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PIGS OF WRATH

There is a great display of the inner conflict so many caught in sin must feel when they are confronted by the saving power of Jesus, as seen in the demoniac of Mark 5. "Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!'" Mk. 5:6-7. Both wanting to be released from the demons that plagued him while at the same time conflicted by the powerful stronghold they had on him not wanting to be tormented by the inner struggle of knowing the demons would not leave willfully on their own that easily. This window into the conflict of wills ought to provide for us insight into the struggles many we interact with will feel when presented with

the gospel. Conversion will not be an easy process. We ought not presume that those entrapped by sin will simply leave their sinful life completely behind without any kind of fight or second thoughts. There will most likely be a tug of war in their soul between the appeal and power of Jesus to heal and the comfort of the sinful life they've grown to depend on so much. What we need to come to understand is that breaking the bonds of sin will not be an easy task and it will not be accomplished by any methods we employ. Jesus Christ and Him alone will ultimately be the only one who can truly overpower the tight grip Satan has in the life of a sinner. Once Jesus, and Jesus alone, is able to free the man from the Legion of demons inhabiting him, we see a powerful demonstration comparing the influence of the

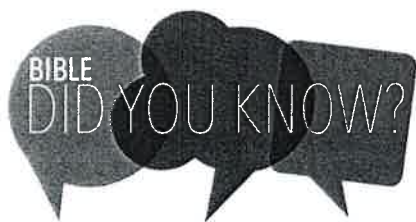
demons to the superior power of Christ in the fate of the pigs who eventually come to be a substitute vessel for the demons to inhabit after leaving the man.

1) The fate of the pigs demonstrates the ultimate purpose of the demons. "The demons implored Him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.' Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea." Mk. 5:12-13. The demons were set on the destruction of the man they were inhabiting. This is why they refused to leave so easily. Once they had achieved their stronghold on him, they weren't going to be satisfied until the end result was what had happened to the pigs. They wanted to destroy him. 2) The fate of the pigs demonstrates the power of Jesus over demonic forces. The only authority which had any real force over the demons was demonstrated in Jesus. While so many people had tried to subdue the man or fix the problem themselves, ultimately it was the power of Christ which held any sway over them at all. It was only by the permission of Jesus that the

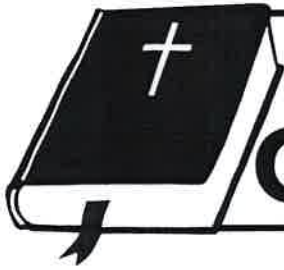
demons were able to enter anyone or anything at all and thereby it was only by the permission of Jesus that they could leave. 3) The dramatic end of the pigs demonstrates how full the transformation was. If there was ever any doubt whether the man had fully been rid of the demons which had overpowered him, he had only but to look at the dramatic sudden absence of 2000 pigs drowned at the bottom of the steep bank. Even while he was dramatically changed, clothed and sitting in his right mind afterwards, if anyone were to question as to whether or not he had been totally and completely transformed as to be finally rid of the demonic forces residing in him, he could direct them to the herdsman who could testify to the sudden dramatic transformation which took place in their pigs driving them down a steep bank to their death. The change was total and complete and there was no question that all the demonic forces had completely vacated his being. 4) The pigs provide the perspective that the deliverance of 1 man is worth 2,000 pigs. I'm sure one of the reasons the citizens of that region began to urge Jesus to leave was because of the tremendous financial ruin His presence was causing. To

them, He had just unnecessarily destroyed the source of their income (when it really wasn't Jesus but the demons who did it). Was the crazy man screaming at the top of his lungs and frightening all who came near him a nuisance and cause of fear to those residing in that area? Absolutely. Was changing him worth the loss of 2,000 pigs? Not to the herdsman and those who made a living from them. What it shows is the ultimate cost bringing the power of Christ to transform a lost soul may come at a steep price. To Jesus, losing a great sum of money or property is inconsequential to Him in the grand scheme of helping just one individual become freed from the destructive grip of Satan. At what cost are we willing to pay to see just one lost soul become redeemed and freed from their sins? In terms of time, when so many of us can easily turn the value of our time into real dollars and cents, how much time are we willing to give to seeing that the power of Jesus is able to free sinners from the grip of Satan? Let this account of the man possessed by the Legion of demons be an example for us of number 1 the importance of letting Jesus and His authority do the cleansing

work of bringing those overpowered by sin to their senses and in their right mind. And 2, let it be a powerful example of just how complete the transformation is able to become and at what cost it may bring to us to enable it to happen. – Daniel Ruegg



Jesus urged the women crying for Him on His way to the cross to stop weeping for Him and weep for themselves. "But Jesus turning to them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'" Lk. 23:28-31



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Casting Seed Challenge

Mt. 13:3, 23 *"Behold, the sower went out to sow...And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."* Let's get busy this month casting the seed of God's word out on the ground this month. There are a number of simple ways we can accomplish that and cover a good bit of ground. We have cards available that have the name of the church and times of services we can hand out or leave behind the places we visit. We have bulletins we can hand out or leave behind the places we visit. We have tracts we can hand out or leave behind the places we visit. We are able to make CD's of lessons we can hand out or leave behind the places we visit. Let's all find a way we can leave a trail of seed with information that can lead someone to come worship or perhaps ask us questions about the gospel and what we believe about Jesus. Can you cast seed at least 5 times this month?

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Luke 19:1-10

"He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"