

Fear or Faith

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[0 : 0 0] If you would turn with me in your Bibles to Mark chapter 5, spending some time in Mark's Gospel in this month of April. Alex will be in the later chapters next week and the week after.

Mark chapter 5, which you'll find on page 840, I think it is. Yeah, 840 in the pure Bible. Mark chapter 5, and we shall read the first 20 verses together.

Let us hear then the Word of God. They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.

For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and bruising or cutting himself with stones.

[1 : 1 0] And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.

For he was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name? He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged them earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, And they begged him, saying, Send us to the pigs. Let us enter them. So Jesus gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs.

And the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened.

And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, The one who had had the Legion, Sitting there, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.

[2 : 1 4] And those who had seen it described to them What had happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. As he was getting into the boat, The man who had been possessed with demons begged him That he might be with him.

And he did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends. And tell them how much the Lord has done for you. And how he has had mercy on you. And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis How much Jesus had done for him.

And everyone marveled. Let us pray. Make the book live to me, O Lord.

Show me thyself within thy word. Show me myself. And show me my saviour. And make the book live to me. For Jesus' sake.

Amen. The reason I chose this passage is because this passage contains my most favourite story in the whole Bible Of how Jesus transforms someone's life.

[3 : 21] The passage focuses on this man called Legion. And as chapter 5 opens, we see that he is demented. Demented due to the demons who have entered his life and are destroying him.

But secondly, we see that he meets Jesus and he is wonderfully delivered. Delivered and set in his right mind. Demented. Delivered. And by the end of the passage in verse 20, he becomes a disciple.

As he is sent out by the Lord Jesus to preach to his family and friends Just how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him. Demented. Delivered. And now a disciple.

It's a wonderful story of the transforming power of the Lord Jesus. And I know that there are many here this afternoon That can personally identify with the plight of this man. You yourself having once been demented.

Delivered. Demented under the weight of your sins. And demented by the life that you were living. Then being wonderfully delivered. As you were introduced to the Lord Jesus Christ. And he's saving work for you on the cross.

[4 : 24] And from that day until this. You've been living as a disciple. And telling people every opportunity that you get. Just how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. Now as we come to this passage.

We can't help but being drawn to the transforming power of Jesus. And the transformation that was brought in this man's life. But I don't think that this is Mark's main message. I think Mark's main focus is to draw us to the two responses.

The two responses that we see here to Jesus. And those are the responses of fear. And faith. So that's where we're going. I'd like to take the passage under two headings.

Verses 1 to 13. Legion meets Jesus. Legion meets Jesus. And verses 14 to 20. The locals meet Jesus.

The locals meet Jesus. Well firstly then. Verses 1 to 13. Legion meets Jesus. At the end of chapter 4. Jesus has just calmed the storm. And he along with the other disciples.

[5 : 26] Arrive in the other side of the sea of Galilee. Verse 1. To the eastern side of the sea of Galilee. To the country of the Gerasenes. Or the Gadarenes. Depending on which translation you read. And we can see that this is in the area of the Decapolis.

Verse 20. The Decapolis means ten cities. This is a Gentile area. Which means it's not Jewish. It's Gentile. So if you're here this afternoon. And you're not Jewish.

Then you're Gentile. And their feet have barely touched the ground. Verse 2. When this man who was demon possessed on a massive scale. Came running towards them. My good friend Rick Crabtree.

Who is the pastor at Harper Memorial Baptist Church in Govan. Says this. In Mark 4. 35 to 41. Mark presents men within a storm.

Men within a storm. But here in chapter 5. He presents a storm within a man. A storm within a man. And this man is totally demented.

[6 : 26] Due to the evil powers that have invaded his life. But Mark tells us that he comes running to Jesus. Can you imagine how he looked? He was naked. Verse 15 tells us that when Jesus delivered him.

He was now clothed and set in his right mind. So he'd been running about naked. His hair was probably all dirty and matted. And stuck together.

His body full of marks and wounds. Marked from all the times that people had tried to subdue him with chains and shackles. And wounds from cutting himself with stones. As he just couldn't bear the agony and torture of being possessed.

He probably looked more like an animal than he did a man. Probably a wee bit like Smeagol. Or is it Gollum? Out of Lord of the Rings. And I wonder how the disciples reacted.

You can just picture it, can't you? There's Peter. Big, bold Peter. Rolling up his sleeves. Getting ready to fight. Getting ready to go ahead as we say here in Glasgow. Maybe still others are picking up rocks.

[7 : 28] And getting ready to throw them at this thing that was coming running towards them. Or maybe still some others were making their way back to the boat. Because after the storm they had quite enough excitement for one day.

Now the story could go straight to verse 6. But Mark takes some time to slow down and to explain the background of this man. He had no home. He lived among the tombs which were graveyards.

Verse 3. An outcast living among the dead. For he was as good as dead himself. Verse 3 and 4. He was completely alone. And was a social outcast.

And he obviously terrorised the neighbourhood for them to bow on him with shackles and chains. In fact, in Matthew's account of this story. Matthew says, He was so fierce that no one could pass that way.

But all their attempts to control and restrain him were utterly hopeless. For no one could bind him anymore. No one had the strength to subdue him. Being possessed had given him extraordinary strength.

[8 : 31] And all the asbos of chains and shackles were utterly hopeless against him. And verse 5 gives the picture of how totally demented he was. Always crying out day and night and cutting himself with stones.

You can imagine how this affected the local area. I suppose doing wonders for house prices. You can just picture the scene, can't you? There's a for sale sign up in the back garden. The front garden. And there's a prospective buyer.

He's been shown around the house. And boy does he like what he sees. A great big lounge. Three spacious rooms. And a great big garden for the kids to play in. It's ideal.

It's exactly what I've been looking for. And I cannae believe the price. It's so cheap. Then one of Legion's blood chilling screams is heard from the tombs.

What's that? Says the prospective buyer. Eh, it's a wild dog. Says the seller. But there's a wee boy standing close by. And he says, that's no wild dog, mister.

[9 : 30] That's Legion, the demon-possessed man that dies in the tombs. All deals are off. Regardless of how cheap the house is. And the buyer walks away. And I suppose Legion would have had an effect.

And people trying to get a sleep for work in the morning. But they couldn't. Being kept awake all night by his demented cries. He was the original neighbor from hell. The scene is certain.

We realize that for this demon-possessed man to be freed. Will take nothing less than divine intervention. And friends, Mark isn't ashamed or embarrassed as some might be. To say that this man is demon-possessed.

Saying that the man is demon-possessed. Wasn't he a primitive way of saying that he had some disease? The Bible clearly distinguishes between disease, disability, mental illness and demon-possession.

When the Bible says he's demon-possessed, that's exactly what it means. He was demon-possessed. The Bible is very clear in that. Well, that might be so, Terry. You might be sitting thinking to yourself.

[10 : 31] And that's quite a picture you've painted of this man also. But I'm so glad I'm nothing remotely like this man. I've got my clothes on. And I'm able to reason with things. And no one's had the need to tie me up for quite some time.

I'm not demon-possessed. Well, that may be true for everybody here this afternoon. No, you never know. But friends, the Bible doesn't say that by nature we are all demon-possessed. But the Bible does say that this man is an illustration of the terrible plight that affects every human being.

The Bible does say that by nature all men, women and boys and girls are ruled by dark and sinister forces. If you would just keep your hand in Mark 5.

But if you would turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2. Which you'll find in page 976 of your Blue Bible. Page 976, Ephesians 2. The Apostle Paul here is writing to a church of believers in Ephesus.

And he's writing to them about what they used to be. He describes here in the first three verses of what they were outside of Christ. What they used to be before they've come to know Jesus and His love and life and death and forgiveness and mercy.

[11 : 46] And Paul is also writing to show that this is not unique to Ephesus. If you look at verse 3 of chapter 2. Like the rest of mankind, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Every man, woman and child outside of Christ. So let's look at Ephesians chapter 2 verses 1 to 3. This is what the Apostle Paul writes. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

Past tense. In which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world. Going down all the roads, just the same as everybody else. You followed the ways of the world. And of the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

The spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time. Description of being outside of Christ. And friends, what Paul has given us here is a description of being outside of Christ.

Outside of Christ, you're a dead man. Outside of Christ, you're a dead woman. You are a dead, alive person. Paul says in these verses, Dead in trespasses and sins in which you used to live.

[13 : 05] Oh, Paul said I was dead in which I used to live. That's right. You are the living dead. Outside of Christ, you are the living dead. You might not be possessed like this man.

But by our very natures, we are in control of that which is dark and sinister. So this man is not as far removed from us as you might initially think.

We might have nice houses to go home to. We might not run about naked. But the fact of the matter is this. That by our very natures, we are outside of Christ. Dead in our trespasses and sins.

And just like this man, we are utterly powerless to do anything about it. And no human power can help us either. The only hope is coming to Jesus Christ.

Outside of Christ, we are dead men and women and boys and girls. Well, this man does come to Jesus Christ. Verse 6 and 7. He meets Jesus, but we see the tension that exists within him.

[14 : 04] Verse 6. He knows that Jesus can deliver him. And so was drawn to him. But he cannot yield to Jesus. Verse 6. He falls down before Jesus in reverence and cries out, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

I adjure you by God. Do not torment me. He knows who Jesus is. There are no atheists among the demons. They believe that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God.

But friends, it's not enough to believe that Jesus is God. Even the devils believe that Jesus is God. But our belief must lead us to yield. To yield to Jesus and to his lordship over our lives.

Verse 7. He couldn't yield. He was afraid of what this change might bring. And friends, Mark wants us to see that this is the same for us all. That no man or woman yields easily to Jesus.

If we think it's easy, we forget the grip that sin and Satan has in people's lives. Our good friend Sinclair Ferguson writes in his book, Let's Study Mark.

[15 : 07] Look, tragically, like legion, men often hold on to their bondage and evil, rather than yield to the pain of transformation by Christ's power and grace.

Did you get that there? The pain of transformation. Being transformed by Jesus is painful. You know this in your life. I know it in mine. Most of you know that I work with people in addiction.

I see this with people all the time. People are drawn to Jesus. They're crying to Jesus. Jesus, have mercy on me. But Jesus, I cannot give up that which I've become accustomed to.

I cannot give up the drink or the drugs. Or maybe you've seen it in some person's life. Maybe a young man or a young woman. The call of Jesus has come upon their lives.

And they're maybe involved in a sexual relationship that doesn't square with being a Christian. They're drawn to each other. They think that each other is fantastic. But they know that saying yes to Jesus will mean saying no to the partner that they've been involved with.

[16 : 10] It's the pain of transformation. Friends, we can't make light of people's situations and tell them that coming to Jesus is easy. It's painful to come to Jesus.

But friends, let me tell you, it's worth it to come to Jesus. Well, in verse 8, a conversation now begins between Jesus and the demons. And Jesus asks, what is your name?

And the reply that he gives in verse 9 shows us the extent of this man's possession. My name is Legion, for we are many. And I think this shows us two things.

It shows us the number and the nature of this possession. Firstly, the number. A legion ranged from 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers. So this man wasn't possessed by one, ten or a hundred, but thousands of demons.

And secondly, the nature of this possession. Well, a legion of soldiers united under one cause and answer only to one commander. And this shows us that Satan's opposition to the kingdom of God is not something haphazard, but it is ruthlessly well organized.

[17 : 13] But the Lord Jesus Christ said, I shall build my kingdom and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Well, verse 10 comes. And these demons, well, they know their place.

They know that one more powerful than they is before them. And the demons start to discuss terms of withdrawal. They beg Jesus to send them out of the country. Not to send them out of the country.

And as there is a herd of pigs in the nearby hill, they beg Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs. Verses 11 to 13, Jesus gives them permission. The man is delivered as the demons come out of him and are sent into the pigs.

And some 2,000 pigs rush down the steep bank into the sea and are drowned. And you would be right to ask, why? Why did this happen? And why did it take place like this?

Well, I think that the pigs dying shows us four things. And they all begin with a P. The pigs dying shows us the purpose. The purpose and the ultimate aim of the demons.

[18 : 11] What happened to the pigs? They died. That's what the demons were going to do to the man. They were going to kill him. They were going to destroy him. Secondly, it shows us the power of Jesus.

As powerful as these demons might have been, it shows us the absolute power and authority that Jesus Christ has over these demons. Thirdly, it shows us permanence.

This is a wee bit less obvious to see. I think this was done for the benefit of the man. How could the man be sure that this deliverance, this salvation that Jesus had brought him, would last?

How could he be sure that the demons, when they come back the foley on Tuesday, and re-enter his life, and cause him more distress, damage, and destruction? There was only one way. And Jesus chose it.

Every time the man doubted his salvation, he would remember in his mind's eye the two thousand pigs rushing down the steep bank and into the sea and be drowned. And that's how he could be sure that his salvation would last.

[19 : 11] And fourthly, I think this gives us perspective. The deliverance of one man is certainly worth two thousand pigs. The pigs would have been worth a lot of money to their owner, but not as much as this man was worth to God.

Well, you would think that this would get a reaction. And it did. And this brings me secondly to verses 14 to 20. The locals meet Jesus. The locals meet Jesus.

Well, verse 14 opens by those who were in charge of the pigs, fleeing to tell what had happened. And you can just picture them, can't you? Running down the hill shouting, The pigs! The pigs! The pigs!

And people saying, What is it? And they say, I don't know, but it's got something to do with the pigs. No wonder. They were probably only five or an hour or something. You know, watch the pigs. Five or an hour.

To lose one or two pigs might have been a bad day. But to lose two thousand on the one day. So they run down the hill shouting, The pigs! The pigs! The pigs!

[20 : 11] And people came to see what it was that had happened. Verse 14. And when they came, they saw Legion. The man who was demented has now been delivered.

I'm sure they had to look twice to see if it was the same man. A wee bit of those adverts you see in some magazines. You know the sort of a thing advertising weight loss products or some brilliant diet.

There's usually a picture of the before and the after. Maybe a picture of before. Some woman that's really let herself go. Maybe 50 stone or something like that. And the picture after has got her posing in a bikini.

And you're thinking, Oh, she looks terrific. Or the picture before is some huge guy. And the picture after has got him standing inside a massive pair of trousers. Maybe with all the weight I've been losing recently, I'll end up in a magazine.

But when you look, you kind of have to look twice, don't you? You kind of say to yourself, That can't be the same guy. That can't be the same woman. And you have to really peer.

[21 : 11] And you see there is. Now I'm sure the locals looked twice to see if this was the same person. And they did. And it was. And this is a great picture of the transformation that Jesus brings.

He was sitting, clothed, and in his right mind. The man who'd been running about like a terror was now sitting. The man who'd been running about naked was now clothed. The man who was crazy was now in his right mind.

Well, how would you expect the locals to react to this amazing healing? You'd probably expect thousands to be converted, wouldn't you? At least that's what a lot of folks would have believed. If God would just do some massive work.

If God would just show some great sign of power. Then obviously people would be converted. Well friends, here is a sign of great power, par excellence. And how do the people react?

Well, how would you expect them to react? To be overjoyed that the man who'd terrorized them is now in his right mind? They probably knew this man. They'd probably grown up with him. Maybe some of them went to school with him.

[22 : 15] Or perhaps maybe even some were related to him. Maybe they were his brother or uncle or son. Or maybe you would expect them to hail Jesus as a great miracle worker. And carry him shoulder high all about the town.

Or maybe you would expect, as in other parts of the gospel, that they would bring all their relatives and friends and family members who had disabilities and diseases to Jesus in order to be healed.

But no, that's not how they reacted. And this last word in verse 15 is where the passage punches you right in the solar plexus. The locals were afraid.

And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. I think verse 17 is one of the saddest verses in the whole Bible.

And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. They were crying. Go on, you just please go. Please just leave us alone. We don't want you here, Jesus. We don't want you. Please just go.

[23 : 20] Why? Why this reaction? Well, I think there are a couple of reasons. Firstly, these people valued property more than they valued people. Sure, the man who had had legion was now delivered and set in his right mind.

House prices would again rise. People would be able to again enjoy a good night's sleep and be able to walk the streets in safety. But at what cost?

To have this man freed had cost 2,000 pigs. It had been a great hit to the economy. What if Jesus hung about and began to deliver more people? Well, we can't have that. Because our economy would end up becoming like that of Ireland or Portugal.

No, no question. Jesus must go. But secondly, and this is where Mark begins to draw his contrast between fear and faith. Secondly, on a deeper level, they beg Jesus to leave because they are afraid.

They are afraid to change and afraid to be changed. Look to chapter 4, 35-41 in the calming of the storm. The storm had made the disciples terrified.

[24 : 26] But the storm has been dealt with by the greater power, Jesus. But now they are afraid of Jesus. And it is the same here in chapter 5. It is the same for the locals.

Legion had terrified them. But now he has been made normal. And now in verse 15, they are now afraid of Jesus. They were afraid that the transforming power that Jesus displayed in Legion's life would produce a similar result in them.

And friends, if you are a Christian, you know that reaction, don't you? You know that reaction amongst your family, your friends, your neighbours, your workmates or your classmates. Wherever you find yourself, you know that reaction.

People are happy to talk to you until you mention Jesus, church or the Bible. They say, hold on a minute. Stop there. I don't want to hear it. I want none of it. I don't want to hear it.

Why? Because they are afraid. They are afraid to be changed by Jesus. Friend, maybe that is you. Maybe you come to church every Sunday. Maybe you come to this service every Wednesday.

[25 : 32] You sit under the Word, but you know that coming to Jesus will mean change in your life. And you are afraid. Friend, I plead with you. Come to Jesus. Don't be afraid.

Look at the change that He brought in this man's life. It's amazing. It's the best that anybody could have ever done for this man. Friend, Jesus can forgive you and change you to become the best you could ever wish for.

But friends, it's tragic that men both then and now would rather cling to the sins that make them sick and will ultimately destroy them. And they beg Jesus to leave rather than be transformed by Him.

Well, verse 17, the locals are filled with fear and they beg Jesus to leave. But look at the faith of the man who'd had the legion. The man who'd had the legion begs that he might be with Jesus.

The same language is used in Mark 3, verse 14 when Jesus calls the twelve apostles to Him that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. And it's quite understandable, of course, that this man would want to be with Jesus.

[26 : 35] Of course he would. He loved Jesus. Jesus was his saviour. Jesus was his deliverer. Of course he would want to go with Jesus. Of course he would want to go and be his companion and be his disciple.

And he was ready to give up home and country to be with Jesus. But friends, these verses teach us that the Lord knows better than His people what is the right position for them to be in.

The Lord Jesus says no to the man's request for He had other work for him to do. The Lord knew how this man could glorify Him best. And friends, this just shows us that the thing that we might have our hearts set on the place that we hope to be good though it may be in itself has to come under the authority of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what being a disciple means. Being obedient to Jesus. We are to go where we are sent. Stay where we are put. And do what we are told.

But verse 19. Jesus was very gracious to the locals. The very same ones who had begged them to go. Jesus is very gracious to them. Because He left behind a living testimony of His transforming power.

[27 : 47] Go home to your friends. I'm sure most of us know that in the 1950s the western missionaries were told to get out of China. leaving behind a church numbering 100,000 or so.

And a lot of folks were beginning to think well that's it for the church in China because they couldn't have possibly survived without the Americans and the British. But God used the Chinese Christians who were already in China.

And as a result the church grew. And what we have today is an indigenous Chinese church numbering tens of millions. the locals had begged Jesus to go but the man who had had the legion was commanded to go home.

And friends, this is first and foremost a mission that we all have, isn't it? We are to go home. We are to go home and tell our families and our friends how much the Lord has done for us. It's great to support missionary organizations or to become a missionary ourselves in a foreign land.

It's right for us to do these things individually and collectively as a church. But friends, our mission always begins from the fireplace out. Friends, this is a challenge to me.

[28 : 55] But I want to ask you the same question that I've been asking myself as I've been pondering this. When was the last time you done that? When was the last time you spoke to your parents or your children or your brothers and sisters, neighbours, friends, workmates, classmates?

When was the last time you spoke to them about how much the Lord has done for you and how He's had mercy on you? And I want to speak in particular to husbands and fathers.

When was the last time you read the Bible and prayed with your wife? When was the last time you led a Bible study in your own home? Maybe you lead Bible studies all over the city, but when was the last time you led one in your home?

When was the last time you spoke to your children about the transforming power of Jesus in your life? When was the last time you told your kids how much the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you?

Men, you are the spiritual heads of your home. Your children will listen to you much more than they'll ever listen to their mothers. Speaking to your children about Jesus is the greatest and the most important thing you could ever, ever speak to them about.

[30 : 02] Well, verse 20, a closing verse. Jesus, the man who'd had the legion obeyed his Lord and he went home and he proclaimed or he preached in the Decapolis of how much the Lord had done for him and how he had mercy on him.

And the people marveled. And in chapter 7 when Jesus is again in the region of the Decapolis, people bring a deaf and a dumb man to him in order to be healed. I suspect they've done so because of the faithful, consistent ministry of the man who'd had the legion.

And as Jesus gets into the boat and heads for the other side, friends, I think now the things that Mark has taught us from this passage are this. One, the power of Satan is real.

His purpose and aim is to destroy the lives of men. And we as men are utterly hopeless and powerless against him. Secondly, Jesus Christ alone has the power over evil.

He has the amazing power to transform any one of us. Despite our backgrounds, despite where we come from, despite where we've been, Jesus alone has the power to transform us.

[31 : 13] And thirdly, and sadly, the human heart is evil and we would rather ask Jesus to go. Well, friends, Mark has been highlighting to us these two responses to Jesus.

As we close, Mark's question comes to you. How will you respond? What will you do? Will you ask Jesus to go?

Or will you ask to go with Jesus? Will you fear Jesus and send him away like the Gerasenes? Or will you, like legion, trust him and go and do what he says?

Amen. Amen.