

AN ASTOUNDING MIRACLE NO. 1765

A SERMON
PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 10, 1884,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”
Mark 1:21-28.

YOU will find the same narrative in Luke, at the fourth chapter, from the thirty-first to the thirty-seventh verse. It will be handy for you to be able to refer to the second passage, from which I shall quote one or two matters.

These two evangelists commence the narrative by telling us of the singular authority and power which there was about the Savior's teaching—authority, so that no man dared question His doctrine, power, so that every man felt the force of the truth which He delivered. “They were astonished at his teaching, for his word was with power.” Why was it that the Savior's teaching had such a remarkable power about it? Was it not, first, because He preached the truth? There is no power in falsehood except so far as men choose to yield to it because it flatters them, but there is great force in truth, it makes its own way into the soul. As long as men have consciences they cannot help feeling when the truth is brought to bear upon them. Even though they grow angry their very resistance proves that they recognize the force of what is spoken.

Moreover, the Savior spoke the truth in a very natural, unaffected manner, the truth was in Him, and it flowed freely from Him. His manner was truthful as well as His matter. There is a way of speaking truth so as to make it sound like a lie. Perhaps there is no greater injury done to truth than when it is spoken in a doubtful manner, with none of the accent and emphasis of conviction. Our Savior spoke as the Oracles of God, He spoke the truth as truth should be spoken, unaffectedly and naturally, as one who did not preach professionally, but out of the fullness of His heart.

You all know how sermons from the heart go to the heart. Moreover, our great Exemplar delivered His teaching as one who most heartily believed what He was speaking, who spoke what He did know, yea, spoke of things which were His own. Jesus had no doubts, no hesitancy, no questions, and His style was as calmly forcible as His faith. Truth seemed to be reflected from His face just as it shone forth from God in all its native purity and splendor. He could not speak otherwise than He did, for He spoke as He was, as He felt and as He knew.

Our Lord spoke as one whose life supported all that He taught. Those who knew Him could not say, “He speaks after a right kind, but He acts otherwise.” There was about His whole conduct and deportment that which made Him the fit person to utter the truth, because the truth was incarnate, and

embodied, and exemplified in His own person. Well might He speak with great assurance when He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He was as pure as the truth which He proclaimed. He was not a speaking-machine, sounding out something with which it has no vital connection, but out of the midst of His own heart there flowed rivers of living waters. Truth overflowed at His lips from the deep well of His soul, it was in Him and therefore came from Him. What He poured forth was His own life, with which He was endeavoring to impregnate the lives of others. Consequently, for all these reasons and many besides, Jesus spoke as one that had authority, His tone was commanding, His teaching was convincing.

Meanwhile, the Holy Ghost who had descended upon Him in His baptism, rested upon Him, and bore witness by His divine operations in the consciences and hearts of men. If Jesus spoke of sin, the Spirit was there to convince the world of sin; if He set forth a glorious righteousness, the Holy Ghost was there to convince the world of righteousness; and when He told men of the coming judgment, the Holy Ghost was present to make them know that a judgment would surely come at which each of them must appear. Because of His unlimited anointing by the Spirit, our Lord spoke with power and authority of the most astonishing kind, so that all who heard Him were compelled to feel that no ordinary Rabbi stood before them.

That power and authority was seen all the more in contrast with the Scribes, for the Scribes spoke hesitatingly, they quoted authority, they begged leave to venture an opinion, they supported their ideas by the opinion of Rabbi this, although it was questioned by Rabbi the other, they spent their time in tying and untying knots before the people, quibbling about matters which had no practical importance whatever. They were wonderfully clear upon the tithing of mint and anise, they enlarged most copiously upon the washing of cups and basins, they were profound upon phylacteries and borders of garments. They were at home upon such rubbish, which would neither save a soul, nor slay a sin, nor suggest a virtue.

While handling the Scriptures they were mere word-triflers, lettermen, whose chief objective was to show their own wisdom. Such attempts at oratory and word-spinning were as far as the poles asunder from the discourses of our Lord. Self-display never entered into the mind of Jesus. He Himself was so absorbed in what He had to teach that His hearers did not exclaim, "What a preacher is this!" but "What a word is this!" and "What new teaching is this!" the Word and the teaching with their admirable authority and amazing power subdued men's minds and hearts by the energy of truth. Men acknowledged that the great teacher had taught them something worth knowing, and had so impressed it upon them that there was no shaking themselves free of it.

Now, when they were beginning to perceive this authority in His word, our Lord determined to prove to them that there was real power at the back of His teaching, that He had a right to use such authority, for He was Jesus Christ the Son of God, clothed with divine authority and power. It occurred to Him to display before their eyes the fact that as there was power about His speech, there was also power about Himself, that He was mighty in deed as well as in word, and hence He wrought the miracle now before us. This most astounding deed of authority and power has been passed over by certain expositors as having too little of incident about it to be of much interest, whereas, to my mind, it rises in some respects above all other miracles, and is certainly excelled by none in its forcible demonstration of our Lord's authority and power.

It is the first miracle which Mark gives us, it is the first which Luke gives us, and it is in some respects the first of miracles, as I hope I may show ere I have done. Remember, however, that the objective of the miracle is to reveal more fully the power and authority of our Lord's word, and to let us see by signs following that His teaching has an omnipotent force about it. This truth is much needed at the present moment, for if the Gospel does not still save men, if it is not still "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," then the attacks of skepticism are not easily repelled, but if it be still a thing of power over the minds of men, a power conquering sin and Satan, then they may say what

they like, our only answer shall be to lament their doubts and to scorn their scorning. O for an hour of the Son of man! O where is He that trod the sea, and bade the rage of hell subside with a word?

I. First, then, to show forth this power and authority, OUR LORD SELECTS A MOST UNHAPPY PERSON ON WHOM TO PROVE HIS POWER.

This person was, first, *one possessed*. A devil dwelt within him. We cannot explain this fact any more than we can explain madness. Many things which happen in the world of mind are quite inexplicable, and for that matter of that so are many facts in the world of matter. We accept the recorded fact—an evil spirit entered into this man, and continued in him. Satan, you know, is God's ape, he is always trying to imitate Him, to caricature Him, so, when God became incarnate, it occurred to Satan to become incarnate too, and this man I may call, without any misuse of words, an incarnate devil, or, at any rate, the devil was incarnated in him. He had become like a devil in human form, and so was in a certain manner the opposite of our Lord Jesus.

In Jesus dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily by an eternal union, in this man the devil dwelt for a while. Is not this an awful picture? But note the fact, the man whom Jesus selects whereon prove His power and authority on was so far gone that the foul fiend controlled his mind, and made a kennel of his body. I wondered, when thinking this over, whether a person of whom this man is the emblem would come into the congregation today, for I have seen such people. I have not dared personally to apply such an epithet to any man, but I have heard it applied, I have heard disgusted friends and indignant neighbors, worn out with the drunken profanity, or horrible filthiness, of some man say "He does not seem to be a man, he acts like the evil one." Or when it has been a woman, they have said, "All that is womanly is gone, she seems to be a female fiend." Well, if such shall come within sound of my voice, or within reading of this sermon, let them take note that there is help, hope, and health even for them. The power of Jesus knows no limit. Upon one who was the Devil's Own did our gracious Lord display His authority and power in connection with His Gospel teaching, and He is not less able now than then.

This man, further, was *one whose personality was to a great extent merged in the Evil One*. Read the twenty-third verse, "There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit," the rendering might be equally accurate if we read it, "A man in an unclean spirit." Do you see that? Not only a man *with* an unclean spirit in him, but a man *in* an unclean spirit. The phrase is simple enough, we speak of a man being in drink. For liquor to be in a man does not mean half so much as for a man to be in liquor. To give a more pleasant illustration, we speak of a person's being "in love," he is absorbed in his affection, we should not express a tenth as much if we said that love is in the man.

A man can be in a rage, in a passion, and even so was this man in an evil spirit. He was completely ruled of the evil one. The poor creature had no power over himself whatever, and was not himself actually responsible, in all that I say of him I am not condemning *him*, but only using him as a type of human sin. Please do not forget this. As far as the narrative is concerned the man himself scarcely appears, it is the unclean spirit that cries out, "Let us alone; I know thee who thou art." These are words spoken by the man, but they are the sentiments of the demon that used the man's organs of speech according to his own will.

The man was scarcely a man with a will or wish of his own, in fact, you do not notice him till you see him flung down into the midst of the synagogue, you only see the proper man when the Savior raises him up before them all unharmed and rational. Until the miracle is wrought the man is lost in the unclean spirit that dominates him. Have you never seen such men? You say sometimes, and you say truly, "alas, poor wretch! The drink has the mastery over him, he would never do such things as he does if he was not in drink." We do not mean to excuse him by such an expression, far from it.

Or it may be the man is a gambler, and you say, "He is quite besotted by gaming, though he impoverishes his wife and children, yet he is possessed by that spirit so completely that he has not the mind or the will to resist the temptation." Or it may be that such another person is carried away with unchaste affections, and we say, "How sad! There was something about that man which we used to like, in many points he was admirable, but he is so deluded by his bad passions that he does not seem to be

himself.” We almost forget the man, and think mainly of the dreadful spirit which has degraded him below the beasts.

The type and emblem of such a person as that, our Lord selected as the platform to show His power. I wonder whether this voice of mine will reach one of that sort. I sincerely hope that none of you are in such a condition, but if you should be, still there is hope for you in Christ Jesus, He is able to deliver such as are led captive at the will of Satan. Though you seem wholly given up and utterly abandoned to the dominion of a terrible sin, to which you yield a willing obedience, yet Jesus can break off the iron yoke from your neck and bring you into the liberty of holiness. It will be an awful thing for you to die in your sins, and you surely will unless you believe in the Lord Jesus, but if you look to Him, He can make you pure and holy, and create you anew.

Note further, for we must show you how our Lord selects the worst of cases, it was a man *in whom the evil spirit was at his worst*. Kindly look at the fourth chapter of Luke, verse thirty-three, and you will see that in this man there was “the spirit of an unclean devil.” Think of that. The devil is never particularly clean at any time, what must an unclean devil be? The ruling spirit in the man was not only a devil, but an *unclean* devil. Satan sometimes cleans himself up, and comes out quite bright and shining, like an angel of light, but do not mistake him, he is still a devil, for all his pretended purity.

There are glittering sins, and respectable sins, and these will ruin souls, but this poor man had a disreputable demon in him, a spirit of the foulest, coarsest, and most abominable order. I suppose this foul spirit would incite its victim to filthy talk and obscene acts. The evil one delights in sins against the seventh commandment. If he can lead men and women to defile their bodies he takes special delight in such crimes. I doubt not that this poor creature was reduced to the most brutal form of animalism, I can well believe that in his body he was filthy, and that in his talk, in all the thoughts that hurried through his poor brain, and in all his actions, he went to a pitch of uncleanness upon which we need not permit a conjecture.

If we were to say of such a character as this man pictures, “Let us turn out of the way,” who could blame us? If we separated from such sinners, who could censure us? We do not desire to go near to Satan in any shape, but most of all we would shun him when he is openly and avowedly unclean. You say, “We could not bear to hear the man speak, the very look of him is offensive,” nor is it strange that you should. There are women so fallen that modesty trembles to be seen in their company, and the feeling that makes you shudder at them is not to be condemned, so long as it does not spring from self-righteousness or lead to contempt.

Yet, now, see it and wonder, our blessed Lord and Master fixed His eye of old on the man with the unclean devil in him, and today He fixes His eye of mercy on the basest and vilest of mankind, that in their conversion He may show the power and authority of His word. Lord, do so at this moment. Let us see today the miracles of Your grace. Bring the chief of sinners to repentance! Upraise those who are fallen to the lowest degree!

In this man there did not seem to be anything for the Lord to begin upon. When you are trying to bring a man to the Savior, you look over him to see where you can touch him, what there is in him that you can work upon. Perhaps he is a good husband though he is a drunkard, and you wisely attempt to work upon his domestic affections. If a man has some point of character upon which you can rest your lever, your work is comparatively easy. But with some people you look over them from top to bottom, and you cannot find a spot for hope to rest upon, they seem so utterly gone that there is neither reason, nor conscience, nor will, nor power of thought left in them.

Of all this, the possessed man in the synagogue is a striking emblem, for when the Lord comes into the synagogue the poor wretch does not begin to pray, “Lord, heal me.” No, his first cry is, “Let us alone.” He does not seem to resist this cry of the evil spirit in him, though it was so much to his own injury, but he goes on to say, “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art.” The possessed man seems wholly lost in the dominating spirit of evil which permeates his entire being.

Now I look upon this, though it be negative, as a very glaring part of the difficulty, for I do not care how far a man has gone in outward sin, if he has some point left in him of common honesty, or love to his family, or a generous heart, you know where to commence operations, and your work is hopeful. Even leviathan has some crevice between his scales though they be shut up together as with a close seal, there is some joint in the harness of most men, even though mail may cover them from head to foot, but in those outcasts of whom I am now speaking, there is neither lodgment for hope, nor foothold for faith, nor more than a bare ledge for love. As the man in the synagogue was shut up within the demon's influence, so are some men encompassed by their iniquity, blocked up by their depravity. Yet the great Upraiser of the fallen can rescue even these, He is able to save unto the uttermost.

One other matter makes the case still more terrible, *he was a man upon whom religious observances were lost*. He was in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and I do not suppose that this was anything unusual. The worst man of all is one who can attend the means of grace, and yet remain under the full power of evil. Those poor outside sinners who know nothing of the Gospel at all, and never go to the house of God at all, for them there remains at least the hope that the very novelty of the Holy Word may strike them, but as for those who are continually in our synagogues, what shall now be done for them if they remain in sin?

It is singular, but true, that Satan will come to a place of worship. "Oh," you say, "surely he will never do that?" He did it so long ago as the days of Job, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also amongst them. The evil spirit led this unhappy man to the synagogue that morning, and it may be he did so with the idea of disturbing the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad he was there. I wish that all the slaves of sin and Satan would attend Sabbath worship. They are then within range of the Gospel gun, and who can tell how many may be reached?

Yet how sad it was that the influences of religious worship had altogether failed to rescue this man from his thralldom! They sang in the synagogue, but they could not sing the evil spirit out of him; they read the lessons of the day in the synagogue, but they could not read the foul spirit out of him; they gave addresses from passages of Scripture, but they could not address the unclean spirit out of him; no doubt some of the godly prayed for him, but they could not pray the devil out of him. Nothing can cast out Satan but the word of Jesus Himself. His own word, from His own lip, has power and authority about it, but everything short of that falls to the ground. O Divine Redeemer, let Your omnipotence be displayed in turning great sinners into sincere penitents!

You see, then, what a terrible case the Master selected. I have not exaggerated, I am sure. O the comfort which lies in the thought that He still chooses to save persons, of whom this wretched being is the fit emblem and representative! O you vilest of the vile, here is hope for you!

II. Let us now look a little further and observe that OUR LORD ENCOUNTERS A FIRMLY-ENTRENCHED ENEMY.

The evil spirit in this man had ramparted and bulwarked himself against the assault of Christ, for as I have said, *he had the man fully at his command*, he could make him say and do whatever he pleased. He had that man so at his command that he brought him to the synagogue that day, and *he compelled him to become a disturber of the worship*. Quietness and order should be in the assemblies of God's people, but this poor soul was egged on to cry out and make horrible noises, so as to raise great tumult in the congregation. The Jews allowed all the liberty they could to persons possessed, and so long as their behavior was bearable they were tolerated in the synagogues, but this poor mortal broke through the bounds of propriety, and his cries were a terror to all. But see, the Lord Jesus deals with this disturber, this is the very man in whom He will be glorified. So I have seen my Lord convert His most furious enemy, and enlist unto His service the most violent of opposers.

The evil one *compelled his victim to beg to be left alone*, as we have it here, "Let us alone." In the Revised Version of Luke the same rendering is put in the margin, but in the text we have "Ah!" While the Lord Jesus was teaching there was suddenly heard a terrible, "Ah!" A horrible, hideous outcry startled all, and these words were heard, "Ah! What have we to do with thee?" It was not the voice of

supplication, it was distinctly the reverse, it was a prayer not *for* mercy, but *against* mercy. The translation is however quite good if we read, "Let us alone." Is it not a horrible thing that Satan leads men to say, "Do not trouble us with your Gospel! Do not bother us with religion! Do not come here with your tracts! Let us alone!" They claim the wretched right to perish in their sins, the liberty to destroy their own souls. We know who rules when men speak thus, it is the prince of darkness who makes them hate the light.

Oh, my hearers, do not some of you say, "We do not want to be worried with thoughts of death, and judgment, and eternity, we do not desire to hear about repentance and faith in a Savior, all we want of religious people is that they will let us alone." This cruel kindness we cannot grant them. How can we stand by and see them perish? Yet how sad the moral condition of one who does not wish to be made pure! You would think it impossible for Jesus to do anything with a man while he is crying out, "Let us alone," yet it was the evil spirit in this man that our Lord met and overcame. Is there not encouragement for us to deal with those who give us no welcome, but shut the door in our faces?

The foul spirit *made the man renounce all interest in Christ*, he coupled him with himself, and made him say, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?" This was a disclaimer of all connection with the Savior. He almost resented the Savior's presence as an intrusion. The voice seems to cry to Jesus, "I have nothing to do with You, go Your way and leave me alone, I do not want You, whatever You can do to save or bless me is hereby refused. Only let me alone." Now, when a man deliberately says, "I will have nothing to do with your Jesus. I want no pardon, no salvation, no heaven," I think the most of you would say, "That is a hopeless case, we had better go elsewhere." Yet even when Satan has led a man this length the Lord can drive him out. He is mighty to save. He can change even the hardest heart.

The unclean spirit did more than that, *he caused this man to dread the Savior*, and made him cry out, "Ah! Art thou come to destroy us?" Many persons are afraid of the Gospel. To them religion wears a gloomy aspect, they do not care to hear of it for fear it should make them melancholy and rob them of their pleasures. "Oh," say they, "religion would get me into Bedlam, it would drive me mad." Thus Satan by his detestable falsehoods makes men dread their best friend, and tremble at that which would make them happy forever.

A further entrenchment Satan had cast up, *he made his victim yield an outward assent to the Gospel*. "I know thee who thou art," said the spirit, speaking with the man's lips, "the Holy One of God." Of all forms of Satan's devices this is one of the worst for workers, when men say, "Yes, yes, what you say is very proper!" You call upon them and talk about Jesus, and they answer, "Yes, sir. It is quite true. I am much obliged to you, sir." You preach the Gospel, and they say, "He made an interesting discourse, and he is a very clever man!" You buttonhole them, and speak about the Savior, and they reply, "It is very kind of you to talk to me so earnestly, I always admire this sort of thing. Zeal is much to be commended in these days." This is one of the strongest of earthworks, for the cannon balls sink into it, and their force is gone. This makes Satan secure in his hold on the heart. Yet the Savior dislodged this demon, and therein displayed His power and authority.

Have I not proved my point? Jesus selected a most unhappy individual to become an instance of His supremacy over the powers of darkness, He selected a most firmly-entrenched spirit to be chased out of the nature which had become his stronghold.

III. We have something more pleasant to think upon as we notice that OUR LORD CONQUERED IN A MOST SIGNAL MANNER.

The conquest *began as soon as the Savior entered the synagogue*, and was thus under the same roof with the devil. Then the evil one began to fear. That first cry of "Ah," or "Let us alone," shows that the evil spirit knew his Conqueror. Jesus had not said anything to the man. No, but the presence of Christ and His teaching are the terror of fiends. Wherever Jesus Christ comes in Satan knows that he must go out. Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil, and the evil one is aware of his fate. Now, as soon as ever one of you shall go into a house with the desire to bring the inmates to Christ it will be

telegraphed to the bottomless pit directly. Insignificant person as you may think yourself, you are a very dangerous person to Satan's kingdom if you go in the name of Jesus and proclaim His Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ opened the book and read in the synagogue, and soon His explanation and teaching with authority and power made all the evil spirits feel that their kingdom was shaken. "I beheld," said our Lord at another time, "Satan fall like lightning from heaven," and that fall was commencing in this "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." The first token of our Lord's triumph was the evident alarm which caused the evil spirit to cry out.

The next sign was *that the devil began to offer terms to Christ*, for I take it that is the reason why he said, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." He did not confront our Lord with the hostile doubt, "If thou be the Son of God," but with the complaisant compliment, "I know thee who thou art." "Yes," the false spirit said, "I will allow this man to say his creed, and avow himself one of the orthodox, and then perhaps I shall be let alone. The man is sound in his views, and so my living in him cannot be a bad thing after all. I am quite willing to admit all the claims of Jesus, so long as He will not interfere with my rule over the man."

The evil one had read his Bible, and knew how Daniel had called Jesus, "the Most Holy," and so he calls Him "The Holy One of God." "I am quite willing to admit it all," says the devil, "only let me stop in the man, do not meddle with me, and this man's lips shall confess the truth." And so, when Jesus comes in His power, and men hear His word, this deceitful compromise is often proposed and attempted. The sinner says, "I believe it all. I deny nothing. I am no infidel, but I mean to keep my sin, and I do not intend to feel the power of the Gospel so as to repent and have my sin chased out of me. I will agree to the Gospel, but I will not allow it to control my life."

However, this coming to terms shows that the fallen spirit knows his Destroyer. He would fain be let down easily. He is willing to crouch, to cringe, to fawn, and even to bear testimony to the truth, if he may but be allowed to keep in his den—that den a human soul. Liar as he is, it must go sadly against the grain for him to say, "I know thee who thou art," yet he will do this if he may be allowed to keep dominion. So when Jesus draws near to men's minds, they say, "We will be orthodox, we will believe the Bible, and we will do anything else you prescribe, only do not disturb our consciences, interfere with our habits, or dislodge our selfishness." Men will accept anything rather than renounce their sin, their pride, their ease.

Then our Lord's real work came on this man. *He gave the evil spirit short and sharp orders.* "Silence! Come out!" "Jesus rebuked him." The word implies that He spoke sharply to him. How else could He speak to one who was maliciously tormenting a man who had done him no harm? The Greek word might be read, "Be muzzled." It is a harsh word, such as an unclean tormenting spirit deserves. "Silence! Come out." That is exactly what Jesus means that the devil shall do when He delivers men from him. He says to him, "Come out of the man. I do not want pious talk and orthodox professing, hold your peace and come out of him."

It is not for evil spirits, nor yet for ungodly men, to try to honor Christ by their words. Traitors bring no honor to those they praise. Liars cannot witness to the truth, or if they do they damage its cause. "Be still," says Jesus, and then, "Come out." He speaks as a man might call a dog out of a kennel, "Come out." "Oh," says the unclean spirit, "let me stay, and the man shall go to church, he shall even go to the sacrament." "No," says the Lord, "Come out of him. You have no right within him, he is Mine, and not yours. Come out of him!" I pray that the Master may give one of His mighty calls at this moment, speak to some poor besotted creature, and say to the devil in him, "Come out of him!" O sinners, sin must leave you or it will ruin you forever, are you not eager to be rid of it?

Now see the conquest of Christ over the unclean spirit. *The fiend did not dare to utter another word*, though he went as near it as he could. He "cried with a loud voice." He made an inarticulate howling as he left the man. As he came out he tried to do his victim some further injury, but in that he also failed. He tore at him, and threw him down in the midst of the synagogue, but Luke adds, "He came out of him, having done him no hurt." From the moment when Jesus bade him, "Come out," his power to harm was

gone, he came out like a whipped cur. See how Jesus triumphs. As He did this literally in the man in the synagogue, so He does it spiritually in thousands of cases. The last act of the fiend was malicious, but fruitless. I have seen a poor creature rolled in the dust of despair by the departing enemy, but he has soon risen to joy and peace. Have you not seen him in the inquiry room, weeping in the dismay of his spirit? But that has caused him no real harm, it has even been a benefit to him, by causing him to feel a deeper sense of sin, and by driving him quite out of himself to the Savior.

Oh, what a splendid triumph this is for our Lord when out of a great sinner the reigning power of sin is expelled by a word! How our Master tramples on the lion and the adder! How He treads under His feet the young lion and the dragon! If the Lord will speak with power today to any soul, however vicious, or depraved, or besotted, his reigning sins shall come out of him, and the poor sinner shall become a trophy of His sovereign grace.

IV. Lastly, THE SAVIOR RAISES BY WHAT HE DID A GREAT WONDERMENT.

The people that saw this were more astonished than they generally were at the Savior's miracles, for they said, "What thing is this? What new teaching is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." The wonder lay in this, here *was man at his very lowest*, he could not be worse. I have shown you the impossibility of anybody being worse than this poor creature was. I mean not that he was evil morally, for, as I have hinted before, the moral element does not actually enter into the man's case, but he is the instructive picture of the worst man morally, utterly and entirely possessed of Satan, and carried away to an extreme degree by the force of evil.

Now, under the preaching of the Gospel the worst man that lives may be saved. While he is listening to the Gospel a power goes with it which can touch the hardest heart, subdue the proudest will, change the most perverted affections, and bring the most unwilling spirit to the feet of Jesus.

I speak now what I do know, because I have seen it in scores and hundreds of cases, that the least likely persons, about whom there seemed to be nothing whatever helpful to the work of grace or preparatory for it, have nevertheless been turned from the power of Satan unto God. Such have been struck down by the preaching of the Gospel, and the devil has been made to come out of them, there and then, and they have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. This creates a great wonderment, and causes great staggering among the ungodly, they cannot understand it, but they ask, "What thing is this? and what new doctrine is this?" This is a convincing sign which makes the most obdurate unbeliever question his unbelief.

Notice, in this case, that *Jesus worked entirely and altogether alone*. In most of His other miracles He required faith. In order to salvation there must be faith, but this miracle before us is not a parable of man's experience so much as of Christ's working, and that working is not dependent upon anything in man. When a man is commanded to stretch out His withered hand, or told to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash, he does something, but in this case the man is ignored, if he does anything it is rather to resist than to assist, the devil makes him cry, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee?" The Lord Jesus Christ here displays His sovereignty, His power, and His authority, utterly ignoring the man, consulting neither his will nor his faith, but sovereignly bidding the fiend, "Be silent and come out." The thing is done, and the man is delivered from his thralldom before ever he has had time to seek or pray.

The miracle seems to me to teach this, that the power of Christ to save from sin does not lie in the person saved, it lies wholly in Jesus Himself, and further, I learn that though the person to be saved be so far gone that you could scarcely expect faith of him, yet the Gospel coming to him can bring faith with itself, and do its own work, *ab initio*, from the very beginning. What if I say that the Gospel is a seed that makes its own soil! It is a spark that carries its own fuel with it, a life which can implant itself within the ribs of death, ay, between the jaws of destruction. The Eternal Spirit comes with His own light and life and creates men in Christ Jesus to the praise of the glory of His grace. Oh, the marvel of this miracle! I was never led more greatly to admire the splendor of the power of Christ to rescue men from sin than at this hour.

And to conclude, I notice our Lord *did nothing but speak*. In other cases He laid His hands upon the diseased, or led them out of the city, or touched them, or applied clay, or used spittle, but in this case He does not use any instrumentality, His word is all. He says, “Hold your peace, and come out of him,” and the unclean spirit is evicted. The word of the Lord has shaken the kingdom of darkness, and loosed the bonds of the oppressed. As when the Lord scattered the primeval darkness by the fiat, “Light be,” so did Jesus give the word, and its own intrinsic power banished the messenger of darkness.

Oh, you that preach Christ, preach Him boldly! No coward lips must proclaim His invincible Gospel! Oh you that preach Christ, never choose your place of labor, never turn your back on the worst of mankind! If the Lord should send you to the borders of perdition, go there and preach Him with full assurance that it shall not be in vain. Oh, you that would win souls, have no preference as to which they shall be, or, if you have a choice, select the very worst!

Remember, my Master’s Gospel is not merely for the moralist, in his respectable dwelling, but for the abandoned and fallen in the filthy dens of the outcast. The all-conquering light of the Sun of Righteousness is not for the dim dawn alone, to brighten it into the full blaze of day, but it is meant for the blackest midnight that ever made a soul to shiver as in the shadow of death. The name of Jesus is high over all, in heaven, and earth, and sky, therefore let us preach it with authority and confidence, not as though it were an invention of men. He has said He will be with us, and therefore nothing is impossible. The Word of the Lord Jesus cannot fall to the ground, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly.

I have gone to great lengths in this sermon because I would reach sinners who have gone to great lengths. Oh that they would accept this message of amazing mercy! He who has come to save sinners is God, and this is the surest ground of hope for the very worst. Hear you this I pray you, it is the Lord your God who speaks to you, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 1:1-28

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—679-80, 331, 440

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