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Sermon Notes

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Christ's Absolute Power over Demons

Matthew 8:28-34

I. America's Preoccupation with the Demonic

A. C.S. Lewis: Introduction to Screwtape Letters

C.S. Lewis: "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

1. POST-ENLIGHTENMENT SKEPTICISM: observation... theory... experimentation explains WHOLE UNIVERSE!!!

David Powlison: "Can a modern believe that God controls lightning and thunder if a meteorologist can use satellite pictures and computer modeling to predict the storm a week ahead of time? Can a modern believe that demons could cause paralysis, seizures, or deafness if an EEG and electromyogram can map patterns of electrical impulse in the nervous system?"

This leads to a SECULARIZED "FAITH" in which demons seem as real as Santa Claus

But now we may have swung in some senses to the other extreme

B. America's Present Fascination

Appeal to younger generation: Warner Brothers

- Harry Potter Witchblade Buffy the Vampire Slayer (and spinoffs) Charmed

C. Christian Interest

1. C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*

2. Frank Peretti's novels: *This Present Darkness... Piercing the Darkness*

3. Modern “Spiritual warfare movement”... territorial spirits, binding & casting out demons

David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*: Cynthia once cast demons out from her toaster when it failed to work! Even worse, she and her husband Andrew had a remarkable—and remarkably destructive—way of arguing with each other. For the first five minutes they warmed up with normal person to person bickering. But at a certain point, when the fighting turned nasty, they shifted gears and wheeled in heavier artillery. They would bind, rebuke, and attempt to cast out demons of anger, pride, and self-righteousness from each other. In Cynthia’s words:

“I saw the demon looking out of his eyes, glittering and murderous. So I said, ‘Demon of anger, I bind your power in Jesus’ name!’ Then I claimed the power of Jesus’ blood as my cover fro all demonic assault coming through my husband!”

Others have gotten into a cycle of seeing their own personal growth in sanctification as merely a matter of casting out certain named types of demons from themselves: the demons of lust, irritability, procrastination, speeding, overeating, etc. Their answer for every sin in their lives is essentially “the devil made me do it!”

Only the Bible can get us to the proper level of understanding

D. Central Lesson Here: Christ’s Sovereign Power over ALL Demons

1. Demons are REAL... they exist, and they are active in the world today
2. Were they given full sway, your life on earth would be unbearable... like HELL on EARTH
3. Were they totally restricted, your life on earth would be delightful... like HEAVEN on EARTH
4. Central lesson of this passage: salvation from demonic powers is something only Christ can do
5. Christ’s sovereign power over demonic authority is clear!!!

E. Context in Matthew

1. Advancing Kingdom of God
2. Christ's Awesome Power
 - power over sickness
 - power over natural forces
 - power over supernatural beings

II. The Awful Power of Demons

A. What are Demons?

1. Spiritual beings

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2. "The Devil and his angels"

Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Phrase implies Devil was the leader, some angels followed his lead into rebellion

3. Satan's Kingdom: Powers, Principalities and Demonic Order

Demons are Satan's henchmen, carrying out his dark plots and schemes

B. What is Demon-Possession?

1. Examples

- a. among the large group of people Jesus healed

Matthew 4:24 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.

Matthew 8:16 When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.

- b. "possession" is a poor translation of a term "demonize"... but it comes from the sense that the demon spiritually inhabits the person... controls them from within

Matthew 12:43-45 *"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.*

c. sometimes multiple spirits can inhabit a person

Luke 8:2... Mary Magdalene had had seven demons cast out from her

d. casting a demon out of a person is an act of great spiritual power and authority

Mark 1:23-27 [Capernaum] *Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!" 25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."*

Acts 19: Seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out a demon and they were thrashed by the man

2. Definition

To be "demonized" means to be so completely under the influence and control of a demon that one is no longer in one's right mind and can no longer resist demonic will. It may or may not result in physical damage or impairment.

3. Implication: Total human powerlessness

C. The Demoniac of the Gadarenes... the most vicious of all

vs. 28 *When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.*

1. Some interpretive issues

a. place

Gadarenes (or sometimes Gergasenes) or even Gerasenes... various spellings; best way to understand it is follow Matthew and assume that Gadara (six miles away from the lake) owned the territory going right to the lake

Predominantly Gentile region (that explains the herd of pigs)

- b. how many demoniacs?

Matthew mentions two demoniacs; Luke focuses on just one... no real contradiction; Luke zeroes in on the more noteworthy of the two, the one called Legion!

- 2. More information in Luke

Luke 8:27-29 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ... 29 Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

- 3. Awesome physical power

- a. able to break chains into pieces
- b. kept under guard, but it did no good

- 4. Tragic consequences

- a. driven away from all humanity
- b. stripped of clothes
- c. living in tombs with dead people
- d. stark raving mad
- e. a mortal threat to any who came near them

vs. 28 They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

- 5. "Legion"

- a. Matthew does not tell us this aspect... but alludes to it

vs. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

- b. "Legion" of demons inside this man

Luke 8:30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

A Roman legion included 6000 troops

6. One leader spoke for all

III. The Absolute Power of Deity

A. Jesus Christ: The "Son of God"

vs. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted.

1. The Conquering Hero Appears
2. Battlefield Ready... Foe Calls Out
3. Spiritual Warfare Joined... our mighty conqueror will triumph

The real issue here is the absolute power of the Son of God... not how we can defeat demonic forces in our lives

B. Demonic Faith

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.

1. Demons "believe"... they do not constantly see God
2. Here: they believe that Jesus is the "Son of God"... long before anyone else knew

The disciples asked: "What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!"

The demons KNEW who Jesus was... the Son of God

In another place, a demon cried out: "I know who you are... the Holy One of God!"

C. Demonic Terror

1. Yes... the demons believe—but they SHUDDER
2. Demonic terror!!

vs. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

- a. absolutely in terror of Jesus
- b. Satan and His forces not on equal par with the Son of God
- c. devil himself flees before a Spirit-filled child of God

James 4:7 Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

3. Afraid of early Judgment

- a. note: “appointed time”...= Judgment Day, end of the world

Demons know that they will be condemned in the Lake of Fire...

Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

- b. BUT some demons are already bound up, held in torment

2 Peter 2:4 God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Demons afraid they too would be held for torment early

D. One Simple Word

vs. 30-32 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." 32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.

Red-letter edition: one single word in red!! "Go!!"

- 1. Luther: “One little word”... “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

And thought this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us... we will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us

The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure... one little word will fell him

2. Jesus' power is in His word

- a. created heaven and earth by the word of His power
- b. upholds and sustains heaven and earth by the word of His power
- c. will end the universe with one powerful word

3. Second Coming Power

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

We will NOT fear... one single word from Christ is sufficient to conquer the devil and his hordes

vs. 32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.

E. Total Healing

Luke 8:35 When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind

IV. The Anxious Plea of Disbelief

vs. 33-34 Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

Illus. John Newton... Grace Teaches Fear, Grace Relieves Fear

A. Disciples: Fear of Storm, Fear of God, Salvation

1. Feared the Storm
2. Feared Christ in Awe and Wonder... Fear Increased!
3. Trusted in Christ Alone for Salvation... Fears Relieved!

B. Townspeople: Fear of Demoniac, Fear of Christ, Rejection

1. Feared the Demoniac
2. Feared Christ in Superstition and Unbelief... Fear Increased

3. Expelled Him from their Region... Fear Triumphant

C. "Depart from Us" Now, "Depart from Me" Then

1. All of us have opportunity to receive Christ by faith or expel Him through unbelief
2. BUT if we evict Him now, He will evict us on Judgment Day

Matthew 7:23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

D. BUT Christ's Grace to the Gadarenes: He left a witness

Mark 5:18-20 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

V. Application

A. Understand

Demonic world has not changed: Demons and demon-possession today

Christ's power hasn't changed either!!

B. Balance

Avoid "demon behind every bush"... don't cast demons out of toasters

Sanctification not a matter of finding, naming, expelling specific demons: "demon of lust," "demon of anger," "demon of procrastination"

Careful not to ascribe flaws in others (especially your mate!) to demons

"Territorial spirits" movement can get polytheistic

C. Believe

Christ's Sovereign Power still RULES demonic forces

Christ's power sufficient to rescue you from Satan's kingdom

Christ's shed blood sufficient for atonement from the wrath of God

Christ's protection sufficient to bring you safely through this demon-infested world

D. Worship

Fall before Christ in awe at His majesty

Thank Him for delivering you from Satan's kingdom and power

Worship Him for the greatness of His love and power

E. Fight

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

James 4:7 Resist the devil and he will flee from you!!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Demonic forces can still plague us daily

Put on spiritual armor and fight temptation

Rescue the perishing... pray in the Spirit for the success of the gospel

Go in God's power to seek and to save the lost from Satan's kingdom