

DEFEATING DEMONS

The story of the demonized man in Luke 8:26-39 is a spell-binding tale. He was oppressed by a legion of demons. He wore no clothes and roamed among the tombs, and was able to break out of his shackles and run into the desert. But Jesus stepped off the boat, and changed his life.

Jesus set him free! Does this story raise questions about how demons are active today, in our own culture? Or how God provides protection and provision to deal with demonic forces?

DEMONIZED PEOPLE - Being demonized takes many forms, including erratic behavior, speech, diseases, derangement, and false teaching. Being troubled in mind or body or soul could involve some level of demonic activity. But don't be deceived by appearances.

"Typically those under the sway of demons descend into filthy living, both physically and morally," notes RK Hughes. "It's not at all incidental that the rise in occultism and satanism in recent years has been accompanied by increasing drug abuse, pornography, and obscenity."

DEVIL IN DETAILS - But 2Corinthians 11:14-15 says, "*Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.*" Hughes says demon-controlled men and women can appear utterly conventional. They can even be spiritual leaders in the Christian community. But don't foolishly think that human beings must be demonized in order to descend to the degradation of the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8.

Sin is endemic to the human situation, reminds Hughes. As James 1:14 says, "*each person is tempted by his own desire.*" We are all fully capable of evil and degeneration on our own.

DEMONIC PRACTICES - The Old Testament speaks of demons and unclean spirits, including Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Zechariah 13:1-2. Psalm 106:34-40 speaks of people worshiping the demons behind idols. Nothing suggests this practice has ever stopped.

Revelation 9 notes people would not repent of worshiping demons, idols, murders, sorceries, sexual immorality and thefts. Evidence abounds that powerful world leaders are subservient to demonic forces and ideas of evil. And it's not limited to the mainstream movement of offering up children to demonic ideas, including abortion, child trafficking, pedophilia, gender confusion.

DEFEATING DEMONS - Ephesians 2:2-3 indicates that the enemies of the believer are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The anti-Christ worldview and system of the world and culture around you tempts you to follow the world instead of God's word. The flesh is your own inner desires, as James talks about, so that you want to your will instead of God's will. The devil is the fallen angel who rebelled against God, and who roams around seeking people to devour.

But Colossians 2:15 says that on the cross, Christ Jesus "*disarmed the rulers and authorities, put them to open shame, and triumphed over them.*" The devil and his demons are defeated foes.

ARE YOU DEMONIZED? - Are you oppressed by doubts? Discouragement? Disease? Darkness? Desperation? Such things are not automatically demonic, because your enemies will use any advantage you give them. If you're not defeating the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, with the truth of God's Word, you will be susceptible to all sorts of things.

Ephesians 6:10-10 says, "*we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but rulers, authorities, cosmic powers over this present darkness, and spiritual forces of evil. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the readiness of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.*" Jesus Himself sets you free, equips you, and protects you.

DECLARING VICTORY - 2Corinthians 10:3-5 says believers have divine power to destroy strongholds of spiritual opposition and oppression. "Demonic powers are like little invisible germs looking for someone to infect," notes NT Anderson, spiritual warfare author. "Be aware of their reality, and commit to a righteous life. In Jesus Christ the Truth, you are equipped with all the authority and protection you need to deal with anything they throw at you."

Stay spiritually healthy and you're not susceptible. Believers are safe in the armor of Christ. But what if you're not reading your Bible, not praying, not worshiping, not serving, not repenting, not relying on the Holy Spirit to power your life to obey God's Word? Then what can you expect? ☐