

Your Key to Deliverance From Demonic Strongholds and Oppression

In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus encountered a man in the country of the Gadarenes who had an unclean spirit. The spirit has such complete control over the man that it caused him to cut himself and cry out from his residence among the tombs. The story is further complicated by the fact that no one in the community was able to tame him, and in a futile attempt to do so, they put him in chains.

The spirit was so violent, the man constantly broke the shackles. But no matter how many chains he broke, he could never break free of the internal bondage, the spiritual enslavement this spirit imposed on his life. Have you ever identified something you felt was causing your turmoil, mastered it and still found yourself feeling defeated? I have! It is exhausting and discouraging. What we learn from the man is that chains are but a fruit—a seed-bearing manifestation but not the source of the bondage. To truly break free, we must get down to the root.

When the man saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him. The spirit tormenting the man then questioned Jesus' presence, having an awareness of His power, and a remarkable thing occurred. The spirit negotiated its exit. Jesus cast the spirit out of the man and sent it into some swine that were feeding nearby. As soon as they encountered the spirit, the pigs ran violently down a hill and drowned.

Prior to the man's deliverance, Jesus asked the unclean spirit a question that had never been asked of it before: "What is your name?" The spirit called itself Legion, meaning "many." The word itself was common in the Roman Empire, as it was used

to describe the largest single unit in the Roman army. This is no coincidence. The unclean spirit that called itself Legion was unique in that it was militaristic in nature. It was vast, combative, aggressive and unwaveringly devoted to the interest and increase of its kingdom and commander.

Spiritual attacks are meant to accomplish spiritual oppression. The enemy desires to get the victory over you by forcing you to abandon your mission and purpose in life, overwhelming you to the point you want to withdraw from the fight and rendering the weapons of your warfare ineffective. All of this is done with the hope of causing you to surrender.

I tell people if Jesus asks you a question, it is not an attempt to discover something He does not know. He is omniscient, so He knows all things. When He asks you a question, He is doing so to reveal something to you. This man who had been overtaken by an unclean spirit experienced healing and deliverance through a series of life-changing events. Let's be clear: Our goal is not to simply lessen the pain of our torment. It is to remove it completely.

The only way the man could mitigate the torment in his life was to have a divine encounter. Deliverance does not happen apart from Jesus. He is the deliverer. But it is difficult to hear Jesus when our pain appears greater than His Word. Often our actions must be toned down in phases so we can experience what we've never encountered before.

When we arrive at our story in Mark 5, Jesus had just spoken peace to a storm. He could have chosen to avoid this situation. But His encounter with the man was a lesson for the disciples and for us so we don't neglect the painful, underlying realities that threaten our lives and those around us. Choosing to avoid the deeper issues that plague us is always an option, but avoidance is detrimental to the process of deliverance.

Let's face it: It's easier not to deal with a problem. It's easy to find refuge in the areas of our lives that are not in conflict. It's easy to focus on our strengths and successes rather than deal with our struggles. I've been there. There have been times in my life when I knew I needed to confront an issue, yet the timing was inconvenient. There are always a thousand excuses lingering when we contemplate addressing the deepest issues that plague our lives.

In Mark 5, people had tried to tame the man and were unsuccessful. We can look around at others who have struggled unsuccessfully and give up before we even get started.

Jesus did not avoid the man's issues, Jesus took the time to face the evil that was tormenting the man, and this is crucial. We come face to face with many issues daily, yet we must decide whether we will address or avoid them. Confronting and casting out evil spirits does not come by way of quick fix solutions. A level of investment must be made. Christ came to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners and oppressed, and recovery of sight for the blind. But laying hold of the freedom we have through Christ takes work, intentionality and a resolve never to quit. The Scripture does not tell us how long Jesus stayed with the man, but we know He did not leave Him until he was restored.

If you want to be restored, you must be willing to remain in the process with Jesus and not allow your frustrations to pull you away. There will be challenges and disappointments along the way, but you must be committed to your personal healing.

 *Adapted from Restored at the Root by Joseph W. Walker III, D. Min., copyright 2019, published by Charisma House. This book will help you deal with the root cause of your struggles and not just the consequences, so that you can experience permanent freedom in Christ. To order your copy, click on this link.*

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