

## **Getting Free, Staying Free**

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Healing: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Healing

Mark 5:1-20

I've been doing a series here at the church on divine healing. Today I want to talk about one very important aspect of divine healing – that is being healed or set free from demonic oppression.

When Marlene and I first got married we hosted a Bible study in our apartment for some other college students. Every Saturday afternoon we would have about 25 other college students over to study the Bible together. An art student joined the group. And when we opened the meeting and began to pray together in simple conversational prayer, this art student fell out of her chair and began writhing and choking on the floor. Everyone seemed very concerned. We ran over to see if she was OK. I remember one of my friends asking her if she wanted a cookie.

She calmed down and we had our study. The next week the same thing happened. The moment we began praying, she fell out of her seat and began coughing and choking. This happened three weeks in a row. By then, Marlene and I became convinced that we were witnessing for the first time in our lives some kind of overt presence of a demon in a person's life.

We had no idea what to do with that. So I went to my pastor. I said, "Here is what we've seen." The pastor had no idea what to do with that either. He recommended that we send her to a therapist. And shortly after that, she drifted away from the group. We were of no help to this young woman. And I don't know what ever became of her.

Fast forward 20 years later. I was doing a conference in England. By this time I had had a number of encounters with people who seemed to have some kind of demonic presence in their life and I had the opportunity to watch Christ set them free. Well, at this conference there was a young man, who asked me on a few occasions if I would pray for him. I said that I definitely would. Every evening I was teaching and there were lots of people around. So at the last night of the conference this man came up to me and I remembered that I had told him I would pray for him. So, during the closing worship I got off the stage and asked him what he needed.

He said that he had been a pastor in Utah some years before and while he was mowing his grass one day, he saw what looked like a huge demonic figure on his lawn. It frightened him so much that he felt himself shrink back inside. Shortly after that he lost his confidence in preaching the gospel. Indeed, he lost his confidence that he could preach at all. And so he quit the ministry and had been struggling personally ever since that encounter on his lawn.

So I said to him, “Well, let’s pray and see what’s going on.” Almost without much pre-thought, I found myself saying, “In the name of Jesus I command the spirit of Mormonism to leave you alone.”

This man let out a howl that went through the whole hall and he fell down on his face with a great shriek. I prayed for him a little while longer. The upshot of the story is that he wrote to me some years later and said that as a result of that experience of becoming free of that demonic oppression, he was able to return to pastoral ministry and he now had a fruitful ministry in another state.

I’ve had many, many encounters with people over the years that have convinced me that there is something real about demonic oppression.

### The reality of the demonic

In the modern world, we tend towards two extremes regarding the whole subject of the devil and demons. On the one hand, many people completely reject the notion that there could be even the possibility that any evil spirit would actually exist. Folks view such beliefs as a holdover from the Middle Ages – some kind of primitive superstition. The whole discussion of delivering someone from a demonic presence sounds troubling like the 17<sup>th</sup> century Salem Witch Trials.

And then on the other hand, there is this terrible fascination in recent years with witchcraft and evil spirits. Just walk through Blockbuster and look at the DVD covers. I don’t know what your taste in movies is, but whenever I walk through and see covers with these evil-looking ghouls that are spewing red blood from their mouths, I think to myself, “Who watches this stuff?” What a great evening of entertainment to sit back with a bag of Cheetos and watch people get slaughtered by the dozens.

Rejection on the one hand, fascination on the other. What is clear is that Jesus took the existence of Satan and demons seriously. He was never fascinated by their existence. But you cannot read the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, without seeing that Jesus considered that there really were evil spiritual beings that needed to be dealt with. From the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we see these encounters between Jesus and the demonic. In Luke 4 Jesus goes out into the desert and he encounters Satan, who tries to tempt him.

And then there are many, many stories in the gospels like the one we are going to look at today in which Jesus delivers someone from some kind of demonic oppression or demonically-induced illness. In the book of John Jesus sees his impending death on the cross as having something to do with the defeat of Satan in this world. He links his death on the cross with the overthrow of Satan’s kingdom.

And then in a number of different places in the gospels, Jesus tells his followers that as part of his followers’ activities, they should set people free from demonic oppression. So we read verses like this in Mark 3:13-15:

### **Mark 3:13-15**

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

What is interesting is that in historical accounts of Jesus' life outside of the Bible, even when we read reports written by people who are hostile to Jesus, one of the things that are almost always attributed to Christ along with healing is the casting out of demons. So, for example, various Jewish sources say that yes, Jesus performed exorcisms, but it was by magic. Even his opponents acknowledged that a significant part of Jesus' ministry involved setting people free from demonic oppression. Certainly the apostle Paul and the rest of the New Testament writers took the existence of Satan and demons seriously. And so has the church universally for most of its history.

Back in the 1970's Pope Paul, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, said this:

*What is the greatest need of the church today? Do not let our answer surprise you as being over-simple, or even superstitious and unreal: one of the greatest needs today is defense from that evil which is called Devil...*

*Evil is not merely a lack of something, but an effective agent, a living, spiritual being, perverted and perverting. A terrible reality...*

*This question of the Devil and the influence he can exert on individual persons as well as on communities, whole societies or events, is a very important chapter of [Christian] doctrine which is given little attention today, though it should be studied again. Some people think a sufficient compensation can be found in psychoanalytical and psychiatric studies or in spiritualistic experiences...*

*But our curiosity, excited by the certainty of the Devil's multiple existences, justifies two questions: are there signs, and what are they, of the presence of diabolical action? And what are the means of defense against such an insidious danger?*

A person doesn't have to look too far in examining the last century without seeing a massive amount of evidence everywhere we turn that points to some kind of great supernatural transcendent evil present in the world. In the 1990's in Rwanda, Hutus killed 800,000 of their Tutsi neighbors in three months mainly by hacking them to death by machetes. An equivalent death toll of 3 World Trade Centers of death happened every day in Rwanda for 100 days in a row. 3 World Trade Center disasters every day for 100 days!

When we read about what's been unleashed in the Darfur, or in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, or what's happening now in Zimbabwe – the deliberate, systematic starving of hundred of thousands of people, we have to ask ourselves how do we account for such monstrous evil, these horrific outbursts of widespread slaughter, these

orgies of killing, unless we posit the existence of some transcendent evil power that seems at certain moments to take possession of individuals and even sometimes of whole societies.

Even the psychiatric community has been forced to notice the existence of the presence of demonic beings that can't be accounted for by simple psychiatric categories. If you are interested in a psychiatrist's perspective of these things, you might want to pick up a fascinating, but chilling book by the Case Western Reserve psychiatrist, Scott Peck, called *People of the Lie*.

Today we're going to look at Jesus' encounter with one unfortunate man, who was completely dominated by the presence of evil spirits in his life. I've called today's talk, "Getting Free, Staying Free." Let's pray.

### **Mark 5:1-20**

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. 11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. 14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. 18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

In verses 1-2, we read of Jesus' encounter with a man who had an evil spirit:

**Mark 5:1-2**

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

This occurs the morning after Jesus' calming of the great night storm that took place on the Sea of Galilee. So, Jesus comes straight from his confrontation with a storm in nature and now he is confronting an equally violent storm in someone's life. And just as Jesus has power to bring peace in the natural world, he has power to bring peace inside a person or a family. The story takes place in an area east of the Sea of Galilee which was populated in the 1<sup>st</sup> century mainly by non-Jews, by Gentiles. This area that Jesus went to on the east side of the Sea of Galilee rises sharply to a height of about 2000 feet. The area today is known as the Golan Heights. It is interesting that 2000 years after this event, the area is still disputed territory; there is still warfare going on there 2000 years ago – not of military warfare, but of spiritual warfare.

Let's read about this particular man that encountered Jesus, verses 2-5:

**Mark 5:2-5**

When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

We see in this man's life Satan's plan.

The purpose of the demonic: to destroy and devour

Satan has one main goal in your life and that is to destroy you. That's what Jesus said in John 10:10:

**John 10:10**

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Satan wants to steal your joy; he wants to steal your freedom; he wants to kill and destroy everything that makes your life worth living – your marriage, your relationships, your peace, your ministry, your sanity. And he will use any means – deception, lying, alluring promises, and unbiblical counsel, the threat of violence, to keep you from enjoying God's plan for your life.

Look at the impact that these evil spirits had in this man's life. It says in verse 2 that he was a man with an unclean spirit. That is an interesting way to talk about the presence of the demonic in a person's life. To have a demon means to have something unclean in your life. And often when the demonic is present, you see uncleanness, or filth

around a person – their house may be filthy, a person's speech is often filthy, their thoughts are filthy, their conduct is filthy.

Unclean spirits cause a loss of morals

Have you ever been around someone whose conversation always drifts towards the sexual? Someone who can find a lewd element in the most neutral situations?

Another sign of the presence of the demonic is found in verse 3:

**Mark 5:3**

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

This man suffered not only a loss of morals, but a loss of relationships.

Unclean spirits cause a loss of relationships

Satan not only wants to destroy us morally, he wants to destroy our marriages; he wants to destroy our families; he wants to destroy our connections with other people in the church. This man is out living among the tombs. He is isolated and there is nothing that the devil likes better than when you get completely isolated and withdraw from relationships because it is in that isolated place that we can be picked off. So in 1 Peter 5:8 we read the following:

**1 Peter 5:8**

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

When I see someone become isolated, withdrawn from church, withdrawn from friendships, withdrawn from community, the picture I have in my mind's eye is of those terrible scenes in a nature show where the herd has moved on and there is one little straggler trotting some distance behind that is now surrounded by ravenous wolves biting at its hind quarter, biting at its neck; the straggler who has no community to protect it.

We were made for relationships. And I will tell you, friends, when we get away from lots of human contact; we human beings get stranger and stranger. We have no one to check out thinking; no one to keep holding up a mirror for us. This man suffers a loss of morals, a loss of relationships and a loss of will.

Unclean spirits cause a loss of will

Here is another sign of the presence of the demonic, verses 3-4:

**Mark 5:3-4**

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

This man has unusual strength which is sometimes present in a person who is infested with demonic presences. I've seen that. What is more striking even than this man's unusual strength is that he is utterly out of control. Even chains can't tie him down. And any of you who have ever been victimized by an abuser or perhaps been a victimizer, perhaps you've seen this in your own homes – the utter loss of control. After a murder people will often confess, "I don't know why I did it. Something snapped. Something came over me!" What a terrible thing it is when a human being loses control through some evil spirits because in that state one also suffers a loss of reason.

Unclean spirits cause a loss of reason

We read in verse 5:

**Mark 5:5**

Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

This man was ranting and raving, screaming, out of control violence. I picture a man who is putting his fists through walls, terrorizing his wife, or terrorizing his children. I picture a woman who has just absolutely lost it. She's become physically abusive even to her own children or to her spouse, or an elderly relative.

Unclean spirits cause a loss of dignity

It is the loss of dignity that we see in this man's life. It is not explicitly said, but it is implied here in verse 15, that when after this man's restoration by Jesus we read:

**Mark 5:15**

When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

One of the things that changed in this man's life is that he is now dressed. He must have been running around naked, or at least mostly unclothed. Satan wants to rob you of your dignity. He wants to humiliate you. His desire is to reduce you to animal existence where you just stumble around through life like an animal.

And as I said earlier, his purpose in all of this is to destroy you. So the final thing that Satan wishes to take away from you along with your morals, your more reasoning, along with trying to steal your relationships and your will and your rationality, and your dignity, ultimately Satan wants to take your life. Here is what it says in verse 5:

**Mark 5:5**

Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Can anyone read Mark 5.5 in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without immediately thinking about the horrific situation we have in America today especially among teenagers and teenage girls in particular of kids cutting themselves? This man is cutting himself with stones, forcing himself to bleed.

Self-abuse is not something people talk about very often. But studies indicate in the US right now there are several million people, including many in churches, who injure themselves by cutting themselves with razors, or utility knives, or scissors, or needles, or broken glass, or whatever making repeated slices on their wrists, arms, or legs. Most of those folks are young women between the ages 13-30. Psychologists say that there is a variety of reasons why people do this kind of thing. There may be a history of trauma or abuse, or it may be a way to express anger or depression. If you know someone who is involved in this very dangerous activity, you might want to point them to a website:

S.A.F.E. (Self-Abuse Finally Ends)

[www.selfinjury.com](http://www.selfinjury.com)

This is Satan's goal: It is to destroy! It is possible to bring someone to such a state of misery and despair that they will choose to take their own lives.

Unclean spirits cause the loss of life

How does a person get into the place that this poor man got himself into?

The inroads of the demonic

We're not told in scripture how this man got to such a dark place. But in my experience of dealing with folks over the past 30 years who have some kind of demonic problem, I've discovered that there are three main ways that evil spirits tend to take hold in a person's life. One is through severe unhealed abuse or trauma.

My experience with people is when there is an open emotional wound, that wound can get infected by the presence of the demonic. Just as an unhealed physical wound can become infected, so can our psyches become infected when a person doesn't undergo some type of healing process from a trauma or significant abuse.

You say, "That seems really unfair, Rich, that someone might become demonized through abuse."

I say, "That's exactly right. Satan doesn't fight fair!"



There is no one too young and there is no one too innocent that Satan doesn't want to attack. He attacked Jesus, for goodness sake. And so the demonic will attack your children, or grandchildren, or friends. This is part of what the demonic does.

And then I've seen people come under demonic oppression through deliberate occult activities.

The Bible warns us against getting involved in occult activities in Deuteronomy 18:9-13:

**Deuteronomy 18:9-13**

When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord, and because of these detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. 13 You must be blameless before the Lord your God.

And so you must not play around with witchcraft, or casting spells or getting your palm read. The Bible warns us that behind these things are demonic powers.

But the place we often see the demonic manifest itself today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the power behind what we call today "addictions."

We human beings can attach our desires to almost anything. Psychologists list some of the following as common addictions:

- The need for approval
- The desire to be loved
- The need to be right
- Candy
- Friendliness
- Computer Games
- Drinking
- Drugs
- Eating
- Exercise
- Gambling
- Golf
- Hair Twisting
- Ice Cream
- Money
- Nail Biting
- Power
- Sex
- Shoplifting
- Shopping
- Tanning
- Television
- Tobacco
- Work

And the Bible doesn't use the term "addiction." The Bible does have a word to describe what we today call "addiction." It is the word "idolatry."

Addiction = Idolatry

The Bible constantly warns us about idolatry. So, for example, in the very last verse in the book of 1 John we read this:

**1 John 5:21**

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

But in the warning against idolatry, the Bible is not merely talking about objects of wood, stone or metal. The Bible certainly warns us against those in many places. And then, of course, we don't have to worry about making an idol out of something made of metal – like our cars! Or turning something made out of wood or stone into an idol – like our houses! Fortunately, making an idol out of metal, wood or stone is something that primitive people used to do, not the sophisticated Americans of today, right?

But the Bible's emphasis is, as I said, not primarily on idols made of metal, wood, or stone. The Bible focuses on idols of the heart. Here is what we read in Ezekiel 14:3:

**Ezekiel 14:3**

Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all?

Idolatry is a wonderful way to think about addictions because what we are doing with respect to any addiction – sex, food, the desire for people's approval, the need to always be liked, alcohol, dieting – what we are doing is we are setting our affections and our hopes for a better future on something other than God. We turn to an idol with the express purpose of this idol is going to give me what I want, what I need, what I desire right now. This piece of chocolate cake, this looking at pornography, a pat on the back – it's going to give me that pleasurable feeling, that sense of comfort, a better self-image, a feeling of release from boredom, a sense of control. Whatever it is that we are looking for, I'm going to go to that activity, I'm going to go to that substance, and the idol will secure it for me.

We go to idols with the express purpose of manipulating the idol to get us what we want. We don't go to idols with the idea that we are going to be ruled by idols. We go to idols with the notion that we are going to rule the idol. The idol is going to give me a feeling of being loved, or a feeling of being satisfied, a feeling of being in control of my life, a feeling of release.

But here is the problem: Our idols don't cooperate with our desire to rule them. And so, instead of you being the master of your idols, or me being the master of my idols, we find ourselves mastered by our idols. We are ruled. After a period of time of giving our hearts and our affections and pinning our hopes on this particular idol, we find ourselves enslaved by it. We can't stop, even if we want to. We begin to lose our freedom. Rather than controlling, we are controlled. Rather than ruling, we are ruled. Rather than being masters, we are slaves.

Why are we warned over and over about idols?

## The impact of the demonic

Because God knows that behind idols which are lifeless, dumb pieces of wood, metal or pictures and images, or activities like eating and work and pornography, or another person – your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your children, your husband, your wife, your dad or mom's approval – God knows that behind every idol is Satan himself. Here is what we read in 1 Corinthians 10:18-20:

### **1 Corinthians 10:18-20**

Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Why the warnings? Let me use some alliteration here. First of all:

### Addictions demonize us

The reason why you struggle so much with your addiction is because behind this particular addiction is a demonic power. You are warned away from addiction because the object of your addiction is just a mask for something way more sinister – a spiritual being that wants to put a hook inside of you, to gain a foothold in your life, to rob you of your freedom and your joy. But all of us, addicts, non-addicts, we are all worshippers; we all give ourselves body and soul to something or someone. We all pin our hopes on something or someone. We are all looking for comfort and love and a sense of security, relief and release from something or someone. And either we look to God or we look to an idol. And when we look to an idol, that is, an addiction, behind that addiction is a demon.

It is this idea of demonization that Alcoholics Anonymous really understood when it speaks about the whole issue of being a dry drunk. Have you ever heard that term – that someone is a dry drunk? Do you know what that means? It means the same power, the same demon that drove a person to drink, if they aren't dislodged in a person's life by Christ, those same powers will drive a person towards some other addiction – smoking, food, or explosive anger. If the house is not cleaned out, and if we don't get a new master namely Jesus Christ, even if we get rid of one slavery we will replace it with another one. Idols demonize us!

Many people who have battled with addictions have gone through recovery. They've repented, they've prayed, and they will tell you that there is something else that seems to be present, some evil power that they can feel.

But addictions don't only demonize us:

### Addictions devour us

We read in 1 Peter 5:8:

**1 Peter 5:8**

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Ultimately anything that we attach ourselves to, pin our hopes on, reach into for meaning and comfort and purpose in life will devour us because behind it there is a demon. It will devour our freedom. It will devour our human spirit.

C.S. Lewis, in one of my favorite books on spiritual warfare called *The Screwtape Letters*, quotes a demon speaking about human beings. He says:

*We want cattle who can finally become food. God wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in; he wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; God is filled and flows over.*

Have you ever felt yourself devoured, eaten alive, utterly consumed by something or someone that's killing you? Talk with a person who is involved in an adulterous affair. You say, "Why did you throw everything away in order to pursue this affair? You threw away your relationship with God. You threw away your Christian reputation. You threw away your ministry. You threw away your marriage. You threw away the respect of your kids. Why did you throw it all away?"

There is no rational answer. Sin is ultimately irrational. It doesn't consider the consequences. It just says, "I want more! I want more!" That's what the film director, Woody Allen, said when he left his wife and married his stepdaughter who was 30 years younger than him. He said, "The heart wants what it wants."

We certainly see the demonic devouring effect in this man's life in Mark 5, devouring his mind, devouring his morals, devouring his health.

I read a terribly sad autobiographical account of a young man named Eric who got involved with crystal meth as a teenager. At first the meth gave him a burst of energy, an alertness. He could stay up for days and not feel fatigued. Here is what he says:

*It wasn't long after I started using meth that I could no longer get high like I used to. Instead, I got paranoid, scared, and uncomfortable and I started distancing myself from friends and family. I was caught for stealing, possession of marijuana, and numerous underage-consumption violations. I found myself in and out of juvenile detention centers and rehab clinics and I still thought the answer was in drugs. I just kept thinking I was different in some way because all my friends seemed to be able to handle the drugs just fine. (Turns out I was wrong – to this day, many of them are addicted.)*

*I thought that maybe I wasn't using the right stuff, maybe I wasn't using enough, maybe I wasn't using it the right way, maybe I needed to be more careful so I wouldn't get caught. Quitting seemed impossible because I couldn't imagine my life without drugs. By 18, I was spiritually dead. I had experienced many bad highs and bad trips, dropped out of high school, lost my popularity and friends and spent most of my time isolating myself in my room using more drugs.*

Eric ended up homeless; committing crimes to get drugs. Finally, he ended up in jail. He had a friend smuggle meth into the jail for him. Here is what he says:

*One night I was breaking up a line of meth on the mirrored metal of my desk in my cell. It was dark and I couldn't really tell how big the line was. It proved to be too much. I overdosed and went into a psychosis for the next four days. I hallucinated and heard voices. I thought cellmates were talking to me when they really weren't – I tried to have "conversations" with the voices I heard. For days I was out of touch with reality and trapped inside my own, drug-induced, scary world. After that experience even my cell-mates were telling me that I should quit.*

Is that not a picture of a person who is being devoured? Let's read on in verses 6-10:

#### **Mark 5:6-10**

When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

The demons tried to defy even Jesus. It says in verse 7 the following:

#### **Mark 5:7**

He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

The demons use a curse formula from the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This man is attempting to put a curse on Jesus to get Jesus to leave him alone. So the demons behind the man are trying to curse Jesus. And the demons are so defiant that Jesus has to repeatedly order them out, verse 8.

#### **Mark 5:8**

For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

The demons didn't instantly leave. And often with addictions, they won't instantly leave for us. In applying this to demonic powers that may be behind an addiction, I'm not saying all addictions are demonic, or that every time you are an addict that there is a demon present. But often, along the physiological problems of addiction and the

emotional problems of addiction, there is a spiritual stronghold that needs to be dealt with. So I would say that:

Addictions defy us

If you are struggling with an addiction, your addiction won't take no for an answer. If you've given yourself over to something such as pornography, alcohol, the pursuit of money, shopping, shoplifting, cutting, being approved of – that thing will not take no for an answer. It will defy you.

And you know when something is an addiction if it won't take no for an answer and you begin to make excuses. You say:

- “I want to stop this addiction, but I want to do it without much effort. I want it to be easy.”
- “I want to stop this addiction, but not at the cost of saying no to something that gives me comfort.”
- “I will start saying no to this addiction tomorrow, but not today.”
- “I want to start saying no to this addiction, but first God has to remove my craving.”
- “I want to stop this addiction because I am unhappy, but I don't want God to be the sole replacement of this idol. I need something else (a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a job, etc., etc.).”
- “I want to stop this addiction. I will do so by cutting back.”

Do you recognize yourself in any of this? All these excuses are us caving into the defiance we experience from the demonic.

Now there is often with addictions someone who has an economic interest in keeping us trapped.

The economic interests behind the demonic

We read in verses 11-17:

**Mark 5:11-17**

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” 13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. 14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-

possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

I have a friend, who said that when he was teaching on this passage some years ago, that what we read here is the “First Bay of Pigs” incident. Out of this man came multiple demons and these demons rush into 2000 pigs and destroys them.

The owners of the pigs when they see this man clothed and in his right man, they don't say, “We won!” They aren't rejoicing because of his freedom. They don't say, “Well, after all, my priority is human beings. I always choose people over things. I always choose helping people over keeping my stuff.” They lost their livelihoods. So we read in verse 17 their reaction:

### **Mark 5:17**

Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

They had an economic interest in keeping this man trapped. In some ways these people are no different than pimps or drug pushers or cigarette companies would be today. There are so many folks who have an economic interest in keeping other people enslaved.

I read a very revealing article some years ago in the New York Times Sunday Magazine. It was called, “The Chrome-Shiny, Lights-Flashing, Wheel-Spinning, Touch-Screen, Drew-Carey-Wisecracking, Video-Playing, ‘Sound Events’-Packed, Pulse-Quickening Bandit.” The biggest vice in America right now, economically speaking, is not pornography. It is not illegal drug use. It is not alcohol. It is slot machines. On average, people wager \$1 billion a day on slot machines in the US. And the hold, the profit from slot machines is greater each year than the combined annual profit of McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King, and Starbucks combined. Slot machines take in more than three times what the entire movie industry takes in every year.

And the manufacturers of slot machines employ cognitive psychologists and mathematicians, and addictions specialists – people who are experts in addiction – to figure out ways to cause a person to keep playing. Gambling counselors say that slot machines are the crack cocaine of gambling. The way they're designed in terms of conditioning your response is something like crack. People find themselves addicted after a very short time. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that is trying to invade the state of Ohio for the purpose of enslaving folks.

If you are an addict, it may be that there are people or even whole industries in whose economic interest it is to keep you addicted.

How do we get free? How does this man break free from what oppressed him? He encountered Jesus. You don't get free from an addiction, and you don't get free from the demonic by will power. You need:

## The power of Jesus Christ

We need a power greater than the power of idols. Jesus said in Luke 11:21-22 these words:

### **Luke 11:21-22**

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

We know that behind idols are demonic forces. These demonic forces are stronger than our reason. That's why even when you know something is wrong and you argue the case out with yourself, you still do it. These demonic forces are stronger than your tears. They are strong men fully armed. That's why even when the thing depresses you and discourages you, you still do it. These demonic forces are stronger than your will power, that's why even when you try to push against them and say "no" they defy you.

The only one that is strong enough to defeat the power of idols in our lives is Jesus Christ. Christ is the Higher Power! He can attack and over power the evil one. And how does he do that?

## We need the people of God

In James 5:16 we this:

### **James 5:16**

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

You can tell that you are serious about tearing down an idol in your life when you communicate what the addiction is to someone else and you communicate the plan you have to tear it down and you welcome that person to hold you accountable. Until you are serious enough to tell another person, you are not serious enough to tear down the addiction.

God has arranged things so that his grace comes to us through the hands, encouragement and prayers of people. Most of what we need by way of freedom from our addictions and the demonic will come to us through other members of the body. That is the reason we have recovery groups here. That is the reason we have support groups. And by the way, if you want to find out do we have a recovery group, a support group, a prayer group regarding a particular issue that you are struggling with, just go online and type in [www.vineyardcolumbus.org](http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org) and it will list all the groups we have.

## Recovery Groups



Idols never satisfy. Addictions never fill us. We will always be left with the feeling of just one more. Only Jesus makes us a promise that will never disappoint us when he said to the woman who had been married four times and was now on her fifth husband, these words in John 4:13-14:

**John 4:13-14**

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

This man is fully restored – emotionally, physically, spiritually, and relationally. No matter how far down we get, no matter how far down Satan drags you or one of your relatives, here is the hope for you, friend; here is the hope for your loved one. Jesus can fully restore. Here is what John 10:10 says:

**John 10:10**

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

There is hope for you! There is hope for your loved one! Go after freedom. Don't be satisfied with anything less than complete and total freedom. Let's pray.

**1. The reality of the demonic**

**2. The purpose of the demonic**

**To destroy and devour (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8)**

- a. The loss of morals (Mark 5:2)
- b. The loss of relationships (Mark 5:3)
- c. The loss of will (Mark 5:3, 4)
- d. The loss of reason (Mark 5:5)
- e. The loss of dignity (Mark 5:15)
- f. The loss of life (Mark 5:5)

**3. The inroads of the demonic**

- a. Abuse
- b. Occult activity (Deuteronomy 18:9-13)
- c. Addiction (1 Corinthians 10:18-22)

**4. The impact of the demonic**

- a. Addictions demonize us
- b. Addictions devour us
- c. Addictions defy us (Mark 5:6-10)

**5. The economic interests behind the demonic (Mark 5:11-17)**

**6. Finding freedom from the demonic**

- a. The power of Jesus Christ
- b. The people of God (James 5:16)