

Jesus Overpowers Legion

I'm glad you let me edit it," said Kamala. "I've known you for a long time, but I was still surprised at the dark chapters in the book."

Kamala, the mother of De-Andra's old friend, Laila, was a professional writer. The woman had agreed to edit De-Andra's book at a "family rate."

The Lord had redeemed De-Andra from a terrible and messy life that had been full of darkness. There was a time when De-Andra thought she would die in the deep pit that held her captive. But the prayers of loved ones had pierced the darkness long enough for De-Andra to cry out to the Lord.

And He rescued her with a strong and mighty hand. De-Andra shared her miraculous salvation to people far and wide. She didn't stop spreading her good news as the Holy Spirit began to disciple her and conform her into the image of Christ.

Along the way, De-Andra realized she had a talent for motivational speaking. The more she spoke, the more engagements she received. Then, at the urging of the Holy Spirit, she began writing down her story.

"I have dark places, too," said Kamala, who had met De-Andra at a coffee shop to talk more about the next steps for the book.

"Ms. Richardson," said De-Andra, "the Lord would love for you to call out and grab hold of Him. Trust me, I know!"

1. *What burdens in life prevent people from enjoying the blessings of God?*

2. *How have some of these burdens affected your life?*

3. *Why does the compassion of Christ liberate you from the effects of these burdens?*

LESSON FOCUS: Tell of the mercy and release you've experienced through Christ.

The Demon-Possessed Man

Mark 5:1-5, KJV

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

Mark 5:1-5, NIV

¹They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ²When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴For 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. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

After Jesus and the Twelve reached the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, they were in “the region of the Gerasenes,” where people lived in cavern tombs among the dead. Mark 5:2 says that this man had “an impure spirit,” and because he was so violent, the villagers tried to secure chains to his wrists and shackles to his feet. However, he always snapped the chains and broke the shackles. “Night and day” (vs. 5) he wandered among the tombs and throughout the hills, howling in distress and slashing himself with jagged stones.

4. *What took place when Jesus exited the boat?*

5. *What was distinctive about the man whom Jesus encountered?*

The Messiah's Authority over Demons

Mark 5:6-13, KJV

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

Mark 5:6-13, NIV

⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷He 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!" ⁸For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

⁹Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."

¹⁰And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

¹¹A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹²The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." ¹³He gave them permission, and the impure 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.

When the demoniac spotted Jesus, he ran to Him and fell on his knees in front of Him. When the evil spirits

realized they were in the presence of the Messiah, they cried out something like, "Why are you bothering me?" They personally addressed Jesus by name in a failed attempt to gain control over Him. In that day, it was popularly believed that knowing and declaring the name of others gave one authority over them.

The evil spirits first referred to the itinerant rabbi as "Jesus," then as the "Son of the Most High God" (vs. 7). In an ironic twist, the host of demons invoked God's name as a form of protection. The Greek text of Mark 5:7 can be literally translated, "I adjure you as God." The evil entities were imploring Jesus for mercy, rather than being tortured by Him. When Jesus asked the demon-possessed man to identify himself, the demons replied, "My name is Legion" (vs. 9). A horde of wicked entities were living in the man.

The mob of demons did not want to be sent "out of the area" (vs. 10). In Luke's version, they feared the prospect of being cast into the "Abyss" (Luke 8:31), the place where Satan will be confined (Rev. 20:1-3). Instead, they begged to be sent into a large herd of swine not far off. The evil spirits implored that after Jesus expelled them from the man, the Messiah permit them to go into the pigs. In turn, He consented to their request. As a result, the legion of demons abandoned their human host, entered the herd (which numbered around 2,000 animals), stampeded down the side of a steep cliff, and plunged into the lake (the Sea of Galilee), where the pigs drowned.

It is unclear from the context exactly why the demons wanted to enter the swine, but the episode puts a fine point on the destructive force of these demons—regardless of whether they exploited people or animals.

6. *What did the tormented man do when he saw Jesus?*

7. *What answer did Jesus receive after asking His question?*

8. *How did Jesus respond to the demons' request?*

The Good News of God's Mercy

Mark 5:18-20, KJV

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Mark 5:18-20, NIV

¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

¹⁹Jesus 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." ²⁰So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

After being freed by Jesus, the man was seen sitting peacefully, clothed properly, and in his right mind (vs. 15). He was so grateful for being healed that he pleaded with Jesus to allow him to accompany the Savior in the boat.

Jesus, however, urged the healed man to return home to his own people and declare to the residents how much the Lord had blessed him. The townspeople would learn the way in which God showered the man with "mercy" (vs. 19).

Previously, after Jesus had cleansed a man of leprosy, He told the man not to tell anyone what had happened (Mark 1:43-44), perhaps because He did not want to then announce He was the Messiah, with the title's implications. However, the former demoniac lived in mostly Gentile territory where the aspirations for a Messiah were not so pronounced. Jesus instead sent the man as a Gentile evangelist of the Lord's healing and mercy in his homeland, the Decapolis (literally, the "Ten Cities").

9. *What did Jesus direct the healed man to do?*

'If the Son Sets You Free'

"Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin," Jesus noted, but then He assured His followers: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:34, 36). Of course, "the Son" is Jesus, and so He was referring to Himself. Therefore, we can only know true freedom when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

In terrible distress because the prison cells had opened, the Philippian jailer was about to kill himself with his sword, but the apostle Paul intervened. Subsequently, when he realized that Paul had not escaped and that a miracle had occurred, the jailer asked how he could be saved. "Believe in the Lord Jesus," Paul replied, "and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Because the jailer and his household believed in God, they "rejoiced" (verse 34). Though he was a jailer of people, evil had spiritually imprisoned him until the Son liberated him.

Similarly, everyone is in their own self-created and self-imposed prison unless Christ Jesus has freed them. But we have been redeemed in the sight of God. Our former prison, whose bricks comprised our fears, anxieties, addictions, depression, and arrogance, is vacant. Each of us has our own unique story of how the Lord liberated us, a story that can provide hope and encouragement and guidance to others who still dwell in their own dark dungeon.

Just like the Philippian jailer and the healed demoniac, we rejoice whenever we comprehend how wondrously Jesus has poured His compassion upon us and released us from the chains that once enslaved us. When others hear our joy they are drawn to Jesus because of it.

10. *Why is Jesus the only one who can release us from evil?*

11. *Why is the mercy of Christ important to you?*

12. *How do you convey Jesus' love to the people in need of God's compassion?*

Our Merciful Lord

Jesus' power over demons was evident when He cast the evil spirits out of a man who dwelled among the tombs in the region of the Gerasenes. Such power indicates that Jesus can release us from any bondage if we surrender our lives to His Lordship. Moreover, this act of liberation is so joyous that we can't help but tell others what Jesus has accomplished within us, especially those who are enslaved to the evil within and outside them.

► *How mindful are you of how Christ has liberated you from a life of darkness and how His light in you can be shown to others? Pray about and write here some ways you can pass Christ's mercy on to others in this coming week.*

KEY VERSE

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

—Mark 5:20, KJV

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.

—Mark 5:20, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of March 27 through April 2

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Luke 19:28-40—The Stones Would Shout.
- Tues.** Luke 19:41-48—Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem.
- Wed.** Job 14:1-15—As Fleeting as Shadows.
- Thurs.** 1 Corinthians 11:23-34—This Is My Body.
- Fri.** Psalm 22:1-2, 7-19—Why Have You Forsaken Me?
- Sat.** Psalm 22:20-31—Deliver Me, O Lord.
- Sun.** Luke 24:1-12—A Surprising Encounter.