



The Omnipotent Christ-Part 2

Confident in His Power to Protect

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Grab your Bibles this morning and turn with me, if you were, to Luke chapter eight. Luke chapter eight. In our study of the Gospel of Luke, we have reached our second encounter with demons. Now I use the word “demons,” and a lot of people just instantaneously check out—demons, well, that’s craziness. I mean, they have relegated that whole word in the category of, you know, spiritual entities to, you know, movies like *Poltergeist* and *The Exorcist* and a few Stephen King novels. And this is just myth. This is craziness. This is stuff that’s beyond what’s real. And if you’re thinking more like a historian, you may say, “Well, you know, this is just the ancients’ way to kind of imaginatively explain phenomenon that was natural and scientific, but they didn’t know how to do it. So they had to come up with these beliefs in spirit beings. And so, you know, this is nonsense.”

Well, if it’s not real and there are no spiritual entities that are categorized as demons, then we would do well just to skip this whole section, verses 26 through 39—we can just overlook it, because it’s all nonsense. It has nothing to say to speak to the reality of what we live with every single day. But of course I’m convinced that’s not the case. Not—I’m convinced that’s not the case based on the fact that the Bible has been attested as an authentic revelation from God to man, which is a whole ‘nother sermon, or set of—series of—set of sermons that I’ve preached in the past. But I believe that the attestation for the reality of the spiritual entities—let’s just start with the category of spiritual entities—is really not all that hard to bring to mind.

And I’d like to—like to say “with your permission,” but I’ve got the microphone, so I guess I just can plow ahead with this—but to ask you to indulge me in a very uncomfortable and unpleasant illustration to try and make this point. Smile at me if you’re okay with that. Very unpleasant. And it’s not fun.

Let’s think this through—spiritual entities. This is awkward, and I don’t do this very often, and it won’t be a big deal, really. But what I’d like to do is just to move your hands around like this—just move your hands around. Now I want you to look around—everybody at people moving their hands around, look down your row and look at that. Okay. Now make some kind of little noise: “Woo,” “Ah.” Okay. Now listen to that. You hear that? You see that? Okay, you can stop.

That’s really weird. And you laugh, and we hear your laughter. But I want you to think for a second. All those fingers you saw, all those bodies you saw moving, all those vocal cords you heard making



noises, all that laughter you just heard—those biological units, those bodies will one day be silent and motionless, called death—every one of them, barring the rapture, I understand. But in the normal course of things, everyone in this room, given enough time, is going to be dead. Now this is very uncomfortable and unpleasant. But if you’ve ever been in the presence of someone dying, you know what a strange phenomenon it is. You have a body that’s alive and breathing, right—you think of the gurney in the deathbed scene I’ve been to several times—and you’ve got the family gathered around. And then the last gasp, the little death rattle as they call it, and the last breath goes out and—done. And the body is dead, pronounced dead. And everybody that’s been there at vigil by bedside, they pack up their things and they walk out of the room. And they go and maybe cry or grieve in the waiting room, and then it is done. Henry’s not there. Brenda’s gone. Brenda’s gone.

Now let’s think about this. That same body is sitting right there on that gurney, on that bed, but—not there anymore. Now there’s something more to reality than just the cells of that body. And if you believe it’s just a few volts of electricity kind of firing through the synapses of that brain, you need to understand there’s something much more to the reality of life than just biology. There’s something about death that should prove it to you. And it’s strange enough—and I know most of you don’t have this experience—to go to a morgue. You see it on TV—or a mortuary, perhaps. I’ve been to the biggest one here in Southern California, where the bodies literally are stacked up in very tight little, you know, like bunk beds all along the sides of the room where they embalm people. And here are all these bodies.

Now, for the guy who’s taking you on the tour, they get a kick out of showing you this room because they know you’re freaked out. But you’re walking through this room looking at bodies that look like the bodies you see every day walking down the sidewalk. But there they are, motionless, with tags on their toes. And you see these bodies and if you’ve had that experience, I can just testify to the experience—you walk out of that, you leave that. The impression is a pretty big impression. And then you walk through the parking lot to your car, and you get in the car, and you go downtown, or you go by, you know, the mall, and you see all these people walking, and you start to freak out that these big, heavy bodies, these large frames with flesh on are walking around and animated. You start going, “This is weird,” because in that room they’re just—they’re just like containers, but they’re empty containers. Whatever it was that made those bodies alive is now gone.

Not to mention, intuitively most of us recognize we’re more than biology. You are more than biology—you understand that just intuitively. Your cells are replicating—some replicate a lot faster than others. Generally speaking, all the cells in your body that were present seven and a half years ago are now gone and have been replaced with new cells. But are you a completely new person? Well, naturally speaking, you are—biologically you are. And yet you’re not; you’re the same person, because you understand you’re software. You are not hardware—software that rides on the hardware. You understand? Those are two distinct things. That’s why when someone dies and the software goes away,



everyone walks away from the hardware. And now it becomes the thing—certainly in our culture—we just kind of sweep death into the corner and out of the way and to the mortician, and that’s why he likes to cremate now. “I just don’t want to think about it. I don’t want a body laying around somewhere.” We don’t like the concept. But in reality, you know that the real person is not there anymore.

That was unpleasant. But let me give you a bizarre one. Let’s just pretend—just to make the point of unseen entities—let’s make the point here this way: let’s pretend that you cannot see people because you exist at 30,000 feet. Thirty thousand feet—you can’t see people. And let’s just say you’re not a person, you’re a thing. And you’re questioning whether or not people even exist because you can’t see them. But what you can see, as you look down as a thing—talking to other things, but I’m personifying things, which makes no sense; this is a bizarre illustration—but as you look down, you see movement. And the things that you see down there, you see as objects just like you are because you’re an object; you’re not a person. But someone tells you, “Well, those objects move, including the cylinders that kind of buzz by you every now and then at 30,000 feet—those are occupied by people.” But you’ve never seen a person because from your vantage point it’s impossible to see people. But the theory is all of those objects—the big trucks that are moving along the streets that look like little dots moving along the lines, and the things that fly by you in the sky—are actually all inhabited by people, which you’ve never seen and can’t see.

Then someone says to you, “Hey, you know what? I know all you’ve ever seen in terms of motion and movement are things, and I’m telling you, those things are occupied by people, which are different than things. But I’m going to really blow your mind now. There are people that can exist outside of things. There are people that walk around downtown in that city that you look down at—you can’t see them; all you see is things moving—but there are actually entities that never get inside of things.” And I’ve been to those places on the planet, by the way—people that have never been in a car and never been in a bus, never been in a plane. They live their whole lives outside of things, but you can’t see them because you live at 30,000 feet—unseen entities.

Here we’re in a passage that talks about—to stretch this illustration far too far—hijacking and carjacking. That there are actually entities that have no right to be inside of a vehicle. And the people that have the title to the car, that belong in that car as it moves down the highway, actually get hijacked by people that have no right to be in it. Spiritual entities—spiritual entities—should not be so hard for us to comprehend. Now that I tried to do this in an introduction—we could spend all day, I suppose, trying to show you the rationality as 21st-century Americans that there are spiritual entities. The problem is, since you’re used to spiritual entities contained within biological units, it may be hard for you to believe and to think through, but it shouldn’t be a stretch that there are actually spiritual entities that don’t exist inside of, and never have existed inside of, material biological entities—containers. These are what the Bible calls angelic beings. They weren’t designed to go inside of biological containers. These are a class of beings independent of biology, created before the fabric of our created



world in terms of time and space and the fabric of material things. And they are classified, much like human beings are, into two groups. The Bible calls them elect angels and evil angels—God’s angels and, Matthew 24 says, the devil’s angels.

We have spiritual entities that exist and interact with humanity—spirits within biological dangers and occasions. And it’s very occasional that we—we’re 63 messages into this series in Luke—here’s our second encounter with a hijacking of a spiritual entity never designed to be within a biological container taking inhabitants within a biological container. We call him the man from the Garrison’s—the Garrison demoniac. And I’m going to read the text for you now, verses 26 through 39. And I’ll try to show great restraint to read it without much comment. I said last night, “without any comment,” and that failed in the first verse. So I just—I want to read it with limited comment. Let’s read it all, then we’ll go back and do a little bit of study here, verse 26 through 39.

“Then they sailed”—that’s the disciples and Christ—“to the country of the Garrison’s, which is opposite of Galilee.” Now, here’s my first comment—I’m sorry—Sea of Galilee. Everything has been taking place, from your vantage point—we’re flipping around to the west side of the Sea of Galilee. This is somewhere on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. One of the reasons—if you were to have your Bibles open, maybe in your homework this week, and look at the parallel passage in Matthew and Mark—you’d find a little variation on the spelling of this because we don’t know where this is. Garrison’s is how it’s spelled here. And we see that through time, in the transmission of this text, some spellings have crept in that have been a little different, because we’re not sure what this is. But it’s on the side of the Decapolis, the Roman cities, the ten Roman cities that were so important on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. And that makes sense when you start reading—and you know this story, many of you—it involves a farmer who’s got a herd of pigs. Now, Jews shouldn’t be herding pigs. Am I right? You know that—Sunday School 101. These are the kosher people. So this is all taking place in a predominantly Gentile area where Jesus goes as he crosses the Sea of Galilee, as he’s with his disciples after the storm.

Verse 27—that was a lot of comment. That’s not minimal at all, was it? Verse 27: “When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons.” There’s the class of spiritual entities that don’t belong inside of human beings. “For a long time he had worn no clothes; he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.’ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.” Apparently—medically—for many a time it had seized him, this man, and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.



Jesus then asked, in verse 30, “What is your name?”—talking to the man. And here’s the answer, weirdly enough. He said, “Legion,” which is the Roman word to describe this battalion of Roman soldiers, which is usually about 6,000 fighting men. And so here’s a word that represents a lot. And the commentary here is that many demons had entered him. So here’s a word that represents a plurality and a lot.

Verse 31: “And they begged him”—these demons begged him—“not to command them to depart into the abyss,” literally “the pit.” It’s the word used throughout the New Testament to describe the place of judgment for the demonic rebellious spirits. “Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him”—strange request—“to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then the people went out to see what had happened.”

Now imagine you’re walking up to this place by the Sea of Galilee—they went to see what happened. “And when they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid,” which is the same response of the disciples watching Jesus last time, commanding the wind and the waves. This is amazing. And you’ve got, you know, bobbing, floating corpses of pigs in the water, and you’re going, “Wow, this whole thing is weird. We know the crazy man who lives among the tombs, and now he’s sitting there, you know, asking questions with perfect diction to the Messiah. This is bizarre.”

Verse 37: “Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Garrison’s asked him to depart from them”—please go away. Just like Peter, when he was overwhelmed with the holiness and the majesty of Christ, he said, “Depart from me, I’m a sinful man,” with the miraculous catch of fish, you might remember. And they said the same thing: “We don’t even want you here.” “So he got into the boat and returned.” Verse 38: “The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him”—right, go with Christ—“but Jesus sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Now, we’re limited on time, and I understand this is a very extreme example—one of the most extreme we have in the Bible—of the hijacking of a person who is spirit contained in a biological container. But here come these entities, and they invade this—they hijack this guy. And he does a lot of things that are not the doing of the man. But he becomes this passive victim. At some point, though, he was culpable early in the process—that’s another sermon; we could look at how this works in the Scripture—but at this point he is being hijacked to go where he doesn’t want to go. And I want to look at the things that



are describing the man, which we can safely assume are where the demons wanted to drive him. And I want to look at those things and say, “I understand this.” This is an extreme example of demonization—which, by the way, that word in verse 36, “the demon-possessed man,” that’s really the word, and I try to point this out whenever we hit this: they don’t possess him, although in your mind you probably think of *The Exorcist* and have something of the right idea of inhabitation. But the word is *daymo, nids*. Omi—*dameon* is the Greek word for the demon—is the causal stem in Greek, which shows me that there’s some kind of causation that the demons are doing, and then *men*—off the passive participial ending—which shows me that there is a demon-caused passivity on this guy’s part. The gun is to his head, if you will—he slid over from the steering wheel, and now the demons are going, “Let me take this life where we want to take it.”

Now, there are at least seven things—the most seven obvious things—that I want to point out. Now they’re extreme, but I want to look at them as categories in the spectrum and start to say, well, when demons get involved, they want to drive you this direction. And the battle that we face, the Bible says in Ephesians 6, is one that really is not flesh, and is not against flesh and blood. It’s not against your boss. It’s not against the culture. It’s not against the late-night talk show host. This is about the real things that drive this—the spiritual things, the cosmic powers of this present darkness, to put it in a mouthful sense and phrase. They’re moving in the direction that we see here, extremely successful in this man’s life. So maybe we’ll find a little conviction in this and a little insight to understand number one in your outline: demonic agendas—that’s what I want to understand. Let’s start there and see how much of this sermon we actually have time for.

Number one: let’s understand demonic agendas. And I say that, I should note this—and I just quoted from Ephesians chapter 6, part of it—I’ve heard of verse 12, but verse 11 says, you know, we ought to be ready to stand against the schemes—and that Greek word is the transliterated English word “methods”—the methods, the schemes, the methods or tactics or techniques or strategies of the enemy. I want to think those through by just looking at seven things we recognize this guy’s doing.

Let’s start with the most obvious one, in verse number 27. Here’s a guy from the city, but not living in the city. For a long time now, because the demons had had their way with this guy, he had—underline this—worn no clothes. That’s bizarre. Clearly making a statement without your clothing on—something’s happening there. If you met a guy naked in the parking lot, you’d probably call the cops or our security team, or say, “Something’s wrong with this guy.” I mean, you don’t just pass by that without noticing. “You have no clothes on—where are your clothes?” Well, without clothes—why? Well, in this case, we know he’s driven to be naked because of demonic activity. Let’s give this a name that maybe we can relate to across the spectrum. Let’s call it this: indecency.



Letter A, you want to start to itemize the demonic agenda—just in this text at least—we see it is to drive a person to be indecent, to be—let’s drive it this way—immodest; to be someone who is shameless, brazen; someone who’s into the shock value of showing you things that we don’t want to see—things about you that should be private are now on public display. Now, when did we start wearing clothes? And don’t say two years old. I’m not talking about when. When did humanity start putting on clothing? Sunday school graduates—Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve—when? Well, not right away—after the fall. And after the fall, and they sinned, they were ashamed and they covered up. Now I’m not trying to, in any way—because I have no time for this anyway—and I’m not trying to hit the whole nut of it, but let’s at least look at the idea of the parallel between the sin and the shame. Why are they ashamed of their genitals at this point? What is going on here? Well, the idea of God taking a tree that he says, “This is private, this is exclusive—don’t touch it,” now becomes something in their mind. They go after it; they transgress that. In essence, basically, it’s like, “Hey, God, you need to build a fence around that tree. You need to protect that,” because here are people that take private, personal, and make it public domain. That’s at least something even we see, knowing that the plan for marriage is that the privacy of certain parts of our body are clearly for the consumption and for the participation of only one person. Now all of a sudden, there’s this idea that that personal needs to stay personal—needs to be gated off. And there’s much more to clothing than that. But let’s just start with that—the idea that sinful people need to show that appropriate, modest shame and cover up things that need to be kept private.

Now, if we were sinless and perfect and had the innocence of Genesis one and two, it wouldn’t be an issue. But it is an issue, and a sinful part of the reality of us having a knowledge of good and evil now. In the spectrum of things, I doubt you’re a part of a nudist colony. Am I right? And you can wink at me if you are, but most of you are not—you’re not prancing around Monday through Friday naked. But let’s just think of what’s going on in our culture to take private things that relate to your body and making them public. And I start using words like “modesty,” and you start feeling, you know, the grip of conviction. And all this going on—the Bible does talk a lot about that—dressing in a modest way. Does that mean *Little House on the Prairie*? Is that what we’re talking about? That we’re putting sheets over you like, you know, in the Middle Ages? Not talking about that. But we’re talking about things that clearly make an indecent statement, a shameless statement of taking things that should be private for your husband or your wife, that now become public—that become broadcast. That kind of idea of moving in the direction of indecency—you understand demonic agenda. The agenda of the enemy—and you see in our culture, right, a showcase of this—absolutely everywhere. I could go in a million directions in trying to drive that point home—I don’t think I need to. First Timothy 2:9, to give it some great words, says we need to be wearing respectful apparel. And obviously culture drives a lot of that—I get that. But let’s make sure that we keep private things private. And when it comes to your apparel, it is respectful.

Number two—middle of verse 27: Jesus stepped out on—there he met a man from the city who had a demon; a long time wearing no clothes—that’s disturbing—and he had not lived in a house. Now, it’s good to live in a house. A lot of advantages to living in a house. Why would you want to live in a



house? Well, it's better than not living in a house, because if you live outside of a house, you know, you've kind of got to find some things like shelter to keep you from the weather and the elements, and so houses make perfect sense—houses—a good thing to live in. You don't want to live without a house; you'd like to live inside a house. Okay, what are you trying to say? I'm trying to say it's illogical for a person that really needs shelter, and it's advantageous to have shelter, to live without that shelter. That's just irrational. Let's make that our second agenda here: indecency—irrationality. Illogical behavior, unreasonable behavior—you can put this in quotes, without turning me off right now—"crazy" behavior. That makes no sense. That's irrational.

Now, I'm not saying that everybody who is "crazy," to use a word in our society that makes us think clinically about psychology, has demonic activity going on. But I can say this: I do know my experience, just as someone who's dealing with people for the last few decades—I understand that a lot of times the demonic activity clearly drives people into craziness, into lunacy, into being completely irrational, doing things that make no sense. Now, if you look at the biblical agenda for human beings, it is to be reasonable and rational. As a matter of fact, look at verse 35 in our text: the end story for this, in Luke's commentary on this guy, is that he's sitting at the feet of Jesus—Bible, verse 35—clothed and—underline it—in his right mind. You see him thinking straight, doing things you would expect, saying things at the time you'd expect him to say things, saying things that seem appropriate to the situation. God is always driving people, in terms of biblical wisdom, into rationality. God is a God—to think of many things just in terms of him—when we act, 1 Corinthians chapter 14: God is a God of order. He's a God of things being done decently and properly. When it speaks to wisdom in James 3:17, it talks about God's wisdom being reasonable—open to reason. The idea of being a reasonable person is God's work and God's direction. And the emphasis of demonic work is to get you doing more and more crazy, illogical, unreasonable, irrational things. In his right mind. God is a God of order. God is a God of peace. God is not a God of confusion. God is not a God of illogical behavior. Living out in the middle of nowhere where you have no cover for your body—that's irrational.

Then let's look at where he chose to live. In Henry's back forty, in the corner of the barn or outside of the barn, next to the cow trough? No, he didn't live there. Where did he live? Verse 27—among the tombs. Tombs. Now you could have picked any place, but the tomb—that's really macabre. That's really morbid. Let's call that the third one: morbidity. Morbidity when it comes to focus—gruesome things, things that are macabre, things that are horrific, things that are grotesque, things that are gross. Graveyards are obviously about death—things that focus on death.

Now, think about our culture. Think about how often you recognize that the tendency, left unchecked, left without the input of biblical, logical, good, godly principles, leads people in that direction. I mean, that's where people go. I mean, all you've got to do—and I don't recommend it—is go on the internet and search. I mean, you could search for words like "grotesque" or "horrific" or "macabre," and you could see it. I mean, man, people eat this stuff up like pornography. They have an insatiable desire for



this stuff—they want to see it. And not only that, you find people that you would think—if they were going to—I think about walking down the street or at the mall or somewhere last month and seeing people’s tattoos, right? Everybody has tattoos. And you think, “Hey, get a tattoo—someone’s going to put a tattoo of some scene that’s beautiful.” No, they don’t have flowers on themselves. Here’s this—you know—this pretty 25-year-old, and she’s got a skull with a snake crawling out of the eyeball or the eye socket. Like, how did you start to think that would be a great thing to tattoo on your chest? I don’t understand. What were you thinking? Skulls, death, skeletons—what is that all about?

See, now, I doubt that many of you are thinking of selling your house and moving your family to the graveyard. But I do want to think through, maybe in the spectrum of that, how is Satan moving even within congregations like ours to put more focus on those things? I talked about Stephen King novels when I started—the realm and relegation of the demonic. Now, even that—why would we choose to entertain ourselves with that? What does the Scripture say about the idea of the enemy? He’s all about—the thief comes only to kill, steal, and destroy. That idea of the darkness of it all—it’s something we should be moving in the opposite direction. Why would we entertain our family with horrific things? Why would we choose it? Those are the places we want our imagination to go? I mean, the Bible says very clearly, when it comes to God, the God who guards our hearts and minds, he says—what does he want us to think about? Whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute—on goes the list there in Philippians 4—because the mind of the person in the direction of God’s influence goes in the other direction of what is macabre, gruesome, gross, grotesque, horrific. That shouldn’t be where we’re at.

Now, this is an extreme example, I get it. But we’ve got so far—what?—indecent, irrationality, morbidity. Go down, if you would, to verse 29: “For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For many a time it had seized him; and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles.” Now, what we have to do is try and define the word “seized” by what they did in response to whatever it is. So when the demon seized the man, what did he do? Did he start, you know, throwing out like calculus calculations or, you know, talking about philosophy? No, none of that happened. This guy needed restraints. He needed shackles. He needed to be kept under guard. Why? Because the demonic activity led to outbursts—it led to eruptions. Let’s just call it this—with fear of you condemning me for the word I choose—let’s call it mania. And just to give it a category: mania. Emotional outbursts, eruptions. In the parallel passage in Mark 5:5, it describes him as always crying out—which is the word for screaming, yelling—the kind of outbursts that the Bible often talks about as works of the flesh we see here, caught on fire and fueled by the demonic influence, to be absolutely out of control. So much so that there would be this manic expression, this manic outburst.

We even read it today in our daily Bible reading, but it’s all over the Bible. When the Bible talks about wisdom, it talks about self-control. The expression of the flesh—I’m just quoting Galatians 5:17—is things like this: fits of anger, fits of rage, outbursts of anger, other translations put it. The biblical fruit



of the Spirit—peace, self-control—the idea of being able to keep my emotions in check. Put in Philippians 4 earlier—the God of all peace guards our hearts and minds. There’s something about the manic expressions, the outbursts, the eruptions, that certainly is the demonic work—and in this case, the extreme example of having to put him in chains so that he doesn’t go crazy, and by that I mean in a flurry of eruptive activity.

Number five—verse 29 says once they got him chained and shackled, though, he would break the bonds. So he would break out of that. Now, I also want to add a word to this because it’s a good descriptive word. This is a narrative that tells us what he did—he got chained, and he would break them. So he had this feat of, like, almost superhuman strength, which we do see attested to in human beings doing a lot of things that are a lot of different influences that seem unreasonably strong. But this kind of breaking of the bonds, I think, is well described in the word that is used over in Matthew 8:28 that calls him “fierce,” which is the Greek word that can be translated “violent”—the fierce and violent behavior, the savage, untamed, brutal behavior—this man in breaking out. I know this overlaps with mania, but let’s just call it violence. Violence.

When you see NFL stars deck their girlfriend or their fiancée in an elevator, and you watch that on the news a hundred times, and then stand back against the wall of the elevator and then drag her unconscious body into the hallway, half flopped into the elevator—we start recognizing we see these kinds of outbursts all the time. And then the next guy—was it yesterday?—gets convicted for, you know, bloodying his kid in the name of discipline, and now convicted—or at least charged—with child endangerment or child abuse or whatever. These are not biblical things. These are demonic things. And by that, I mean this is the direction demons want to take people in—being violent. And the Bible says, the closer we get to the end of time—and I’m quoting now 2 Timothy 3:3—the more we get near the end of time, we’re going to see more and more of this. And the Bible says this: when it comes to violent people, they lack *storgē*. Now, if you’ve ever studied the words in the Greek New Testament for love, *storgē* means affection—natural affection you would have. And in that list, there’s an opposition—there’s a negation at the beginning: *astorgos*. It describes people as lacking that natural affection. I think the ESV—how does it translate it when it comes to that? It calls it “heartless.” I guess that’s an okay translation of the idea. They don’t—you don’t think of decking your fiancée. You wouldn’t think of bloodying your child. Natural affection would not lead you to do those things. It is the irrational behavior, the demonic moving people to do things that just are absolutely savage, brutal, untamed, dangerous—violence. And the times say it’s only going to get worse.

Verse 29—there’s one last phrase there. After he’d break the bonds, it says he was driven by the demon into the desert. Number six—are we on number six? What do we have so far? Indecency, irrationality, morbidity, mania, violence. Number six—let’s call this one anti-social. He wasn’t driven to the marketplace. He wasn’t driven to hang out at the YMCA. Where was he driven? Into the desert. What’s in the desert? Nothing. When you see—and you’ll see this throughout the Bible—the demonic



influence on people driving them to withdraw, to be reclusive, to be isolationist, you can know that's certainly not the direction of the Bible. The failings of the medieval church notwithstanding that created things like monks and monasteries—all I'm telling you is the Scripture is very clear that this is a communal life that we're to live. We're created for relationship. We're created to be, as Psalm 133 says, dwelling together in unity. One of the favorite words in the New Testament for Christians is "brothers and sisters." We're seen as communal, not withdrawn, independent, isolated, or anti-social. But that's exactly what we see here going on in Scripture.

Now, I should say this at this point—probably should have said it earlier—all of these can be unique, isolated expressions of something godly. Is it ever good to get away from everybody and retreat into the mountains? Jesus did it to pray. He didn't live that way. Nothing wrong. How about violence? Was Jesus ever violent? Absolutely—turned over the tables, made a whip, drove people out of the temple. There are expressions of all these things that you could say, "Hey, you know, there's a time for it." Even morbidity—I mean, here's a story in the Bible about something gross. It envisions us picturing a naked man living in the tombs. There's a time for these things in their appropriate setting. We're talking about the trends. And all—I mean, it's easy to imagine, because we see it all over our culture—people driven to morbidity, mania, violence, anti-social, reclusive, isolationist behavior.

Love the verse in Acts 2:44—this is one of the ones that came to my mind: "They"—Christians—"were all together; they had all things in common." The ability to harmonize in relationship—that's God's plan for us. Satan's is just the opposite.

Lastly—we could come up with more, but these things are the ones that are most obvious—drop down to verse 33. When the demons had their way, ultimately—now, this is a bizarre passage, I understand. Why would God let them inhabit, you know, pigs? Why do they want to go into pigs? What was that all about? No time for that. And a lot of it is speculation anyway. But what happens to these pigs? Verse 33: when the demons came out of them and they entered the pigs, the herd rushed down the steep bank and into the lake and drowned. Now, all you do is open the Bible and see that throughout the Scripture, Satan and his henchmen are described as people that are all about killing. I already quoted John 10:10. How about John 8:44? He's a murderer from the beginning—he's been a murderer. He's all about destruction. He's a destroyer—*Apollyon*, *Abaddon*—you know those words for Satan in the Bible. Those mean "destroyer," one who destroys. And so the idea here of this person being led to—or these demons being led to—destroy what they inhabit—it's even in this account, but not articulated by Luke. It's articulated by Mark in the parallel passage—Mark 5:5. There were even things leading up to that—self-hurtful behaviors. It says this: that he was cutting himself with stones. So this guy lived out in the tombs, you know, by himself, sometimes out in the desert, very violent—the mania of this man and the violence of the man, in the middle of the man—and then he would be cutting himself with stones. This kind of self-destructive behavior—that's the label I gave it: number seven, self-destructive. A danger to oneself—this self-loathing, this idea of being a murderer of my own self—suicidal thoughts, suicidal



behavior, suicidal acts—suicide itself. Ephesians 5 says, just as the natural work of God in everybody's conscience should be that we don't hate our own flesh, but we nourish it and cherish it—that's what God designed for us to do. Not to be full of ourselves, but we take care of ourselves. We guard ourselves. We protect ourselves. Satanic influence always leads to self-destructive behavior, endangering our own well-being.

All right, now those are seven quick—quick; I mean, I did them as quickly as I could—observations of an extreme example. And all I'm wanting you to do is to think of the spectrum of these and say, whenever I find my life moving in the direction—down the slider—of this particular spectrum toward indecency, irrationality, morbidity, mania, violence, anti-social behavior, or something that is self-harmful or self-destructive, I need to know there's more than just stuff involved. There's more than people involved. There's more than an irritating boss involved. There's more than just my thoughts involved. The Bible says that behind all of this—to quote the Scripture—we're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, cosmic powers of this present darkness, over the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

But why is this text here? Well, it's not here just to warn us—although I think there's a lot of warning we can glean from it. It's here to show us, just like in the previous passage, that Christ has omnipotent power over these things. And while this is going on, and you see the man from the city living out there naked in the graveyard, as you try to walk by—which, according to Matthew, people even couldn't even walk by wherever he was because he was so violent—this man—you might think, “Where is Christ in all of this?” Well, Christ steps on the scene and commands those demons to go out and proves his authority over it. And the end result is he's clothed and in his right mind in verse 35, and everybody is afraid that even the demons are so responsive—to be jettisoned out of this man's life. They hijack, and they seem tough, they seem intimidating. They seem violent and gruesome. And these demons—by the word—Christ commands them to go, and they go.

Number two on your outline, if you're taking notes: do not doubt Christ's power. And that's hard to do when the demons are doing their thing. As Job—too—the demons harassed Job—Satan himself. Man, I've got the head honcho messing with him. And when the devil himself goes to mess with Job again, it's not through seances. It's not through weird dark feelings—he sits alone in the dark at night. It's through storms. It's through his kids being killed. It's through sickness. It's through all these things where he does end up doing a lot of the things, by the time the book is over, that Satan wants him to do. What is it calling into question? The goodness of God—doubting God. Satan hates God. That's the problem—you're just a pawn in all this. He'd like to turn you, like Job, against God. He wants to dishonor God by getting you harassed and messed up and moving down the line of at least these seven things in the direction of a place of a life that dishonors the Lord. So that's his goal. But you need to remember his power—that at any time, he could pull it back.



Now remember, the struggle we have intellectually is, why doesn't he pull it back all the time? Why is it that he prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies? Why don't you just ratchet all those powers back? Well, that's a different sermon. I understand that—we've dealt with that at length, the problem of evil. But what we need to catch from this text is that Christ has omnipotent authority over them. Even Satan, in Job chapter one, has a leash, does he not? Now, when I had a dog as a kid, I just had a nylon rope, you know, with a hook on it. Today they have those little things—zippy thing—off they go. Right? And the dog is on—what do they call that?—a retractable dog leash, which I think is weird. Now, I don't have a dog right now, so I don't know—maybe it's the best thing since sliced bread—but it's a weird little thing because it always seems the dog is going everywhere that you don't want it to go. But then you can put the brakes on it. I don't know—is it with the thumb you do it?

Now, here's what you need to envision—don't envision the gal that walks through your neighborhood, like the one in my neighborhood who's probably like 4'7", and she weighs maybe 70 pounds, and she happened to buy a Doberman Pinscher and I have no idea why. She's not taking the dog for the walk—the dog's taking her for a walk. You know that lady in your neighborhood. Don't picture that. I know Satan is intimidating, and he's attacking us. He is our enemy, and his demons surround us. But picture on the other end of that—picture this way: forget the Doberman—picture a yappy little irritating poodle. Okay, if you own a poodle, I'm sorry. This is just an illustration. And on the other end of the retractable dog leash is like the biggest, you know, bodybuilder you could ever imagine—Mr. Thug, you know—just bulging—every muscle is just rippling. And that's it. And he's got the little yappy dog, and at any minute he could not only stop it, but take that thing and yank it over your neighbor's fence. Right? Well, picture that.

Don't doubt Christ's power just because it feels like a Great Dane and long teeth are about to eat us. Remember, when he's pushing us toward irrational behavior, morbidity, violence, outbursts of anger—whatever it might be in your life—and the work that he does to drive you away from God, to do things that are dishonoring your Maker, remember the other end of that influence—the things that you're wrestling with—on the other end of that leash is an all-powerful Christ. And at any moment he can end this. And you need to be encouraged that one day he will—the leashes will all be flipping the yappy poodle into the abyss, and they know that. Isn't that how it starts? "Are you going to put us into—don't torment us." And as Matthew adds, they give this phrase, "before"—"Are you here to torment us before the time? Is our time up?" "Nope, wait a minute—we know we're heading to the abyss. We know we're going to be put into the pound. But is it now? Just don't do it now—it's not time yet." See, their theology is really good—these demons. They know where they're going. They understand Christ is in charge. They are begging him in verse 32—begging him: "We don't want to go to the abyss now." He can lock people up in the abyss if he'd like to—demons—but instead he gives them permission to do something bizarre, and who knows where they go after that. But the idea is: Christ has absolute, sovereign, perfect control over these and can yank their chain back at any time he chooses.



If you struggle with why he hasn't pulled it back in your life—because you are wrestling with the temptation and struggle and influence the demons are always working to accomplish in our lives—just remember Psalm 23: your rod and your staff, they comfort me. What's the point? You could end this, and one day you will—as it says in Romans 16 (we read this recently in our daily Bible reading), verse number 20—Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” And one day we'll be done, and he will be locked up in the abyss, the Bible says. So I'm comforted by the fact that he can stop it, even though now he prepares the table before me in the presence of my enemies. But he ends that with that biblical optimism—always trying to get you to have—which isn't “here and now” name it and claim it; it's, “I know this: surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Realize this: one day Satan will be crushed under our feet—not through name-it-and-claim-it prosperity-gospel theology, but by the reality that while they yap and while they bite and while they bark—better yet, from our perspective, they roar like roaring lions in our lives—we know one day they'll be done. In the meantime, I let that power comfort me as I partake and indulge in whatever provision God gives me—that table before me—even though I'm surrounded by the hostile forces.

Now, this particular passage is about a man who's very passive. We could look at the culpability that he had and participation that he had to get there, and we can assume it—though this text doesn't tell us elsewhere in the Bible. You don't get to the place of being hijacked unless you've been tooling around in the wrong neighborhood far too often. Okay. But when it comes to this particular text, when Christ comes and delivers, he delivers a man who is completely passive—he seems out of his mind, and God fixes him. Now, while that can happen and has happened and happens here, that's not the normal fare for us as Christians. He doesn't say, “Just be passive; if you're in trouble, I'll yank you out of it.”

Let me just have you jot this passage down—if you have time, we'll take two minutes to look at this text—Ephesians chapter 6. He tells us, number three, if you can do three things at once—jot this down: take all biblical precautions. We have to take the biblical precautions to be ready to fight, so that our lives don't drift down into indecency or irrationality or morbidity or violence or all the rest of these things that we looked at. I need to make sure that I'm ready.

Verse 13—if you've got it open—“take up the whole armor of God,” so that I'll be able to stand in the evil day. And the evil day isn't the eschatological day, because in that day he's going to be crushed—God's going to do it with the sword of his mouth. I'm talking about the days that I get struck with the temptations and the pressure and all the wrestling I have to do, as it talks about in verses 10 through 12. “Having done all”—there it is—every precaution—“to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on”—now you know this, right? They teach this down the hall in Sunday School. But be sure you catch these things: put on the belt of truth. Why would I need truth? Because the enemy—I know this about



the enemy—he’s a liar and the father of lies. John 8 says he’s always trying to get me to think unbiblically. Therefore the belt of truth—I snap around my torso more biblical thinking, and I can never think biblically unless I get the Bible in my head. I need more biblical encounters to have more biblical thinking, to stand against the lies that come into my mind. See things like suicide—no one offs themselves, if you will, without a lot of irrational, unbiblical thoughts. The temptations—whether it was Job who wanted to die, Elijah that wanted to die—name somebody—these people that were despising their own lives—there’s a demonic thing. And the Bible says we need biblical thinking. We’ve got to have—as the text says—the word of Christ richly dwelling in us. As David said—I believe he wrote Psalm 119—“Your word have I hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” Satan is a liar. We need the truth. We’d better think biblically by getting in our Bible every day.

The breastplate of righteousness—which I don’t think is the salvific righteousness imputed to us in Christ. I believe this is the righteousness that shields us against all kinds of compromise and problem. Think about this: Satan is a tempter, right? That’s what he’s all about. He wants you to sin. He wants you to compromise. He wants you to deviate from biblical plans. I need to make sure that I’m doing right—I’m making these right decisions.

“Put on, as shoes for your feet”—verse 15—“having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.” Satan is an accuser, the Bible says. Demons want to accuse us. They want to make us feel like, “Oh man, I’m not right with God.” And here I need to recognize, hey, I’ve got to deal with the issue of grace—understand grace, review the gospel, understand what the Bible says about why I’m right with the living God—and slap those things on my life like a pair of cleats or shoes or a Roman soldier’s war boots—or the equivalent in the first century.

Verse 16: “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.” Nothing could be more central. I’ve got to believe what God says. I’ve got to believe what God has promised. Satan is a doubter. Satan doubted to get himself into sin in Ezekiel 28. He goes into the garden and he tries to make Eve doubt. He’s all about doubt. So I need faith. I need to trust God’s promises—God is good; his promises are right; his path is best.

“Take up”—verse 17—“the helmet of salvation.” There it is—I’ve got to hold on to grace. I’ve got to remember that he’s a slanderer—that’s what “devil” means, by the way—the word *diabolos*, thirty-four times in the Bible—one who slanders us, wants to get us to doubt God’s ultimate promise. I’ve got to hold on to the truth there.



“The sword of the Spirit”—look at this, verse 17b—“which is the word of God.” So we’ve got one offensive weapon—the sword—and the sword is God’s truth. Now, it’s one thing to think God’s truth and to have it as a protection around my torso. But the reality is, I’ve got to speak it. There’s one thing Satan wants to do—is shut people up who speak the truth. He wants you quiet. He hates the truth. We’ve got to speak biblically, not only think biblically.

Then two more things that aren’t a part of the armor, but let me add these just to round out our exhortation in this text: praying at all times—verse 18—that speaks for itself. Nothing Satan wants more than for you to be isolated not just from people but from God. He’d love for you to talk to and look to anybody but God. So we pray at all times. And then verse 18b: “To that end, keep alert.” Keep alert, with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints. I’ve got to be vigilant—so much of the Bible. I think of that passage I quoted about the roaring lion—it says I’ve got to be sober-minded and watchful. I’ve got to be alert—alert to pray, alert to trust, alert to speak biblically, alert to think biblically. I’ve got to be vigilant. Satan is a schemer. He wants the advantage of surprise. He wants you blissfully unaware.

Speaking of carjackings—there are about 38,000 carjackings in our country every year. And there are certain things that you can do, I suppose, to protect yourself. But as Psalm 127 says, no matter what the concern of danger is, the Bible is clear that unless the Lord watches the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. That’s why I need to realize this: I need to take every precaution, but success is not in my precaution. It’s not in my armor. It’s in the fact that God is a God who can protect us. I understand that whatever crime that you’re trying to protect yourself from—whether it’s your security system at your home, whether it’s the locks on your stuff, whether it’s, you know, the alarm on your car—really, it comes down to whether or not God is willing to watch that for you. It does not relieve us from the responsibility to be very careful and vigilant—doesn’t mean that we can keep our windows down in the parking lot when we go into church or into the mall. But it means that I take every precaution, and then I realize that victory and protection come from him—the omnipotent Christ. When the leash gets long—that retractable leash—and we’re scared, remember: he’s a God who has all power. His rod and his staff comfort me, and I trust him. And when we have victories, no matter what aspect or impression of the enemy comes against us, and we see that he has been pushed back—right?—don’t credit your helmet or your sword or your, you know, your faith. Credit God. And like this text ends: return and declare how much God has done for you.

I wish I could elaborate on that some more. Would you stand with me? We’re just out of time—that’s the bottom line. But let’s talk to God about this real quick.



God, I know for some here perhaps haven't had a chance even to be convinced of the reality of spiritual warfare. And for others, they have a caricature of it in their mind—that it's all about Ouija boards and fortune tellers, which—there's something to that—but that's not how we are accosted every day in our lives. It's the things—and we can see examples of it in this extreme case of the Garrison demoniac. But we have all kinds of pressures to move away from things that we would think and do that are honoring to God to behaviors and actions and attitudes and values and imaginations that dishonor God. And that's the battle that we fight.

And so God, for some in this room, they can celebrate victories, because they've seen victory in terms of their patterns of thoughts, their patterns of behavior—the way they used to do this or that—and now they've moved in an opposite direction. Maybe it was violence or temper or whatever it was. And we've seen victory—let us be like that Garrison demoniac at the feet of Christ, in our right mind, hearing, learning, listening, and worshiping—I can assume—and hear those words of Christ: “Return home and declare—tell people all the great things that God has done for you.”

And God, while this man's life was going to be punctuated, I'm sure, with plenty of problems like we all have from this point on, the victory and deliverance is a big deal. And for some, even as we think of testimonies and conversion stories, we know that Satan has had his way in a lot of people's lives in this room in such dramatic ways prior to our conversion. The ultimate release is the fact that Satan—though he can harass us—can no longer drive us to the pit, to the abyss where he's headed. And we're thankful for that. And it gives us great confidence that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. And so we want that to give us that great sense of assurance that you possess all power. We don't want to doubt. We don't want to be afraid. We don't want to be fixated on this. But we certainly want to be vigilant and aware—sober-minded and alert.

So may that be the reality of this. May we think about some of these expressions of demonic activity in this Garrison demoniac and start to be real careful about these kinds of influences in our lives. Dismiss us now, God, this morning, with a sense of your presence and biblical optimism about our future. Thanks so much for those ending words of Paul, that one day Satan will be crushed under the feet of his people. In the meantime, God, we trust you, we look to you, and we want to armor up every day to be sure we're careful to do all that we can, taking every biblical precaution to stand against the methods, the tactics, the schemes of the enemy. Let that be the reality for us, I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.