DEMONOLOGY – HOW TO DEFEAT DEMONS
Mark 1:21-28
by Andy Manning

What is demonology? Demonology is the study of demons for the purpose of knowing how to defeat them.¹

There’s a lot of confusion out there about demons and the devil. Some people don’t believe in them at all. Some people believe in demons but are obsessed with them. But the reality is that you have an enemy, the devil, and he has many soldiers called demons, and they are out to get you. They want to harm you.

Professional athletes, like football players, prepare for the battle on the field or on the court by studying their opponent. They know that the better they understand their enemy, the easier it will be to defeat them. The last thing you want to do is go into an important game totally ignorant of your enemy. When I played basketball, our coach would always give us a scouting report on the other team. He could tell us what kind of defense they were going to play – Man-to-Man or Zone; he could tell us who their best scorers were; and he could usually tell us their weaknesses. All week long we would practice with those things in mind, and when the game rolled around, we were ready. In the game of life, you have an enemy, and the better you understand him, the more success you will have over him.

So today I’m going to give you a scouting report on your great enemy, the devil and his soldiers called demons.

Let’s look at a story in Mark 1:21-28 (NLT).

21 Jesus and his companions went to the town of Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, he went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority—quite unlike the teachers of religious law.

23 Suddenly, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil[h] spirit began shouting, 24 “Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

¹ Tyndale Bible Dictionary
25 Jesus cut him short. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. 26 At that, the evil spirit screamed, threw the man into a convulsion, and then came out of him.

27 Amazement gripped the audience, and they began to discuss what had happened. “What sort of new teaching is this?” they asked excitedly. “It has such authority! Even evil spirits obey his orders!” 28 The news about Jesus spread quickly throughout the entire region of Galilee.²

One Sabbath day, Jesus goes into a synagogue and begins to teach. What is a synagogue? The Greek word simply means gathering place; they were also called Houses of Instruction. Synagogues were where Jews met every Sabbath for worship, and during the week they were used as schools for the boys to learn the Bible, as well as civil courts. There was only one temple; it was in Jerusalem, and that’s where the priests offered sacrifices to God. But because it was so far for some Jews to travel to the temple every Sabbath, they started building Synagogues all over Israel. Wherever there were 10 married Jewish men, they could build a synagogue and start meeting. So every town had a synagogue, and some towns had several synagogues (by the time of Jesus there were 500 synagogues in Jerusalem alone). On the Sabbath they would gather to listen to the reading and teaching of the Bible.

Bible teachers back then were scribes and rabbis, but most synagogues didn’t have a resident rabbi, and so when a rabbi was visiting, they would invite him to stand up and teach. That’s what happened here. Jesus was considered a great teacher, so they invited Him to teach.

And the people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching. Why? Because He taught with real authority – quite unlike the teachers of religious law (verse 22). The people compared Jesus to the teachers of religious law. These were also called scribes, or rabbis.

Scribes were experts in the Old Testament. They were teachers, and civil lawyers. They were highly respected. The title “rabbi” means honored one or great one. People let scribes go to the front of the line, and have the best seat in the house, and when a scribe entered a room, people would stand to their feet in respect. But the people said that Jesus was much different than their scribes, because He taught with authority. The scribes would take the Old Testament, read it, explain it, and then quote other rabbis to back up their interpretations. But Jesus didn’t have to quote Scripture or other rabbis. He just spoke as if His words were

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Scripture. He would say, “This is what God is like; this is God’s will for you; you’re wise if you obey me.” They were amazed. But not everybody was amazed.

A demon-possessed man began shouting at Jesus. And then Jesus commands the demon to come out of the man. Then the demon leaves the man. Here’s what we can learn about demons from this story.

6 Facts About Demons

1. **Demons exist.**

   In this story the demon is called an evil spirit; sometimes they are called unclean spirits; and sometimes demons.

   Some people have said that demons don’t exist; that these Bible stories are just ignorant ways of describing mental illness before people knew mental illnesses existed. But that’s not the case. Demons are real.

   How do we know? In this story, the demon knew that Jesus was “the Holy One of God.” How did it know that? No human knew that at this point. Jesus wasn’t even claiming to be the Son of God at this point. But the demon knew who Jesus was, because the demon was from the spiritual realm. It knew Jesus before Jesus ever came to earth. It worshipped Jesus at one point.

   What exactly are demons? The Bible says that at one point Satan was the greatest of all the angels in heaven. But he decided to rebel and disobey God, so God kicked him out of heaven. But he didn’t leave alone. The Bible says that one third of the angels left with Satan. And so demons are evil angels who serve Satan. The Bible calls Satan the prince of demons. Satan is not omnipresent, so he has many, many demons who serve on His army, doing his wicked work.

2. **Demons have power over people.**

   In this story the demon has possessed a man. And it has so much power over the man that it actually took control of the man’s mind, and voice, and tongue, and mouth, his whole body, and was speaking through the man.

   The Bible says that demons are more powerful than people, and that all people, apart from a saving relationship with Christ, are under Satan’s control. The Bible says in Acts 26:18 that
people apart from Christ are under the power of Satan. Ephesians 2:1-3 says that non-believers are obeying the devil, and that He is at work in their hearts. It says in 1 John 3:8 that non-believers belong to the devil. It says in 1 John 5:18 that non-believers are under the control of the evil one.

So let me put it this way. Everyone who is not a Christian is under the control of demons. They may not be possessed by a demon, which is when a demon enters you and makes you do all sorts of things. But every non-Christian is demon-controlled.

What do demons do to people? In the Bible when a demon possessed a person, all kinds of different things could happen. Sometimes the demon would make a person deaf, blind or mute. Luke 13 tells about a woman who had been crippled by a demon for 18 years. Sometimes it would make a person go crazy. Sometimes it would cause people to harm themselves, like the demon possessed man in Mark 5 who cut himself with sharp stones; or the demon possessed boy who kept falling in fire or water, because the demon wanted to kill him.

But demons don’t just have power over people; they have power over nature. In Mark 5 a bunch of demons entered a herd of 2,000 pigs and caused them to jump off a cliff and into a lake to their death. In the book of Job, the devil had the power to cause a group of bandits to kill and steal from Job; he caused fire to fall from the sky to burn up Job’s sheep and shepherds; then he caused the wind to blow so hard the house collapsed and killed all of Job’s children; and finally, he caused job to get terrible boils all over his body, from head to foot.

So Satan and his demons are strong. In Mark 3:27 Jesus refers to Satan as the Strong Man. 2 Corinthians 4:4 calls him the god of this world. Satan is a very powerful being that seems to have power over the world and everyone and everything in the world – to the degree that God allows.

3. **Demons are against Jesus.**

In our story in Mark 1, the demon says, “Why are you interfering with us, Jesus?”

Demons have an anti-Christ agenda.

Ultimately Satan’s goal, according to John 10:10, is to steal, kill and destroy, but the best way they can do that is not by causing people to be deaf and blind and crippled; their ultimate goal is to prevent unbelievers from believing in Jesus, and to prevent believers from enjoying and serving Jesus.
The primary work of Satan and his demons is to lie and deceive and tempt. Jesus says if you love Him you must obey Him. The devil says that rules are meant to be broken. Jesus says He wants to give you a full and meaningful life. The devil says that following Jesus will suck all the fun out of your life. Jesus says that sin leads to suffering. The devil says, “Just this once; nobody will know; it’s no big deal; nobody’s going to get hurt.” Jesus says to trust Him. The devil says, “How can you believe in somebody you can’t see?” Jesus says to invest in eternity and prepare for eternity. The devil says that after you die you cease to exist, so do whatever you want, forget about being good, and have all the fun you can.

Satan and his demons tempt and lie. Revelation 12:9 says that the devil is the one deceiving the whole world. The Bible calls him the tempter. He was the one who tempted Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden in Genesis 3. John 13:32 says he was the one who tempted Judas to betray Jesus. In Acts 5 he was the one who tempted Ananias and Saphira to lie about their donation to the church, which ultimately led to their death. In Matthew 4 He even tried to tempt Jesus to abandon His cross for an earthly crown. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 it says that the devil is working to blind people’s minds so that they can’t understand the Gospel and be saved.

Demons are against Jesus. They want to keep unbelievers from turning to Christ; and they want to tempt you to sin so that you can’t enjoy and serve Christ.

4. **Demons know who Jesus is.**

The devil says to Jesus in verse 24, “I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”

It’s interesting that in the first half of Mark, the demons are the only ones who truly know who Jesus is (Mark 1, 3 and 5). It wasn’t until Peter’s confession in Mark 8:29 when Peter said, “You are the Christ,” that people begin to understand who He is. But the demons know.

This is why the people in this story are amazed at Jesus, but the demon is threatened and begins shouting.

The Greek word for shouting used here refers to someone who is suffering and traumatized. The demon is freaking out, because he knows who Jesus is. Why? Because demons know their fate. The demon knew what Jesus had come to do, and what He was going to do ultimately. The demon knew that Jesus is God who will one day punish Satan and all demons by throwing them in the Lake of Fire for eternity.
Whenever you truly come to see Jesus for who He is, you should experience some fear and dread, like this demon. The demon was an unclean, impure, sinful spirit, and when it encountered the holiness of Jesus who will one day judge everyone, it was terrified. When you see the perfection of Jesus clearly, you will see how sinful you are, and how deserving you are of hell, and you should experience a degree of fear and dread as well; and that fear should drive you to run as fast as you can to the cross for mercy and grace.

5. **Demons are under the authority of Jesus.**

Now we’re getting to the good news. As powerful as Satan and his demons are, Jesus shut the demon up, and forced it to leave the man in peace.

In Mark 3, some people criticized Jesus, saying that he got his power to do miracles and cast out demons from devil himself. Jesus replied by saying that he is stronger than the devil; able to tie him up and plunder his house. Colossians 2:10 says that Christ is the head over every ruler and authority. 1 Peter 3:22 says that all angels and authorities and powers accept His authority.

You don’t have to be afraid of Satan or demons because Jesus is in charge of them, and He loves you. They can’t do anything to you unless Jesus allows it. And the Bible says that if God allows anything bad to happen, it’s for your good and His glory. Demons can’t do anything without God’s permission, and God loves you.

6. **Jesus came to rescue us from the destructive control of demons.**

The final thing we learn about demons in this story is that Jesus’ mission is to rescue us from demons. Just as Jesus delivered this man from that demon’s destructive power, He wants to do the same for every person in the world.

Jesus came to save us from sin, by dying for our sins; but He also came to free us from the control of Satan so that we can enjoy and serve Jesus; so that we can enjoy the full and meaningful life that He created us for.

Remember that apart from Christ, every person on earth is under the control and power of Satan. You are a slave to demons. They are in control of you mentally, physically, emotionally, financially, professionally.
Their goal is not to terrorize you. Their goal is not for you to fear them. Their goal is to keep you from Christ so that you will spend eternity in hell, because that’s the best way to hurt you and God.

But the Bible says that when you trust in Christ as your Savior and King, he rescues you from Satan and demons. Let me show you a few verses.

1 John 3:8 says, “But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.”

Notice that people apart from Christ are under the control of Satan; they belong to him. But what did Jesus come to do? He came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to rescue us from the devil’s power.

Colossians 1:13-14 says, “13 For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, 14 who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.”

When you turn to Christ, He takes you out of the kingdom of darkness, where Satan is ruler and you are slave, and places you in the Kingdom of God, where Jesus is king and you are God’s child. You are no longer under the control of Satan.

Colossians 2:15 says, “In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.”

When you get saved, Christ disarms Satan and demons. They have no power or authority over you. They can’t possess you or force you to do things.

1 John 5:18 says, “We know that God’s children do not make a practice of sinning, for God’s Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.”

When you become a child of God, He holds you securely, and the devil cannot touch you.

1 John 4:4 says, “The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.”
When you get saved Jesus baptizes you with Holy Spirit. He places God the Holy Spirit to live and dwell and reside within you, permanently. And if God’s Spirit lives in you, there’s no way that Satan or any demon can enter you.

So if you are saved, then you cannot be possessed by a demon. A demon cannot enter you and control you. And Satan can’t do anything to you without God’s permission.

But that doesn’t mean the battle is over. As Christians, we are still in a great spiritual battle. While the devil can’t possess you, he can still oppress you. He does that primarily through temptation. Just as he tempted Jesus, He can tempt you to sin, to fight with other believers in the church, to get distracted from serving God and witnessing, to doubt God’s goodness and greatness, to get discouraged and depressed and give up. The devil is at work right now on a strategy to prevent you from enjoying and serving God.

So how do we as believers, as Christians, overcome demonic oppression? How do we engage in spiritual warfare?

**Overcoming Demonic Oppression**

1. **Arm yourself with the truth.**

   We can learn from how Jesus handled Satan in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. When Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus did two things to win. First, Jesus was armed with the truth. Each time the devil tempted Jesus, Jesus quoted Scripture. The devil tempts us through deception; he lies to us, because if we believe the lies he’s got us. You must be daily, diligently studying your Bible, learning the truth so that when the devil tempts you with his lies, you can immediately recall God’s word.

2. **Pray.**

   Second, Jesus was armed with prayer. By the time the devil approached Jesus to tempt Him, Jesus had been fasting and praying for forty straight days.

   In Matthew 6:13, the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus encourages us to pray, “Deliver us from the evil one.”

   As soon as the temptation comes, begin focusing on God and praying to Him. Don’t talk to the devil. Don’t try to rebuke a demon. Focus on Jesus, and ask Him for strength.
3. **Decide to obey God.**

Third, as soon as you are tempted, make a conscious decision to obey God. To do the right thing. And then look what the Bible says in James 4:7. “Humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

If this article has been helpful to you, I’d love to hear about it. Email me at andy@churchacadiana.com.