Confronting Satan and Demons  
Matthew 8:28-34  
(The following text is taken from a sermon preached by Gil Rugh.)

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An article in the Newsweek magazine of August 30, 1982, was entitled, “Giving the Devil His Due.” It basically offers the perspective of unbelievers about the origin of the Devil and the purpose that is served by such a creature. The main thrust of the article is that the Devil is a myth that is used as an explanation of why there is evil in the world. It indicates that, by and large, belief in a personal Devil has fallen into disrepute.

1.  The Contemporary View of the Devil

As a background for Matthew 8:28-34, let me quote from the article which will give an understanding of modern thinking regarding the Devil. These quotes are not necessarily connected. Notice in the quotes that the Devil is considered a figure of myth.

The article by Kenneth L. Woodward with David Gates says: “Like most figures of myth, the Christian concept of the Devil is a composite drawn from many disparate sources--most of them ideas and legends that originated outside the accepted Hebrew and Christian scriptures. . . ‘The figure of Satan probably developed under the influence of Iranian dualism,’ says the West’s premier historian of religion, Mircea Eliade of the University of Chicago Divinity School.” So according to these authors, Satan is a legend or myth which came from a variety of sources, perhaps from Iran and their concept of dualism with good and evil. The authors of the article do not even consider the Bible as the source of information regarding Satan and demons.

The article continues: “According to most contemporary Biblical scholars, the traditional profile of the Devil owes its essential features to a diverse collection of apocryphal scriptures that appeared in Palestine between the second century before Christ and the second century after.” The way these authors make their point and give it weight is to say that “most contemporary Biblical scholars” hold this position. In other words, they imply that if you want to be in the majority, contemporary and a scholar, this is the position you should hold. No consideration is given to the biblical teaching of the origin of Satan or his activity in the opening chapters of Genesis.

“For most people, however, the existence of the Devil is an adequate explanation for such demonic realities as war, poverty, mass starvation and the possibility of nuclear annihilation. Even among otherwise orthodox Christians, his figure has become vestigial: he exists in Scripture and tradition, but he has been trivialized by a thousand superstitions.” The authors say that even orthodox Christians, in many ways, have accepted the Devil as a rather trivial person and not an adequate explanation of all the problems in the world. I agree that Satan is not an adequate explanation of these problems in and of himself, because you must add to Satan the sinfulness of fallen humanity. These things together give
an explanation for the misery present in the world.

In conclusion, the article says, “The real religious lesson woven into the long history of the Devil is that ultimately only God can divert man from his drive toward self-destruction. In retrospect, therefore, the disappearance of the Devil from modern consciousness may prove to be providential. A trivial personification is hardly adequate to symbolize the mystery of evil that even nonbelievers must confront. In these harrowing times, Satan’s cleverest ploy would be to convince mankind that a pallid personal Devil really does exist.”

2. The True Revelation About Spirit Beings

As you can see, the idea of modern thinkers today, even religious thinkers, is that the Devil is a mythological figure. It is true that many legends have been built around the Devil, but if we are really going to know anything about the spirit world, including not only the existence of a Devil, but the existence of God, we must have a revelation from the spirit world. We human beings are locked into the realm of time and space—the material dimension. Therefore, we must have a spiritual revelation. So we come to the revelation that God has given, the Bible, to find out about His own existence as well as about the existence of other spirit beings.

The Bible is clear that there is a personal Devil followed by a host of personal spirit beings who are identified as demons. This was touched on briefly in the study of Matthew 8:16 where Christ was casting out demons from the demon-possessed man. As a further background for Matthew 8:28-34, the biblical revelation on the subject of Satan and demons will be considered followed by the highlights of this section where Christ confronts and casts out demons from two demon-possessed men.

To find out about the creation of angels, we must go back to the Old Testament. Job 38:7 tells us that angels joined together in rejoicing when the earth was created. Therefore, angels were present when the earth was created. Exodus 20:11 says that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. Many Bible teachers believe that the angels were created on the first day of creation. Hebrews 1:14 says they were created as ministering spirits to serve those who are the heirs of salvation. So they were present when the earth was created, and their purpose is to minister to God’s children on earth. It may well be that they were created early on the first day of creation and were thus present for the rest of the creating works of God. If that is not the case, then they were created sometime before that.

Satan and the demons are all identified as angels who were created by God. Angels are personal spirit beings. Even though angels do not have tangible physical bodies, they have personality—emotion, intellect and will—as well as self-consciousness.

God created a whole host of spirit beings called angels, meaning messengers. These would be His servants to carry out His bidding. At a point in time, a certain group of those angels turned in rebellion against God. Demons are simply identified as those spirit angelic beings who joined Satan in his rebellion against God. Two key Old Testament passages tell of this event. In both of these passages, God is speaking through the prophets regarding earthly kings. But at a point in the message, He moves beyond the earthly king to the king that stands ultimately behind ungodly earthly kings, Lucifer or Satan.

3. Satan

The fall of Satan is described in Isaiah 14: “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit” (vs. 12-15).

At that point in time, Lucifer exercised his will to rebel against God. He said, “I will be like God,” or in effect, “I will replace God.” Satan wanted to become the object of the worship of all creation. For that he was cast from his position before God.
Ezekiel 28 speaks of an earthly king, the king of Tyre. But God moves the prophet to speak about a person beyond the king of Tyre, Lucifer himself. Ezekiel writes in verse 12, “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”’” God says that when He created Lucifer, He had the seal of perfection. He was full of wisdom. He was perhaps the most brilliant of created beings. Human beings are no match intellectually for the brilliance of Satan. He was also perfect in beauty. If Satan were to manifest himself in a visible way, people would probably be blinded by the beauty of his presence. This beauty of person and perfection of wisdom resulted in Satan thinking that he could replace God as the object of worship.

God continues His description of Satan in verse 13: “You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering; the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared.” This also may indicate that Satan was created on the first day of creation, but note that he was a created being: “On the day that you were created.” The Bible does not present a dualism of an eternally evil being and an eternally good being. There is the eternal God who is perfect in goodness and every other attribute, and there is the created being, Satan, also called Lucifer.

Verse 14 says, “You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there.” Satan was of the group of angels known as the cherubim. He served in the presence of God covering the very throne of God, perhaps the most intimate, close position of any angelic being.

The description continues in verses 14 and 15: “You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you.” God did not create Satan as a sinful creature. He created Lucifer, that beautiful creature, who had the potential for sin. As a personal being he was created with a will. He exercised that will by his own choice in rebellion against God and became a sinful, fallen being, no longer privileged to be the anointed cherub that covered the throne of God.

Note that Satan lost his position in heaven at the point of his rebellion. But though he has lost his position in heaven, he has not lost his access into the presence of God. That loss will occur at a future time.

4. Other Fallen Angels

These two passages have been describing Satan. But Scripture indicates that a whole host of angelic beings joined Satan when he rebelled against God. In Revelation 12 and 13, various names for Satan are used as these chapters describe the fall of demons. Satan is pictured in chapter 12 as a dragon. Verse 4 says, “And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

This describes Satan standing before Israel awaiting the destruction of the Christ who would be born. It says that his tail drew with him a third of the stars of heaven, and this may be an indication that a third of the angelic beings joined with Satan in his rebellion. Verse 7 continues, “And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war.” In this verse angels are associated with Michael, the unfallen angel. Other angels are associated with Satan, the fallen angel. This seems to indicate that demons are fallen angelic beings who joined Satan’s rebellion against God. Christ mentions in Matthew 25:41 that hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels, the angels who followed him in his rebellion.

It is not known how many angels were involved in the fall; but evidently it involved multiplied millions, perhaps billions of angels. Since angels are created beings, they can only be in one place at one time. Satan cannot be here at this moment and also in God’s presence in heaven. He can only be at one place at one time. But he has a whole host of angelic beings to represent him. Scripture indicates that they are present in many locations. The evidence of their work is seen in the world in many ways. I assume from this that there are demonic beings here whose purpose is to resist the teaching of Scripture, to blind the minds of the unbelieving lest they believe in the glorious message of Jesus Christ. These fallen angelic beings are arranged in an orderly fashion, the Bible indicates, under the authority and leadership of Satan.
5. The Activities of Demons

One of the activities of the demons is recorded in Revelation 12:10: “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night.’” Apparently Lucifer spends a lot of time in the presence of God in heaven accusing believers before God.

An example of that is in the first two chapters of the Book of Job. Satan came into the presence of God and accused Job, the servant of God, saying that Job only served God because God did good things for Job. Satan told God to let him test Job, and then God would see how much Job believed in Him. This would prove how much Job was willing to trust God. In this situation, Satan was accusing Job before God. That is what Satan does with believers even today. He is in the presence of God night and day accusing believers before God. That seems to be an activity unique to Satan himself.

Another activity of Satan and his demons is the promotion of false worship. Paul wrote regarding this activity of Satan and his demons in 1 Corinthians 10:20: “No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.” This means that when people who do not believe the Bible join together in worship and they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the one who died on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins, then they are really involved in worshiping demons, not God. Paul says to be very careful about not having any association with the worship of demons.

There must be some doctrine to go with every system of worship. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:1 about the doctrine or teaching of demons. These demonic beings move on the minds of men to develop strange and twisted unbiblical teaching around which people assemble themselves. John refers to the same thing in 1 John 4:1-3.

A key area of demonic activity involves the battles and bickering that go on in churches among believers. Jealousy, divisiveness and bitter remarks are a result of demonic activity. James wrote about this in James 3: “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing” (vs. 13-16). Do not overlook the fact that this is demonic activity; it is the kind of wisdom the demons promote which causes division, jealousy and bitterness. It is important to be careful about the influence of demons in our relationships.

Another activity of demons, which helps explain what is going on in the world today, is the influence of demons in human government. One of the functions of demons is to oversee and manipulate human government. In Daniel 10, an angel was sent from God with a message for Daniel. The angel confronted a demonic being who is identified as the prince of Persia. That demonic being was so powerful that he withheld this angel for three weeks, and it was not until Michael the archangel came that the angel was able to proceed on his way. This gives some insight into the orderly arrangement of the demonic beings under Satan.

Certain demonic beings have the responsibility for various nations of the world. If you have ever wondered how such confusion and misery could go on in the world, it is not so hard to understand when you see it as the activity of Satan. This is all under the sovereign power of God who is even using the sinfulness of fallen beings to accomplish His purposes.

6. The Destiny of Demons

The destiny for demons is destruction. At a time in the future, there will be a war in heaven when Michael the archangel and the angels of God will oppose Satan and his demonic beings. The result of this clash will be that Satan and the demons will lose their access to heaven. They have already lost their position, but they still have access into the presence of God. At that time, according to Revelation 12, they will lose their access and will recognize that they only have a short time left before their judgment. As a result they will begin a program of viciousness and terror like the world has never seen. That will occur in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation which immediately follows the
Rapture of the Church.

Remember that the Rapture of the Church is the next prophetic event referred to in Scripture. Immediately following the Rapture will be the seven-year Tribulation. This war between the angels of God and the angels of Satan will occur three and a half years into the Tribulation when Satan will be cast to earth with his demonic beings. The ultimate destination of Satan and the demons is hell. Matthew 25:41 indicates that hell has been prepared for the Devil and his angels. Revelation 20:10 says that Satan will be cast into hell to be tormented forever and ever. All unbelievers will also join him there.

7. Demon Possession in Scripture

Matthew 8 describes another activity of demons. Demon possession involves one or more demons taking up residence within the body of a person. Those demons take absolute control of that person, including the mind and the physical activity.

The Old Testament does not record specific accounts of demon possession. Demonic activity is found in the Old Testament, but demon possession, as described in the New Testament, is not recorded in the Old Testament. That does not mean that it did not happen in Old Testament times, but there is an outbreak of demonic activity in connection with the first coming of Christ when the Son of God came to earth in a visible way. Just as Christ’s activity was visible when He came to earth, so the activity of Satan became more evident during that time. This provided opportunity for the conflict between Christ and Satan to be more recognizable. It also made it possible for the power of Christ to be demonstrated over Satan and demons in a clearer way.

In connection with the Second Coming of Christ, especially during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, there will be a tremendous outpouring of demonic activity again in a more clear and recognizable way than today. This does not mean that demon possession does not go on today; I believe it does. But Satan does not work in the same way in every place. In other parts of the world, demon possession may be more clearly recognized and evident than here, but there is no reason to believe that demon possession does not go on in this country even though we do not necessarily recognize it as such.

It is my understanding that a believer cannot be demon possessed. According to 1 Corinthians 6:19, the body of a believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He resides within believers. Satan or demons cannot reside within the body of a believer. First John 4:4 says that the One who resides within believers is greater than the one who resides in the world. Satan is in the world; he cannot be in the believer. Satan can have great influence on believers. When believers choose to function in the flesh, the door is opened for demonic activity. Demons work in conjunction with the flesh to bring great travesty into the lives of people, even believers.

8. Believers in Spiritual Conflict

We, as believers, need to understand the conflict that we are involved in. It often seems that when a person becomes a believer, things get worse instead of better. God brings His peace, confidence and assurance within, but often the external circumstances deteriorate. Believers are in conflict with Satan and demonic beings. Every unbeliever is under the domination of Satan and his influence. Most unbelievers are not possessed by demons, but they are under the control and influence of them. As believers we are in a battle with these spirit forces.

Paul writes in Ephesians 6 about the battle that believers are in with these spirit forces: “Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (v. 11). Believers are in battle with the Devil and his schemes and plans. There is no human being who can do battle successfully with Satan. He is far too brilliant and too powerful for us. We are no match for him. As believers, we need to be clothed in God’s armor which provides protection and enables us to successfully battle against Satan. That is why the unbeliever is totally exposed to Satan and the demons. He is at the mercy of demonic beings, if you will, because he is powerless against them.

Paul continues with his description of the battle between believers and Satan in verse 12: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” We are battling against spirit beings of the
heavenlies. That is where Jesus Christ Himself is seated according to the Book of Hebrews. Those spirit beings are the kinds of beings we are involved with in battle. There is no hope for us to be successful in the battle apart from being clothed in the armor of God.

Why is the going so rough at times? Why does it seem like such a struggle? Why does it seem like everything is caving in? Because we are in battle against an enemy who God Himself says He made perfect in wisdom. Now he has become a fallen being, but he still has supernatural brilliance.

Sometimes things seem to be going along so well and we think that we are on a smooth boat ride to heaven. We are not even anxious for Christ to come because we think it is not too bad here. In fact, we rather enjoy it. Then, all of a sudden, everything seems to come apart at once. Nothing seems to be going right. We wonder what in the world happened. We must keep in mind that Satan has not gone away. He is a relentless enemy, and we lose sight of that too frequently. We may have a string of good weeks, good months or even good years, and then we forget that we are in a battle so that we get out of the habit of prayer. But Satan has not gone away. He is still at work. The battle is relentless, and that is the most difficult thing about the battle. After a day of battle where God has given you the victory, you cannot go to bed saying, “Well, I’m glad the battle is over.” Satan will not quit.

The battle will not be over until we are in the presence of God in glory. Satan is a relentless foe, a spirit being of awesome power. It is with him that we battle as we present the Word of God and proclaim Jesus Christ, making the gospel known. We are not opposing human beings. We are opposing Satan who uses human beings to carry out his purposes.

9. Jesus Deals With Demons

It is against these demonic beings that Christ is doing battle in Matthew 8:28-34. Jesus and His disciples have crossed the Sea of Galilee and have come through a storm where His great power was demonstrated over the elements of nature.

“And when He had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road” (Matthew 8:28). These men lived among the tombs, graves cut into the side of the mountain. They were such violent men that they lived in this place of defilement.

Both Mark and Luke also record this event and indicate that these men were too powerful to be chained. They were so violent that everyone took a different road so as not to encounter these vicious men. It was unsafe to take the road to the city by these tombs because the two men were so violent that they would destroy you.

Mark 5:9 indicates that when Jesus asks for the name of the demon, he says, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” A legion was a full compliment of Roman soldiers numbering one thousand. I do not know whether he is saying that each man had a thousand demons within him or not, but when the demons are eventually cast out, there will be two thousand pigs that will run into the sea.

Demon possession does not necessarily mean one demon in one body. Christ delivered Mary Magdalene of seven demons who indwelled her. Is it any wonder that nobody could control these two men with all of those demons living in their bodies? Demons have supernatural powers. With a whole host of demons dwelling in one body, nobody was a match for these individuals. They were a terror to the area.

10. Demons Have Understanding

The men came out to meet Christ, and He confronted the demons. Verse 29 is a remarkable verse and gives some insight into demons: “And behold, they cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’” First, they recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Secondly, they recognize that their destiny is in His hands. “Have you come here to torment us before the time?” they asked. Thirdly, they recognize that God has a timetable of events, and they have some understanding of that timetable. They recognize that it is too early for them to be tormented yet by God.

Demons consistently refer to Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the gospels. When they confront Christ, they recognize
and acknowledge Him for who He is. They never have any question about who they are dealing with because they recognize Christ as the Son of God.

A similar incident is recorded in Mark 1:23 and 24 where Christ confronts a demon: “And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’” The demon acknowledges that Jesus of Nazareth is the Holy One of God and recognizes that Christ has sovereign power over demons and their destiny.

James 2:19 says, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.” Demons believe in God and tremble. James says that if your life is no different than the unbeliever’s life, but you claim to believe in God, that puts you in the category of the demons, because the demons have no question about the existence or person of God. In fact, they tremble before God as is demonstrated here. They are in terror at His power. The demons believe in God and have a fear of Him, but they are not saved. Their lives have not been transformed by Jesus Christ. In fact, no salvation has been provided for demons, because Jesus Christ did not become an angel and die for angelic or demonic beings.

James is making the point that it is not faith in God that saves a person, a point we ought to recognize. Many people today talk about faith in God, but the demons also have faith in God. It is possible to believe in God and be in abject fear of coming judgment, yet be on your way to hell with the demons. It is only when you recognize Christ as the One who died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and believe in Him as your Savior that you have forgiveness and cleansing.

Matthew 8:29 indicates that the demons recognize they are destined for judgment at the hands of Christ. “Have you come here to torment us?” they asked. Luke records the same incident in chapter 8 and indicates that they were begging Him not to cast them into the abyss, evidently the place where demonic beings are bound waiting for final judgment to hell. Revelation 20:3 says that Satan will be bound in the abyss during the thousand-year Millennium when Christ rules on the earth. Then they will be sentenced to hell after the Millennium.

These demons not only realize that they are destined for judgment at the hands of Christ, but they have some concept of God’s timetable, because they know that this is not the right time for their judgment. It is not clear how much demons know because their knowledge has been corrupted by the fall, but apparently they still have tremendous insight. They know that they are going to be judged by Christ and in this passage they recognize that it is not yet time for that. They are apparently aware that they are not going to be placed into the abyss until the end of the Millennium. The Bible does not say how many other details they are aware of regarding their future.

11. Christ’s Power Over Demons

After the demons cried out to Christ in Matthew 8:29, verse 30 says, “Now there was at a distance from them a herd of many swine feeding.” The other gospel writers indicate there were two thousand pigs involved. Verse 31 continues, “And the demons began to entreat Him, saying, ‘If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.’” Evidently demons can inhabit animals as well as human beings. The demons asked Christ not to send them into the abyss, but to send them to inhabit the other creatures.

Christ gives them their desire. Verse 32. “And He said to them, ‘Begone!’” Do not overlook the power of Christ over demonic beings. These demons, so many and so powerful that no one could in any way restrain these two demon-possessed men, obeyed the command of Christ. Jesus says the word, “Begone!” and the demons are gone. They move into the herd of swine. “And they came out, and went into the swine, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.” (v. 32).

Why did Christ send the demons into the pigs? A couple of reasons come to mind. One, it makes clear that what happened was genuine--that Christ had power over the demons. It was not that all of a sudden these men just experienced a calm spirit, relaxed and settled down a bit. The demons were gone, and the impact of their violent character was felt in the swine, so much so that the swine went out of control, rushed down into the sea and were
destroyed. This is also going to make an impact among the people of that region and force them to make a decision.

It is interesting the number of commentators who are concerned about how fair it is to send the demons into the swine. They are more concerned about the pigs than they are about the men who had the demons. Those commentators are following in the line of the people of the city. The herdsmen who had been taking care of the pigs went tearing off into the town asking the townspeople to get Jesus and His disciples out of there. “And the herdsmen ran away, and went to the city, and reported everything, including the incident of the demoniacs. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus” (vs. 33,34).

12. The Response of the People

You would think that after this event there would be a mass revival. No, not on your life! “And when they saw Him, they entreated Him to depart from their region” (v. 34). That is remarkable! Here they have just been exposed to the tremendous power of Christ over the spirit world. They have come face to face with the one whom demons acknowledge to be the Son of God, and they ask Him to please get out of there! Luke 8:37 says that they were gripped with great fear. They could not understand it, but they knew they did not want any part of it.

It is remarkable that they do not consider who it is that could have such great power. The impact of the demons on the pigs was clear, and the demon-possessed men are normal people again. Who could this be but the Son of God? But they are gripped with fear, and all they know is that they want to put some distance between them and Jesus Christ. That is often the way unbelievers react when they are confronted with the truth of Christ. They become very uncomfortable when they hear the Bible taught; it also makes them uncomfortable to be around people who talk about Christ. As a result, they want to put distance between themselves and Jesus Christ because they are not comfortable with Him and His message. That is the condition of these people. When you read it in this passage, you think how amazing it is that they would respond in this way.

The people of the town where this miracle occurred entreated Jesus to depart from their region, and He did. They have already lost two thousand pigs! Life has become a bit unsettled. The people liked it the way it was before He came: The demon-possessed men were living in the tombs, everybody took a different road and life was alright. But now Christ had come into the picture, and everything had changed. They would rather have life on its normal keel without Christ being involved.

Matthew ends the record of this incident here because his purpose is to present the power of Christ and demonstrate that Christ is the Messiah through the miracles He performed. What happened to the demon-possessed men who had been delivered of those demons? Mark and Luke record the closing events, but they refer to only one of the men, evidently dealing with the one who is the key figure.

Mark gives additional details in Mark 5:17 and 18: “And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region. And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him.” Isn’t it natural that this man would want to go along and be a follower of the One who has forgiven, cleansed and delivered him? Jesus could have said, “Look, they had their chance. They told me to get out. Come on, let’s go!” But that was not His response.

The grace and mercy of God are evident here because Jesus told him not to come along. “And He did not let him, but He said to him, ‘Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you’” (v. 19). Jesus told him that he could not come along, but Jesus had something else He wanted him to do. He wanted him to go back into the town where he lived and be a testimony for Him. Jesus wanted him to tell the people what the Lord had done for him that He had redeemed him, delivered him and set him free. He was to tell them about the mercy of God in his life.

Verse 20 shows how he obeyed: “And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.” That is exciting! God is not through using him in his own city. The people there had been exposed to the power of Christ, and they had retreated. But God tells the man to go back and
be a testimony to them. He is to tell them what Christ has done for him, how He has transformed his life and had mercy on him. That is exactly what the man does, and the people are dumbfounded. Many of the people probably believed in Christ as a result of this man’s testimony.

13. A Personal Challenge

God works the same way today. Why does He not save us and take us out of this miserable mess immediately? Wouldn’t it be wonderful to believe in Jesus Christ and be taken off to heaven? But who would tell the people what marvelous things He has done for us? After we are saved, Christ sends us back to tell our family, our friends and those we work with what Christ has done for us. We were hopelessly enslaved, entangled in our sin and destined for hell. But God in His love sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross. When we believed in Him, He forgave us, cleansed us and made us new persons. Now we are looking forward to glory in His presence. He sends us back to tell the people that.

If you do not tell them about the marvel of your salvation, who will? Why should someone else have to tell them about your salvation? Aren’t you excited about it? Isn’t it glorious to you that Jesus Christ has delivered you from sin and made you a new person? Then He expects you to go and tell them. Peter says that you have been saved to “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

How many people have you shared with this week regarding the marvelous salvation you have experienced in Jesus Christ? Maybe you do not think they are ready for it yet. The Gadarenes were not ready for it either. They had just told Christ to get out. So Jesus got in the boat and left this man to tell them. The man’s responsibility was clear. He did not have to struggle over whether the people were ready to hear or not. He did not have to be concerned about whether it was a good time or an opportune moment. All he had to do was tell them what God had done in his life as a result of the transforming work of the power of Jesus Christ. He had the message he was to proclaim, and that is the message we have as well.

Sometimes I think we spend too much time praying for an open door or for the right opportunities. I am not saying you should not pray for these things, but we can get so bogged down in analyzing the situations that by the time we are ready, the situation has passed and we have missed the opportunity.

We have experienced the redemption of Jesus Christ. That provides us with the opportunity we need to share with others what has happened to us. We have been redeemed, and there are people who ought to know about it. That is the opportunity; that is the open door. How the Spirit of God chooses to use our testimony is up to Him. But He has placed us here to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

You have been exposed to the truth concerning the Son of God. How have you responded to Him? Are you anxious to put some distance between you and the message and the person of Christ? Have you believed in Him as the Son of God to be your Savior?

If you have believed in Him, are you following the pattern that Jesus gave this man? Have you returned and told others of Him? Have you told your family and friends, those you work with, those you come in contact with and know ought to hear the message from you that Jesus Christ is the Savior? It does not matter that others might have told them. The people in Jesus’ day had been exposed to Jesus’ message and had asked Him to leave. But when this formerly demon-possessed man shared his testimony with them, everyone marveled. That is the impact of a transformed life. Make sure you utilize your testimony to make an impact on those around you.