

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 8:28-34 | Jesus' Power Over Demons**  
August 6, 2023

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 8:28-34.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

Last Sunday, we learned about fear.

The Lord Jesus taught us how to go from being cowardly to courageous—amid a terrible storm that came upon the disciples as they crossed the Lake of Galilee.

We had six key points and four keys of application—let me review those as well to get everyone up to speed.

**LW KEYPOINT 1:**

*Fear is an emotional response to a threat.*

We can't make good decisions when we don't control our emotions—so the Lord Jesus taught us how to do that.

**LW KEYPOINT 2:**

*Faith is a willful, conscious choice to believe.*

Contrary to today's popular thinking—faith is not about feelings.

Faith is about our head and heart, as Romans 10:9-10 proclaim.

**LW KEYPOINT 3:**

*Faith is a form of bravery.*

Christians are no longer the home team in America—the hostility towards Christ grows every day—and if we are going to live out our faith, we will need to push through and overcome our fears of being liked and our sense of comfort.

#### **LW KEYPOINT 4:**

*Fear extinguishes faith.*

Not only do we make poor decisions when fearful, but fear also chips away at our beliefs and hopes. = Truth

#### **LW KEYPOINT 5:**

*The disciples are more afraid of Jesus than the storm.*

The disciples thought hanging around with rock star Jesus was pretty cool as he was healing people and casting out demons.

But everything changed when Jesus told the creation to chill out.

The disciples asked, "what kind of man is this?" = God/Man

#### **KEYPOINT 6:**

*Fear is a natural emotion designed by God; Fearfulness is not.*

If we live in a constant state of fear—something is wrong.

#### **FACE** **Four keys to overcome your fear—to move from cowardice to courageousness.**

1. *Understand that fear is a natural human response—excessive fear is a sin*

Excessive fear must be confessed to God as sin.

There is a lack of trust somewhere—and it needs to be dealt with.

2. *Fearing God is foundational in the life of a Disciple*

We've all heard the phrase, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself."

That's a lie—we are to fear the Lord Jesus Christ, as the disciples discovered in the boat from last week.

***Don't fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*** (Matt. 10:28).

3. *Trusting God expels fear*

***Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*** (Proverbs 3:5).

4. *The spirit of fear must be overcome*

As Christians, we are commanded to overcome our fears.

***For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgement.*** (2 Tim 1:7).

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL POINT:**

*Confronting and overcoming the fears in your life begins with repentance.*

Repentance is to confess our fear as sin—that we have a trust problem—and then make the willful, conscious effort to leave our fears behind and run into the arms of Jesus.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Repentance brings us to today's passage.

Today's text is part of the sequel to last week's story.

After Jesus quiets the storm, He and the disciples reach their destination on the other side of the lake.

But as soon as they roll up, something unexpected and terrifying happens.

Jesus is met by two demon-possessed men.

Now demons can't repent—only people can—however, demons are much better theologians than any of us—and we have much to learn from them today.

How so? Let's find out together!

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 8:28-34 CSB**

**Matthew 8:28**— When he had come to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him as they came out of the tombs. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

**Matthew 8:29**— Suddenly they shouted, "What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

**Matthew 8:30**— A long way off from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding.

**Matthew 8:31**— "If you drive us out," the demons begged him, "send us into the herd of pigs."

**Matthew 8:32**— "Go!" he told them. So when they had come out, they entered the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water.

**Matthew 8:33**— Then the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything, especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed.

**Matthew 8:34**— At that, the whole town went out to meet Jesus. When they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

*These are the very words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, and infallible Word of Almighty God.*

**PRAY:**

*Who is this person who fears the Lord?*

*He will show him the way he should choose. (Psalm 25:12)*

**EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 8:28**— When he had come to <sup>Jesus</sup> the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, ~~two demon-possessed men met him as they came out of the forms.~~

Matthew gives us the location of this incident—the other side.

In the Jewish mindset, it was understood the "other side" was in opposition to "our side."

"The other side" are folks who aren't like us—they're different and scary.

Your parents may have told you not to cross over into a specific part of town.

**STORY**

I remember driving to Chicago as a young man...

**Matthew 8:28**— When he had come to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes,

This story has caused some angst because Mark and Luke say it happened in the region of Gerasenes.

To make things more complicated, On the northeastern shore of the Lake of Galilee, there's a little village named Gergesa.

And it's at Gergesa where cliffs overlook the sea—so Gergesa pinpoints the exact geography of the narrative.

So, because of the three areas mentioned throughout the Gospels in this one story, people say that these contradictions prove that the Bible is fallible and uninspired.

The problem with their argument is that they don't know the region.

Gadara is both a city and a region—as New York is both a city and a state.

New York City is in the state of New York, just as the city of Gadara was in the region of Gadara.

So Matthew focuses on the region, while Mark and Luke emphasize the city within the area.

This whole area is known as the Decapolis ("ten cities"), and most people were non-Jews—they were Gentile.

The interesting thing about Gadara is that the people living there were originally from the tribe of Gad.

In the OT, when the land was being divided up among the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Gad stayed on the wrong side of the Jordan River—the east side.

Big Brother Reuben did the same thing—Little Brother Manasseh straddled the fence and took both sides of the Jordan.

What happened to Gad? Evidently, they went into the pig business—which as Jews, was an act of disobedience.

And here we find Jews living in a Gentile land, acting like people who don't even know God.

### **KEYPOINT 1:**

*Once you disobey the Lord in one area of your life, it becomes easier to violate others.*

**Matthew 8:28**— two demon-possessed men met him as they came out of the tombs. ~~They were so violent that no one could pass that way.~~

Here we have another issue with Bible critics.

Matthew mentions two demon-possessed men, but Mark (5:2) and Luke (8:27) mention only one.

This is not a contradiction— a contradiction is when things are directly opposed to one another.

If there were two men there, there had to be one man there, *simultaneously.*

It would be a contradiction if Mark or Luke said that there was "only" one man.

Matthew focuses on the story's larger context by including both men, while Mark and Luke focus on the one who does most of the talking.

So there is no discrepancy or contradiction.

**Matthew 8:28**— two demon-possessed men met him (Jesus) as they came out of the tombs.

So here we are introduced to an uncomfortable theological subject—demonology.

In the larger context of Scripture, demons are part of the fallen angels who rebelled against God before the foundations of the world (cf. Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

To be demonized means to be under the control of demons.

When Scripture speaks of demon possession, it speaks of a person being indwelled, controlled, and tormented by a demonic spirit.

Demons can at will control a person.

They can disable the body, and they can derange the mind.

We don't know exactly how that works, and it's dangerous to go beyond what Scripture tells us.

Why?

Demons will attack people (and, as we'll see, animals) spiritually, mentally, and physically.

 **Matthew 8:28**— *two demon-possessed men met him as they came out of the tombs.*

No sooner had they reached the shore and, trying to dock the boat, two raging lunatics came racing down the hill.

These men lived in a graveyard.

To a Jew, this meant they were unclean (Num. 19:11–16; Ezek. 39:11–15).

It should be no surprise that Satan and demons dwell in areas that are profane.

 **Matthew 8:28**— *They were so violent that no one could pass that way.*

The violence of these two demoniacs kept them from the rest of civilization and civilization from them.



You don't cross these men—they will kill you.

**Mark 5:3 NLT**—*This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain.*

**Mark 5:4 NLT**—*Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him.*

In other words, no one was able to tame this man.

The problem is that we don't tame people—we tame animals.

In fact, human beings tame wild animals—and yet people have to treat this man as a wild animal because that's what he's turning into.

We don't know whether the chains and shackles were for his own benefit or for other people—probably both.

Regardless, it didn't work—these men are so completely out of control that no one can solve this problem.

**Mark 5:5 NLT**—*Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.*

This man's story is tragic.

Anything and everything that might restrain evil in this man's life is gone.

His continual wailing, screaming, and crying out is from a pain we can't begin to understand.

He is so miserable that his only option is to kill himself, yet the demons won't let him.

We see Satan's purpose statement being blatantly acted out upon this man...

**John 10:10 NLT**—*The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.*

Demons hate people—because people are made in the image of God.

The demons are literally erasing God's image from these men.

They have no personal identity or God-given personality left.

Luke tells us that these men are stark naked.

Only babies and perverts run around naked.

It may be cute and funny for your toddler to run out the front door naked for all the neighbors to see—you better pray that by the time he's 12, he outgrows that!

When Adam and Eve were only covered with a fig leaf, God Himself made coverings for them.

These two men illustrate what Satan does to humanity.

We see two supernaturally strong deranged lunatics, immersed in all sorts of sexual perversion who are incredibly violent.

**Mark 5:9 NLT**—*Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"*

*And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man."*

This man can't even answer for himself.

The demons answer for him, and they don't give Jesus a name—they give him a number—6,000.

The Greek word *legiōn* meant "army" or "camp."

In Latin, it represents power, numbers, and strength—in other words, legion crushes all opposition.

A standard Roman legion consisted of about 6,000 soldiers.

These legions were the elite soldiers of the Roman army.

Don't miss the message to Jesus—six thousand evil warriors possess this man.

*That number was to intimidate Jesus.*

This is why no one can control him.

In addition, this man is hopelessly conquered by the demonic.

He is under the enemy's control, and there is nothing anyone can do about it.

**Matthew 8:29**— Suddenly they shouted, "What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

**Mark 5:6 NLT**—When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him.

**Mark 5:7 NLT**— With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!"

**Luke 8:28 NLT**—As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. ... Please, I beg you, don't torture me!"

When you put all three accounts together, you can see that the demons are in a panic—similar to the disciples from last week as they woke up Jesus in the middle of the storm.

**KEYPOINT 2:**

*When Jesus shows up unexpectedly—people panic.*

I find it somewhat humorous that the question the disciples asked each other from last week, "What kind of a man is this?"

Well, the demons are about to answer.

**Matthew 8:29**— *Suddenly they shouted, "What do you have to do with us, Son of God?"*

Make a note here—the first creatures to recognize the true identity of Jesus are demons.

Why is that?

Demons are fallen angels.

**Luke 10:18**—*Jesus said, "He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning."*

So when Satan rebelled against God and fell from heaven (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28), one-third of the other angels joined in this insurrection (Revelation 12:3-4,9).

These fallen angels are now known as the demons.

These demons had never seen The Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus, in human form.

When Jesus rolled up o the shore—they instantly recognized Him.

Isn't that fascinating?

It makes you wonder what they can see that we can't.

Regardless, the demons know who stands before them.

**Matthew 8:29**— Suddenly they shouted, "What do you have to do with us, Son of God?"

These demons call Jesus the Son of God.

This is a true statement, but they probably say it with disgust.

A common belief in the first century was that secret names grant power to the one who knows that name.

The demons may be trying to control Jesus by naming him in front of others, but we don't know for sure.

Keep in mind the demons are in panic mode and making this plan up as they go.

**KEYPOINT 3:**

*What's your plan when you meet Jesus face to face?*

Oddly enough, part of their plan was never to plead for mercy.

They plead for delay— because demons can't be forgiven—only humans can.

The demons now ask Jesus a question...

**Matthew 8:29**— Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

The answer is "Yes."

Demons know that Jesus has the authority to do with them as he wishes and when he wishes.

Most people either do not know this or deliberately reject that fact altogether.

We didn't create ourselves—and there will be a day of judgment for everyone—in front of Jesus because He is the Creator and judge.

So, The demons realize the consequence of rejecting God—but humans don't. Humans have been blinded ~~by~~ the truth. *by ourselves, world, & demons.*

**Matthew 8:29**— *Have you come here to **torment** us before the time?"*

Let me ask you, who is the greatest theologian?— Satan.

If you're going to be the greatest deceiver, you must be the greatest theologian.

If you're going to lead people into error —you have to know how to twist the truth better than anyone.

These demons know the plan of salvation.

Note this, these demons know their theology, Christology, and eschatology.

Demons know the truth—they just hate it.

The demons knew they were not destined for judgment until after the Millennium.

Oh, no! Jesus is early! Time out!

The demons understood that from all eternity, God has appointed a day when He will judge the world.

#### **KEYPOINT 4:**

*Are you prepared for your day of judgment?*

This is a day when He will send all of the demons to a very real place called hell.

Luke's Gospel tells us the demons asked not to be sent into the abyss.

The abyss is the final place of Satan's punishment (Rev. 20:3; 9:2; 2 Peter 2:4; Matt. 25:41).

**Matthew 8:30**— *A long way off from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding.*

**Matthew 8:31**— *"If you drive us out," the demons begged him, "send us into the herd of pigs."*

What is happening here?

This seems like such an abrupt transition within the conversation.

Think about this, if the demons know their theology, they know that Jesus came to redeem and save mankind.

In other words, the demons knew that Jesus was there to rescue this man that they possessed.

The demons know this...

**Exodus 34:6**— *The Lord—the Lord is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,*

**Exodus 34:7**— *maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.*

The demons knew they were going somewhere because Jesus made this special trip to save these men—but they didn't know exactly where.

In desperation, the demons looked around for a way of escape, and their only hope was a herd of pigs.

As weird and disgusting as this thought is, inhabiting pigs would be way better than being thrown into the abyss.

This brings up some questions?

Do demons long for physical bodies?

We talked a bit about demonology. Now let's talk about angelology.

Angels never possess bodies—they have the power to assume bodies.

Demons don't assume bodies; they must take over and possess them.

That's a huge theological difference between the holy and the profane.

Evil can't create things—evil can only take what God has created and mock, maim and destroy it.

How does Jesus respond to the demons?

**Matthew 8:32**— "Go!" he told them.

Matthew reveals only one word—"go."

That word really stands out if you have a red-letter Bible.

"Go!" is more literally, *You may go*, granting permission.

As strong and powerful as this Legion is—it is no match for Jesus.

Remember when the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a demon?

**Matthew 12:29 NLT**—For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger...



And that Someone is Jesus!

**Matthew 8:32**—So when they had come out, they entered the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the water.

I bet that was something to see.

What would you think if you saw a herd of 2,000 Javelina running full steam through Old Town?

At first, this might look like an act of mercy on Jesus' part. *for the demons,*

But it's not. It's an act of judgment.

But notice what happens—those pigs don't just go about their business doing what pigs do.

They are not the same pigs—they have been demonized.

What the demons did to those two men—they are now doing the same to the pigs.

For reasons unknown to us, the physical pigs can't handle the demonic possession.

Now, if you're an animal lover— don't like this part of the story.

People ask, “Why would Jesus kill all those pigs?”—That’s the wrong question.

Jesus didn't kill the pigs—the demons did.

*NOT PETS*  
Besides, those pigs were destined for slaughter anyway.

This story is not the pigs—what’s it about?

**Matthew 8:33**— Then the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything, especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed.

Many people also make a big deal about the financial loss of the pigs dying.

Please note money is not the subject of this story—no where are finances mentioned.

**Matthew 8:33**— They went into the city and reported everything, especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed.

The subject matter here in verse 33 are the two men.

The fact that the demons destroyed 2,000 pigs is nothing compared with the fact that Jesus delivered two men from the powers of Satan.

Verse 34...The whole city came out to meet Jesus, and revival started. :)

Is that what happened?!

**Matthew 8:34**— At that, the whole town went out to meet Jesus. When they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Here we find the first opposition to Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Why?

**Mark 5:15 NLT**—A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.

The townspeople saw a once crazed psychotic man now seated.

This man's posture reminds me of the apostle Paul's words to the Ephesian church.

**Ephesians 2:1 NLT**—Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.

**Ephesians 2:2 NLT**— You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

**Ephesians 2:3 NLT**— All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

**Ephesians 2:4 NLT**— But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,

**Ephesians 2:5 NLT**— that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)

**Ephesians 2:6 NLT**— For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

Amazing!

Not only is this man seated physically and spiritually—but he is also clothed physically and spiritually.

**Galatians 3:27 NLT**— And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.

But the townspeople don't care that God has rescued these men from death to life.

Now, they're not angry or resentful— but scared.

When unholy people come face-to-face with the holy God, they are terrified.

Jesus did these townspeople a huge favor by casting out the demons and opening up this part of town to where its now safe to travel.

But they see Jesus as too powerful and unpredictable.

The townspeople tried to tame the two men, but they don't even try to tame Jesus—they just want Him to leave.

They can handle pigs, but they cannot handle God.


People want religion, not redemption—so they ask Jesus to leave.

The crowd asked Jesus to leave because He fixes things and heals people, and most people don't want to be healed.


They want to function within their dysfunction.

But Jesus loves people too much for them to do that—Jesus meddles in people's lives, but the world doesn't want people meddling.

So what's Jesus do? Matthew doesn't tell us, but Mark does...

 **Mark 5:18**— *As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.*

This man is so grateful. He's sitting in the boat!

 **Mark 5:19**— *But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been."*

**Mark 5:20**— So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region (Decapolis) and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.

Jesus did three things for these men.

**KEY POINT #5**  
Jesus restored them to sanity, society, and service.

This man is the first missionary to the Gentiles.

This guy is such a good missionary—we'll see the proof when Jesus feeds the four thousand—guess where that was?

In the Decapolis! (Mark 7:31)

How did all those Gentile people hear about Jesus?

From the testimony of this once demon-possessed man.

**PREACH:**

Today's passage is another amazing piece of Scripture that reveals Jesus as the Son of God who came to save sinners.

Besides Jesus, there are two other characters in this story.

1. The two sinners who are now saints.
2. The townspeople who asked Jesus to leave.

Which group are you in?

## **PRAYER**

## **BENEDICTION**

*Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* (Eph. 3:20-21).

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