

# Three Demons To A Pig

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An exciting experience awaited Jesus and His disciples as the boat carrying them across the Sea of Galilee touched the eastern shore. Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8 record it. But before we raise the curtain on the drama, let's look at the possible background of the event--months, perhaps years, before.

In a nearby community lived a very ordinary man. Matthew informs us that two men were involved. We will focus our attention on just one, as do Mark and Luke.

We know little about the history of this man. He had a home, and he had some friends. What Jesus said to the man tells us that much about him. Probably his life was routine. He enjoyed his home and had a good time with the small group of people around him.

Also, it is evident that he left God out of his life. He wanted to run his own life in his own little self-centered world. Thus he showed no serious regard for the real meaning and purpose of his existence, the rights and interests of God, and the vital issues of sin and salvation and eternity. Perhaps, like so very many, he assumed that this is the "normal" way to live.

But--also like so very many--he failed to understand that ultimately none of us is his or her own master.

Oh yes, we are free moral agents. We make our own choices and we are responsible for them. Still, we make those choices either in obedience to God or in obedience to sin.

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as slaves to obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves to sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered [committed]. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:16 - 18). "Slavery" to righteousness is the believer's happy freedom in Christ.

Satan goes around looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). That enemy of God and man is skilled at hunting people down. Using their own desires against them, he

knows how to bait, trap, and enslave people who choose to serve self instead of God. They are in "the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

It seems evident that this is where this man stood. He was alienated from God and therefore out from under His covenant protection. Sin left him wide open to Satan.

What happened? A whole legion of demons (about 6,000) spotted this spiritual "stray," pounced on him and made his body their home. An average citizen of the community turned into a raving maniac. Relationships were shattered; the city was terrorized.

The tormenting demons drove him out into the mountains and tombs. He screamed. He tore off his clothes. He cut himself with sharp rocks. Hunger and exposure ravaged him.

Often, as the town was asleep, the night air was pierced with a spine-chilling scream. People awoke with a start, their hearts pounding. Little children stared into the darkness, fear knotting their stomachs.

"What was that?"

"Oh, it's just Mr. So-and-so, out among the tombs. Poor fellow. He used to be such a nice man. Wonder what got into him."

Nobody had the answer. But the word of God does. The answer is *sin*. Sin let the devil in. And sin leads to suffering.

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7, 8).

He had taken the devil's bait and sin's trap had snapped shut on Him, body and soul. Now he had lost everything. He was a man without hope. His health was rapidly draining away. Eventually he would lose his soul. *He was a man without hope*. In modern society he would be institutionalized, medicated, studied, and forgotten, just another closed case in the files of the Health Department.

But something happened!

One day as he stood among the tombs with the blood of fresh, self-inflicted wounds trickling down over the scars of old ones, he looked out over the Sea of Galilee. A raging storm had ceased--suddenly, mysteriously--and now the sea was calm.

One object in particular seized and held his attention. A boat was gliding calmly over the smooth waters, heading right toward him.

The man twisted in agitation. The Master was coming, and the demons knew it. They

knew also that they could be compelled to acknowledge Him as the Son of God. Would He send them into torment before the time? The poor man reacted to their agitation as they stirred within him.

The man began to feel something else stirring, something he had not felt in a long, long time, something that thousands of demons could not suppress--*hope*.

He watched as several men climbed out of the boat. Then he saw a Man in a seamless robe step down and stand on the shore.

Immediately the spark of hope that smoldered within him burst into a flame. Something urged him to action. *Run, man, run! Run to Him! He is your only hope! He is your life, your salvation!*

With a determination born of desperation, that tormented man found himself running down the hillside toward Jesus, carrying a legion of terrified demons with him! He had resolved in his soul to come to Jesus, and all the demons put together could not stop him!

No doubt at least some of the disciples looked up to see a wild-eyed, shaggy-haired, naked man streaking right toward them. Perhaps some of them yelled, "Master, look out! A crazy man is coming. Everybody, get back into the boat! Let's get out of here!"

But Jesus did not move. Calmly and firmly He stood there in His full divine authority. The man crumpled to his knees before Jesus and began to worship Him.

Desperate demons interrupted, using the man's vocal ability and mechanism as a means of communication, begging Jesus not to torment them. They had tormented others; now they groveled in fear before the Son of God, pleading that He would not hasten the torment of their inevitable doom.

As Jesus exposed the demons and ordered them to leave, they attempted to bargain with Him. Nearby was a large herd of pigs.

"Send us into the pigs!"

"Go!" Jesus ordered. Immediately 6,000 demons made a wild scramble and invaded 2,000 pigs. *Three demons to a pig!*

It is evident that these demons did not have any previous experience with pigs, and did not anticipate how pigs would react. What a surprise they got! The pigs could not tolerate the demons. They stampeded down the hill, over a precipice, and into the sea.

In the distance the pigherders were seen fleeing as fast as they could go. Tending pigs had never motivated them like this!

After the last of the herd hit the water and sank beneath the surface, all was calm. The demons were gone elsewhere. The man sat at the feet of Jesus—saved, healed, clothed, and in his right mind. Instead of disorder and restlessness, he now had stability and contentment. Instead of wanting to disrobe, he wanted to be clothed. Instead of emotional torment and mental confusion, he had peace and a right mind. *That is what a personal power-encounter with Jesus Christ does for a person.*

The news spread. Soon an alarmed yet curious crowd gathered. They had become accustomed to the works of Satan. They had adjusted to the way he was running things, assuming this to be the "norm." They had accepted living with a legion of demons around. But when Jesus came and upset the devil-dominated *status quo*, they became fearful.

Also, a whole herd of swine had just been lost, and they saw *Him* as the cause. So they begged Him to leave.

As Jesus returned to the ship, the man asked if he could go with Him. Now, *that* is evidence of a genuine born-again experience! The crowd wanted Jesus to get far away; the redeemed soul wanted Him to be near.

However, Jesus had work for him to do. Service follows salvation. Here was the Master's commission: "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled" (Mark 5:19, 20). Gladly, eagerly he obeyed.

Imagine what might have happened next. As he approaches the town, some people see him. "Here he comes! At least it looks like him." But something is different--*very* different. Instead of taking hesitant and uncertain steps, he is walking normally. Also, he has clothes on. And he looks happy. He is greeting his friends by name.

As he approaches his home (Jesus' command to him included his family as well as his friends), his wife sees him and reacts with a mixture of fear and wonder. "*Is this my husband?*" But before she realizes what is happening, he puts his arms around her and begins telling her what Jesus had just done for him.

Meanwhile, the children are fearfully peeking around a corner, afraid yet wondering. Gently he approaches them. "It's okay, kids," mother assures them. "Daddy just met Jesus, *and daddy's a new man!*"

He was living proof of the power of Jesus Christ. He "proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39). In fact, he gave his testimony in the surrounding semi-pagan area known as Decapolis (Mark 5:20).

The Bible records that his testimony was effective. And why not? He found peace and happiness. His night was turned into day, his despair into joy. He had great news. In

fact, he was great news. And it all happened because *he had a life transforming encounter with the Lord of life!*

His testimony was effective. When Jesus returned later, "the multitude welcomed him, for they were all waiting for Him" (Luke 8:40).

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If you are not right with God, Jesus Christ will make a brand new person out of you--if you will let Him. You might not be in the shape this man was in; however, if you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and He is not ruling on the throne of your heart, *you are just as completely under Satan's power as he was.*

The fact that Satan has been successful so far in keeping you from coming to Christ is proof that he has you under his control.

Jesus Christ said, "No one can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). He wants to set you free to serve Him in the liberty of love. He has the power to do so. Surrender to Him now. He is waiting for your decision.