

### Introduction

I've had several jobs over the years. Some jobs I loved. Others, not so much. But there is one thing all of these jobs had in common—there was always a boss. Either I had someone in authority over me or I was in authority over someone else.

While it may not seem like it when they are breathing down your neck for that report they needed an hour before they asked you for it, bosses have limited authority. No city council member has universal jurisdiction over all the cities in the state.

A senator for the State of California is not responsible for citizens in the Midwest. Even the person who holds the powerful office of President of the United States cannot make decisions on behalf of just any other country, not to mention the system of checks and balances to limit the president's power within this country. Authority exists, but authority is limited. There isn't a single person on Planet Earth who possesses all authority.

- What types of bosses (authoritarian, democratic, servant-like, etc.) have you experienced in your workplace?
- What was it like to work for different kinds of bosses?

In contrast to bosses with limited authority, Jesus has all authority. He didn't have an impressive appearance (Isa. 53:2). He didn't have all the luxuries you'd expect to come with such authority (such as a corner office). Yet He had and still has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

Not only that, Jesus' authority is universal and all-encompassing. Nothing compares to His power and authority. The extent of Jesus' power and authority is too vast to comprehend. And here we will see how His sovereign control extends to the spiritual forces of evil that wage war in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).

### Session Summary

In this session we witness the power and authority of Jesus Christ over evil spirits. Jesus showed His care and concern for a man who was isolated from society and controlled by evil spirits. After delivering the man from his bondage, Jesus called him to testify to the goodness of God. As those who trust in the authority and power of Jesus and who have been delivered from our bondage to sin, we too are called to testify to the goodness of God.

#### **1. Jesus cared about the demoniac who was isolated from society; Read: Mark 5:1-8.**

Christ demonstrated great power while He walked on earth, and He did so in many ways. Several stories in the Gospels depict Jesus encountering people who were demon-possessed, held captive by demonic forces inhabiting their bodies. Let's take a look at one of the most memorable exorcisms Jesus performed; Re-read Mark 5:1-8.

Can you imagine running into this guy, or having this guy run into you? Scary! He was a man living among the dead! Although people had tried to bind him with chains, he broke out

of them every time. He was what many people today would label a "crazy person," which was one of the reasons he was isolated from society.

People were fearful of this man for obvious reasons. First, they were afraid because he had incredible strength. They tried everything they could to restrain him from harming others. They put chains around his hands and feet, but nothing they tried could overcome him. The shackles were no match for his strength.

Second, they were afraid because of his self-mutilating behavior. He was an outcast. He didn't fit in. And since they couldn't control him, they banished him. He was completely ostracized from culture and society.

I know of a man named Cody who serves the homeless population in the city of Las Vegas, Nevada, many of whom struggle with harmful vices similar to this demoniac in Mark 5. Cody supports these individuals by providing meals, hosting weekly Bible studies, and guiding them toward rehabilitation and reconciliation with family and friends. Many souls have been changed by the grace of Jesus because of this incredible ministry. Unfortunately, like the demoniac, the thousands of homeless living in Las Vegas are considered as outcasts by many and seen more as a nuisance than as human beings made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).

Wherever you live, in whatever city or area God has placed you, there are people like this demoniac—men and women who are created to be in a loving and worshipful relationship with God but who suffer under the power and reign of sin. They are in desperate need of the healing power found only in the gospel. The demoniac serves as the embodiment of the damaging effects sin can cause, and this causes us to ask, "How can we who have experienced the gospel share it with those on the fringes of society?"

- What are some reasons we tend to shy away from serving people who may be labeled "hard cases"?
- How do Jesus' actions challenge that tendency?

Unlike those who tried to bind the man and ultimately cast him out to live among the dead, Jesus met this man on the shore and engaged him. Jesus didn't turn His back on this needy sinner. In fact, it was for people such as this that Jesus came in the first place.

Earlier in his Gospel, Mark quoted Jesus as saying, "It is not those who are well who need a doctor, but those who are sick. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners" (2:17). Likewise, in Luke, Jesus said He came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus cared about this demoniac because he saw a sick man, not just the demonic spirit that ravaged him. No amount of medicine could have helped this man. No self-help book could have restored him. Jesus knew what we now know—that He alone had the power and authority to change this man's life forever.

The Savior cares for sinners. Jesus was moved to the core when He saw the effects of sin on people (Matt. 9:36). If that was His heart attitude toward those trapped in the bondage of sin, then what should we feel toward those who are in the same condition today? Since we have the Spirit of Christ, shouldn't our hearts break over the sin that plagues our family, friends, and

coworkers? Shouldn't we feel a deep anguish over the sin that ravages countries and the world at large? When what breaks the heart of Jesus doesn't break our hearts, there's a problem. An area of our heart that does not break over sin is an area of our heart that isn't conformed to Christ.

- When was the last time your heart broke over the consequences of sin? How did you respond?

## **2. Jesus confronted the evil spirits in control of the demoniac; Read: Mark 5:9-17.**

Jesus didn't just show compassion to the man in distress. He demonstrated His power over evil. Notice how He confronted the evil spirits.

One of the main truths we glean from this story is that all demonic forces, including the Devil, are subject to the power of Christ. No demonic spirit has the final word. The Devil and his demonic forces are subject to One who is much greater and much more powerful. Note the significance of these statements in verses 10 and 13: "And he begged him earnestly" and "he gave them permission."

The Bible says that "even the demons believe [that God is one]—and they shudder" (Jas. 2:19). Thus, we know that evil spirits believe in the power of God and know that they are under His authority and are only permitted to do what He allows.

While we don't often see today the same kind of demonic possession witnessed in the New Testament, we still believe that Satan opposes our mission in every way He can—including through demon possession. Because evil stems from the heart (Mark 7:20-23), we should take care not to give too much credit to demonic work, but neither should we rule out demonic influence in all circumstances.

When addressing this issue in the Bible, often the question arises: If demon possession still takes place today, am I as a Christian susceptible to demon possession? Those who find their identity in Christ have been adopted into the family of God and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-14). As a result, as John wrote in his first epistle, "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Demonic spirits have no hope of ever possessing a person who is already possessed by an even greater Spirit—the Spirit of Christ.

The Bible also clearly delineates the difference, however, between demonic possession and demonic oppression. While a believer cannot be controlled by a demon to the point that they are unable to obey God, we are still encouraged to resist the Devil because our "adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. Jas. 4:7).

From time to time, believers can be susceptible to demonic oppression (cf. Luke 13:16). By this I mean that there are seasons of heightened spiritual attack that challenge our faith in God. These seasons are often characterized by a lack of faith in the truth revealed to us in God's Word. The key to fighting this spiritual battle is to expose the lies of the enemy to the truth of God and by faith believe and act on the truth.

- In your spiritual journey of following Jesus, what have you found helpful in resisting the schemes of the Devil?

The man in Mark 5 wasn't merely a maniac but a demoniac. He was possessed by devilish, demonic spirits—a legion of them, in fact. But by the power and authority of His word, Jesus delivered this man from all the torment and destructive behavior that once characterized his life. Therefore, we learn this powerful truth: The power of Jesus Christ changes lives.

There are a few things to notice about this change. First, it was radical. The text says that the man was "sitting there, dressed and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). His life had completely changed when he met Jesus. He did a complete 180-degree turn. What once marked his life—demonic possession, hostility, and rage—was all gone, and his life was completely different because of Jesus. When a person realizes his or her inadequacy apart from Christ and then repents and trusts in Christ, that person is given new life in Christ that is remarkably different than the old life. That doesn't mean that past struggles or even consequences of past sins go away. But a new heart changes the way a person thinks and behaves.

Second, this change was evident to others. When you and I gave our lives to Christ, something changed inside us. This change inside of us also changes us on the outside. What Christ has done on the inside of my life begins to spill out of my life on the outside. And when it does, people notice. When fellow believers begin to see our walk with Jesus change the way we live, they rejoice!

However, as in the case of this miracle, change is not always met with the "hallelujah chorus." Jesus forever changed this man's life, immediately apparent in the former demoniac's decent appearance and calm disposition, but many around him completely missed it, choosing instead to be afraid rather than wowed. I have heard many stories of Jesus' followers experiencing similar opposition because they gave their lives to Christ.

Sometimes people no longer want to associate with the believer. Sometimes the believer experiences hostility. Maybe you have experienced that yourself. If so, you are not alone. Christians are slowly becoming the minority in Western culture, an increasingly unfriendly culture to those of the Christian faith. This fact, however, shouldn't cause us to retreat. Rather, let us be resolved to take the gospel to hard places so that God may get the glory.

- What are some radical changes you've seen in the lives of people who trust in Christ?
- What changes would you point to in your own life since you became a follower of Jesus?

### **3. Jesus called the man to testify to God's goodness toward him; Read: Mark 5:18-20.**

When Jesus delivered this man, He had a much bigger plan for the man's life than for him just to live out the rest of his days in peace. This man was commanded to testify to the goodness of God that he had experienced firsthand. Here we learn that the gospel that saves is the gospel that sends. When God redeems you, He gives you a mandate and a mission.

All followers of Christ have a mandate—to tell those who don't know God about what He has done for them. Jesus said, "Go home to your own people, and report to them." Therein

lies the power of a personal testimony. While God does use seminary-trained preachers who proclaim the Word of God to see people come to faith in Christ, the Great Commission is not reserved for preachers alone. Rather, the Great Commission is for all Christians to take the good news of Jesus to new people and places.

With access restricted for pastors and ministry professionals in many countries around the world, it is even more imperative today that we heed Scripture and unleash people like teachers, businessmen, medical professionals, and construction workers. When all disciples of Jesus grab hold of the mandate—to report what God has done—the mission of God is advanced to unreached peoples and places in powerful ways (Rom. 15:20-21). Is your “yes” on the table?

As Jesus followers, we have a mission. This mission is local, but at the same time it is also global. Jesus wanted this man to share what the Lord had done for him at home but also throughout the cities of the Decapolis, which was a conglomeration of cities largely under Greek influence. So this former demoniac did just that, going about the region telling people about Jesus had done in His life by showing him mercy and freeing him from his demonic possession.

Isn't it amazing that God invites us into His mission of seeing His kingdom expand to the ends of the earth? God doesn't need us, but He invites us to share in accomplishing His global mission. Each member of His body has certain jobs, skills, and passions that He desires to be used as platforms to engage the culture and the world with the gospel of Christ.

- How might God want to use you, based on your unique wiring as a Jesus follower, to accomplish the mission locally and globally?
- How are you engaging right now in spreading the gospel in your community, city, and among the nations?

### **Conclusion**

Deliverance from sin always—eventually—leads to a deployment into mission. Jesus calls us to leave the wrappings of sin to pursue the worship of Him among people who don't know God at all. Through our own salvation, we come to realize that forgiveness leads to freedom. And freedom leads disciples of Jesus to go to the ends of the earth so that all people may know and fear Him. The reason why we can fearlessly forge ahead in the mission is because He has sovereign power and authority over all things, including evil spirits. God's sovereignty doesn't negate our going—it empowers it!

**Christ Connection:** In this account we see Jesus' compassion for those held captive to the Evil One as well as His confrontation with the dehumanizing powers of evil. With one word, Jesus delivered the demon-possessed man. This account points forward to the end of the Gospels when Jesus would give His life on the cross, appearing for a time to have lost His battle against evil only to rise triumphantly, having defeated sin, Satan, and the grave forever.