the world could not hold the life of Jesus Christ, because here are just two days that are just a blur of activity. He's been telling parables all day. He's been beside the seashore. I do not know what time of day it is right now, but it says the same day toward evening or when it was evening. I do not know what that means, but if this is evening, watch and see how much more gets packed into this day. It's rather remarkable, if not almost impossible to conceive of so much in one evening. It's the longest evening.

It is evening, and the Lord looks around at the multitudes pressing in about Him. You would almost expect it to say next, 'and He was moved with compassion, and He healed them and in something or other.' But the very opposite is true. He sees the multitudes around Him, and He decides to push off into the water and leave, completely leave the multitudes. He's not being very Christian. Boy, I'd like to know why He left. Why did He leave the multitudes? But what did the Father prompt Him to do? What was going on inside the Lord?

I've got two possibilities. One: He decided to take care of His soul for a little while. Maybe He knew He had reached His limitations, and it was time for Him to be very human and get out from under the pressures that He was under. I think that's one possibility. I don't know. Maybe the other one is a little too religious. Maybe I'm putting too much on God. It's possible there was a prompting in Him...perhaps He saw a cemetery and a madman. Possibly He had an overwhelming sense of God's pity. Perhaps, across the Sea of Galilee, a man was having a raging fit at that moment. I can tell you I don't know what it was. I would personally be inclined to say it had to be one of those two. Unless one of you brothers can come up with a better one. We'll just say that it was one of those two.

For some reason, He decides to leave them. I love the scene here. There's obviously an enormous amount of popularity and hero worship going on. You've seen the pictures of the victorious ship steaming into New York Harbor, Southampton Harbor, with people everywhere. Well, He's leaving, and folks begin getting in their little boats and going along with Him just out of tribute to this marvelous person, to add one more minute, and possibly to get His attention by waving to Him.

Well, they go a little farther out on the water, and Jesus Christ gets in front of the boat. There seems to be - everybody seems to know - who read this 2,000 years ago that there's a cushion in the front of the boat, because it's what? A cushion at the front of the boat because it says so, matter-of-factly. The front boat cushion, and He had laid down on it and He had fallen asleep, a little evidence that He knew it was time to take care of His soul. He was a tired man, and He obviously fell into a deep sleep.

I told you all that I once had the privilege of watching a storm blow up on the Sea of Galilee...the Lake of Galilee. Supposedly the most tempestuous lake in the whole world, because it's so far down, so low, and because of the atmospheric pressures there, especially being affected by the Dead Sea, which is just a little bit further over in the mountains, that highs and lows move in on that thing. If I hadn't seen it, I really wouldn't have believed that, but we were sitting by the Sea of Galilee eating fish that had just been caught from it. Literally, all of a sudden, lightning and thunder and storm and wind and rain right out in the middle of it lasted about 20 minutes, and it was over with. It was a remarkable sight to see. Did not affect us. It was right out in the middle of the lake.

They were on the Lake of Galilee, and one of these things rolled in. The Lord is asleep, and the boat is being swamped, which means there's so much water in it that it's sinking, and they can't get the water out fast enough. They wake him up. I don't know whether they woke him up so He could be awake when He drowned, or because they had had some sense He might be able to do something about it, or because it just seemed to be the logical thing to do at the moment. But they said, "Lord, do You not care that we perish?" I'm going to pass over the miracle. It's obvious that He's master of wind and rain and sea and storm. This story clearly shows that He has power over the elements. I want to focus on His rebuke. "Oh, ye of little faith."

If you had faith, why are you fearful? You of little faith. If you had faith, you could have done exactly the same thing. Now, brothers and sisters, is that true? I believe 99% of us would read that and preach it that way. I may be wrong, but I'd like to tilt the scale a little. The lack of faith is over the word fear. It is not over stilling the winds and the sea. But was He telling them they should be able to do it? **Audience:** No.

Well, I think the typical Pentecostal sitting out there would say yes. So, we're going to talk about this. We're going to talk about it in the light, not in some pulpit on Sunday morning backed up by some wild story. If they should have been able to do it, then we have to assume that one day they graduated and did do it, and I recognize that the apostles performed miracles, but I have no record of them ever stilling the waters. Well, I know you know about someone who did. So, I'm going to tell the story myself.

There was a ship going to the New Hebrides, which, if I'm not mistaken, is right above Scotland, between Scotland and the North Pole, and the ship was in great trouble, and there was a Christian lady there, and she went out on the deck, and she called out to the winds and the seas, and instantly it was calm. I'm not even questioning that happened; I wouldn't question that for a moment. My question is the impression that we leave that she could do that anytime she wanted to, and that if she were out there again today, she'd do it again. If that woman had that much faith to do that, I ought to be able to hear about her on the radio and television right now because she should be able to maintain that faith to do all sorts of things.

I hear wonderful and marvelous stories about people raised from the dead and this and that, but I ask, "Where is the maintenance of these things? They are more like bolts of lightning that seem sometimes to strike in a man's life, and he does perform a miracle, but he can't pull them off at will

like Jesus Christ can. I would ask you to bring me that human being and show him to me. He has never existed in human history, and not even in the first century.

There are moments, there are seasons when we seem to be able to grasp the unseen realm and have power over it, but walking around and constantly handling the elements is not a consistent gift the Lord has given any of us. Even the Lord Jesus seems to have only done this once, and yet He said, "Oh, ye of little faith." I want to point out that it's "Oh, ye of little faith," and your lack of faith is the fear. Lack of faith that he could do it? I'm not sure; it's lack of faith in that you're fearful, that's it, period. You are fearful.

Would those men, in their old age, caught in that same storm without Jesus Christ, and all 12 of them had gotten up there and rebuked the wind, and nothing happened, have been fearful? I think I can give you a resounding no; I don't think they would have been, and if the ship had gone down and they had sunk and drowned all 12 of them on the Sea of Galilee, we'd have a big monument out there today commemorating the place where all 12 apostles drowned. I believe those men would have died without fear because of something within their veins. Brothers, I'm not certain about this, but this Scripture says nothing more than, "Oh, we lack faith, brothers, to move mountains." Find some other Scripture than this one.

When He finished, He said, "Where is your faith? How is it you have no faith?" What was He talking about? I do not know, but He doesn't say either. They seem not to have understood, and I'm not sure they did when they recorded this. One thing was certain: they were dumbfounded in the presence of this Man. They were astonished by this Creature in front of them, and they were beginning to catch a glimpse of what they had hold of here in the way of a human being. And this mysterious, forgive me for using a term many years ahead of time, but this mysterious Christian life that they had just launched out into.

Well, I'm going to say no more of the incident there except to say that, when you read it, keep it confined to where it is. It is simply a question of why you don't have faith, and there's a strong possibility He is addressing the element of terror here, as He's asking why you don't go and rebuke that thing.

Mike just said, "We have to look at this and remember who it was who told them to get into that boat." And it was Jesus Christ who told them to get into the boat. So if the Lord tells you to get into the boat, there's no room for fear. Thank you, brother; I appreciate that.

It's very possible we have a third reason: to give them the opportunity to have more faith in Him. Alright, we now have three. One of them: He took care of His rest. The second one was that He gave these brothers a lesson in faith. And possibly the third one would be the one we are coming to now. Or all of the above. Four possibilities.

Alright, I'm going to project a little imagination here, all based on one word: pity. The Lord is teaching the parables on one side of the Sea of Galilee, and by the way, if this is north and this is south, and the Lord is here on this side of the Sea of Galilee. He's crossing over straight this way,

eastward to the area of the Decapolis or at least to Gerasene or the area of the Gerasenes. He moved this way across the lake by boat.

Okay, while He is over here teaching the parables, there is one man and possibly two men, but because Scripture focuses on one, I will focus on one. A man who, at one time, was a fairly normal human being, for reasons we do not know, was possessed with a demon. Then a most hideous thing happened: several demons and more demons, until he literally became demon headquarters, and he was the hangout of demons, so that they became almost innumerable the demons that lived in him, or at least possessed him, I should say. So much so that he ran out into the wilderness, a desert, a forsaken place, a place of mountains and a place of a graveyard, and he lived there among the tombs and probably in the caves.

When he went mad, he went mad; people tried to control him. They had tied him up in ropes, and in fits he had ripped them loose. So, they tried chains. Can you imagine human strength in the presence of a fit, a demonic fit, so great that he could break chains that bound him? He is now scratching himself, cutting himself. Chains hang from his wrist. He is walking among the tombs and in the caves and the wilderness, stark naked, and standing there and raising his face toward heaven in bloodcurdling screams. I see time and space leak, and the Lord, sitting in the quiet and calm areas of Galilee, senses and perhaps sees this man on the other side of the sea and feels the pity of God as God has beheld this man.

So the storm has passed, and the boat comes to shore, and it's a fascinating story. There's no question about its fascination. I'm sure this story has been used many, many times to preach the gospel and many, many times to talk about the Lord's power over demons. I want to look at it in its simplest form and know that it happened because of God's pity. The Lord pities us; God takes pity.

Well, they're starting to get out of the boat, and they've gotten up on shore, and they hear this blood-curdling scream, and several of them jump back in the boat. The Lord steps off. He starts up the slopes. They cautiously get out of the boat, looking right and left. They've heard the legend. They know the stories. You don't keep a story like that hidden. Two mad men appear on the crest of the hill. Both of them are out there. I guess they're used to scaring the wits out of people. Perhaps at this moment they're only gurgling and doing crazy things. Perhaps they're not having a fit, but the Lord approaches them, and you begin to see the human soul and the evil spirit speaking from out of the man's flesh, or whatever it is that is possessed by unclean spirits.

The man says, "Don't harm me. Don't hurt me. Please don't inflict pain on me. Don't torment me. Please." It's a cry of survival because he has been hurt so much by so many, and something about this man approaching Him is threatening. Then there is an instant change. It is no longer he who speaks through his voice but the voice of demons, and they say, "Son of the most high God, have you come here to torment us before?" The man speaks again and says, "I implore you by God. Do not torment me."

I've learned two things about this man, though they may not be valid. One is that he seems to have gone out into the tombs to avoid scaring people to death. He must have something redeeming about him. Another one is that he's a religious man. He asks in the name of God for pity, so he will not be tormented by this one approaching him. And the demons, in turn, are concerned about their eternal state. I tell you this; this tells us so much.

I wonder what you learn from the demons who are calling the Son of the Most High God? What do you get out of this? What do you see? **Audience:** Well, they recognize something that the people don't.

That's right. They know what no one else does. They know Him to be the Son of God. They are absolutely clear that He is the Son of God. They also have a sense of time. I don't understand that, but they have a sense of time, and they know this is not the hour; that they have a rendezvous with the Son of God, and this is not it. They are terrified that he has walked half the earth to find them just to torment them ahead of their time for being tormented. The tormentor knows that one day he will be the tormented, and it is an encouraging thing to know that there is a time, and the astounding thing is that they know it. They have a certain theological understanding. They know who He is. They know they will be tormented. They know that time is coming...and they know that time has not yet arrived. **Audience:** And when that time comes, they'll be heading to the abyss.

We're going to come to that in a moment. They also know that they... I'm a little reluctant here. I remind you that I am not Pentecostal. I was not raised in a Bible school. I am not a fundamentalist. I was not raised in a fundamentalist seminary. I am a conservative. This is how I was taught: to be very careful with my words. They make a statement here that is very difficult to understand: Legion is mentioned, He says what your name is, and he began to beg Him not to order them away from that region into the abyss. Alright, I don't know what abyss means; are they begging not to be sent to hell, or are they begging not to be sent into the water? The answer is we don't know, and we should not be dogmatic, because we don't know. Anyway, coming back to this, a lot is going on here that the unclean spirits seem to understand, but no one else does. He asked for their name, and they are a legion, and that is a large number. If they're going by the Roman count...**Audience:** 6,000.

A lot of them, enough to keep 2,000 pigs busy. **Audience:** In one person.

The man was literally headquarters for a group of demons. They seem to sense His absolute control over them. They don't even say, "Don't cast us out." They start negotiating for the best possible place to be cast out. There seems to be no question in their mind that they're about to be cast out. They ask not to be tormented, but they don't ask not to be cast out. They seem to know the minute they see Him that this is it's up. They don't want to go to the abyss, whether that's water, I don't know, or whether that's some pit of destruction, I do not know. Perhaps they feel that He's going to deliver them out of time and space and throw them into eternal damnation. I can't say, but I would like for us to look at all of these things as possibilities. We're going to go all the way through

the Lord's life and Acts and everything else, and we will have the ability to refer back to this and remember and weigh rather than being dogmatic.

Audience: Whatever it is that they don't want to go.

Whatever it is, they don't want it. It's a bad place. They did end up in the water, but not by any deed of His own. Now this brings up the question of...there are two references in the New Testament about demons and water. The Lord tells a parable of the haunted house and... I believe it's a haunted house...and He says, and they go about in waterless places, and then He refers here: they are thrown into the water.

Brothers and those of you out there, be careful. You let your imagination run away with you a little bit. You don't call things into focus sharply. You cheat a little. You cheat a little there and a little here, and who knows what you come up with. And so I am really using tonight as a night to balance in the midst of some really wild stories, to try to bring some things into balance. Well, you know the story. He cast them into the pigs, which seems to be a fitting place. The pigs, in turn, vote no. The pigs make a decision. I'd rather be dead than demon-possessed, and they take off for a cliff. And it is 2,000, is it not? 2,000 pigs go over the side, fall into the sea, and drown. What happens to the demons? We don't know. I guess you could build a theology on the idea that if you can get a demon inside somebody and get that somebody dead, then the demon's dead. I don't have any idea. There's been a lot built around that, too. I don't know that much about demons. I don't know any on a first-name basis. They did go into the waters. Perhaps that was their abyss. Perhaps nature came again and did the will of God.

What fascinates me is the value that men put on pigs; pretty shocking. But they chose their pigs over God. Maybe they didn't know they were doing that, but they chose pigs over God. This story got back to town immediately, and the people came out and stared at Him, and they saw those corpses floating in the water. You can imagine what 2,000 dead pigs lapping up on the seashore looked like to those folks as they peered over and verified the story. And here stands this Man, and here stands a mad man...or here sits a mad man at His feet. They fall down in front of Him and beg Him to leave. They don't beg Him to come; they beg Him to leave, and the only reasonable assumption is they were afraid they were going to lose more pigs.

There are a lot of people, or maybe you, maybe me, who want to keep the Lord out of certain territories because we're afraid we're going to lose more pigs. There might have...that might have been pig country. That was a Gentile country. That wasn't Jewish country, and here was this Jew who just wrecked the pork market. That's a lot of money, and that's a lot of pigs; people won't be able to get any pork in the market next week...and they've got other pigs on other mountains.

And there's more, of course, to it than pigs; they're afraid of a man with that much power. But it is incredible to me that the loss of pigs is what started it, and on that basis they ask the living God to depart from them. I don't consider that a compliment to those people. Fear. Misplaced fear. Fear

that went off in the wrong direction. Tom, were you about to say something? **Audience:** What happened to the demons? **Gene:** What happened to the demons? Maybe they died in the water.

Now, brothers and sisters, I come to the end of this evening and come to the end of this story, and I have to laugh at myself. I have been sitting here trying my best to make you very conservative and very exact. Call this the way it's written, not the way somebody would foul it all up, but I have to tell you that this story ends about as wild as a story can end. There is no way to get out of it. To me, it is absolutely incredible.

Here is a man who is cut and bleeding and naked with chains on him, and he is scarred, and he is unshaven, and he is wild, and he is absolutely the worst sight in the world, and he is at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ right where He belongs. Here is the world's most incredible theologian. This man is a theologian's theologian. How long has he spent with the Lord? An hour? Two hours at the most. The Lord tells these people, "Alright, you're afraid you're going to lose more pigs. You're afraid of Me. I will not come where I'm not wanted. I will leave." He starts back toward the seashore, and this man comes, falls down before Him, and says, "Lord, take me with You."

I don't know if this man even knows Jesus' name yet. Perhaps by now he has learned His name. He knows He's the Son of God because the very demons within him testify to it. He wants to go with Him. The Lord looks back at the Gerasenes, and He thinks about that territory from there to Damascus, and these people don't want Me. Well, I'm going to fix them well.

The Lord ordains an evangelist, and I'll tell you, this man has got to be not only one of the greatest theologians who ever lived, but one of the greatest evangelists this earth will ever know. The Lord tells him to go home, tell his family what happened, and proclaim the work of God. This man, with no more information than that he has been healed, the demons have been cast out, and this is the Son of God, starts one of the greatest tours ever. With no more information than that, he goes back and evangelizes the Gerasenes.

He goes back to Gerasenes, and he goes to Hippo, or whatever the name of that town is, and all of those other big-name things, and all the way to Damascus, and he goes into village after village and city after city, and he stands in the marketplace and says, "Come here, I want to tell you a story. You see these scars; I put them on myself. You see these chains? They used to be on my hands. You see this face? It used to be mad. I am the man you heard of who once inhabited the wilderness and the mountains. You heard my screams at night coming over the valleys and hills, and something happened to me, and I want to tell you what happened to me! I was delivered by a mighty hand. I met the Son of God, and I know he was the Son of God because the demons even said He was the Son of God. I know He was the Son of God, and I met Him, and He healed me, and He saved me. He told me to come here to this town, into this marketplace, and to tell you to repent of your sins and trust in the living God. Wow. Praise the Lord.

There's the story, and you can't make that conservative, brothers. You can't make that conservative. This is one wild story. Perhaps some of those villages later, when the disciples spread throughout

all of Israel, came there and found that Man or found His converts or found people who said, "Yes, we heard, we heard of Him. We heard Him by a man who was once mad and possessed a legion of demons, and the man told us that God had had pity on him."

That story encourages me because sometimes I need God to save me. Sometimes I need Him to heal me. I have needs. Sometimes I need God to forgive me; sometimes I need Him to direct me, give me hope, and give me faith...but there are times I just need pity. I need pity, and I have called out to the Lord, "Lord, have pity on me." I don't doubt that that man in those rare moments of rationalization would sit there with his bloody hands buried in his face and say, "God, please have pity," and God heard him and sent His Son to pity him.

Go home to your kin folks and tell them the things the Lord God has done for you and how He pitied you. Praise the Lord for Jesus Christ.