

Expository Tracts, No. 1.

# THE EVIL SPIRIT OF GADARA.

BEING

THOUGHTS ON MARK V. 1-17.

Extracted, with additions and alterations, from “ Expository Thoughts on  
the Gospel of St Mark.”

BY THE

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# THE EVIL SPIRIT AT GADARA.

## MARK V. 1–17.

- 1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.
- 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
- 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:
- 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any *man* tame him.
- 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.
- 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,
- 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.
- 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.
- 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name *is* legion: for we are many.
- 10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.
- 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.
- 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.
- 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.
- 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told *it* in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.
- 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.
- 16 And they that saw *it* told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and *also* concerning the swine.
- 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

These verses describe one of those mysterious miracles which the Gospels frequently record,—the casting out of a devil. Of all the cases of this kind in the New Testament, none is so fully described as this one.

We see, in the first place, in these verses, *that the possession of a man's body by the devil was a real and true thing in the time of our Lord's earthly ministry.*

It is a painful fact that there are never wanting professing Christians who try to explain away our Lord's miracles. Of all miracles, there are none which they assault so strenuously as the casting out of devils. They do not scruple to deny Satanic possession entirely. They tell us that it was nothing more than lunacy, or frenzy, or epilepsy, and that the idea of the devil inhabiting a man's body is absurd.

The best and simplest answer to such sceptical objections is a reference to the plain narratives of the Gospels, and especially to the one before us at this moment. The facts here detailed are utterly inexplicable, if we do not believe Satanic possession. It is notorious that lunacy, and frenzy, and epilepsy are not infectious complaints, and at any rate cannot be communicated to a herd of swine? And yet men ask us to believe, that as soon as this man was healed, two thousand swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, from a sudden impulse, without any apparent cause to account for their so doing! Such reasoning is the height of credulity. When men can satisfy themselves with such explanations, they are in a pitiable state of mind.

Let us beware of a sceptical and incredulous spirit in all matters relating to the devil. No doubt there is much in the subject of Satanic possession which we do not understand, and cannot explain. But let us not therefore refuse to believe it. We may be sure, that upon the subject of the devil and his power, we are far more likely to believe too little than too much. Unbelief about the existence and personality of Satan has often proved the first step to unbelief about God.

We see, in the second place, in these verses, *what an awfully cruel, powerful, and malicious being Satan is*. On all these three points, the passage before us is full of instruction.

The *cruelty* of Satan appears in the miserable condition of the unhappy man, of whose body he had possession. We read that he dwelt “among the tombs,” that “no man could bind him, no, not with chains,” and that he was “always night and day in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones,” naked, and without clothing. Such is the state to which the devil would bring us all, if he only had the power. He would rejoice to inflict upon us the utmost misery, both of body and mind. Cases like this are faint types of the miseries of hell.

The *power* of Satan appears in the awful words which the unclean spirit used, when our Lord asked, “What is thy name?” He answered, saying, “My name is Legion: for we are many.” We probably have not the faintest idea of the number, subtlety, and activity of Satan’s agents. We forget that he is king over an enormous host of subordinate spirits who do his will. We should probably find, if our eyes were opened to see spirits, that they are about our path, and about our bed, and observing all our ways, to an extent of which we have no conception. In private and in public, in church and in the world, there are busy enemies ever near us, of whose presence we are not aware.

The *malice* of Satan appears in the strange petition, “Send us into the swine.” Cast forth from the man, whose body they had so long inhabited and possessed, they still thirsted to do mischief. Unable to injure any more

an immortal soul, they desired leave to injure the dumb beasts which were feeding near. Such is the true character of Satan. It is the bent of his nature to do harm, to kill, and to destroy.

Let us beware of giving way to the senseless habit of jesting about the devil. It is a habit which supplies awful evidence of the blindness and corruption of human nature, and one which is far too common. When it is seemly in the condemned criminal to jest about his executioner, then, and not till then, it will be seemly for mortal man to talk lightly about Satan. Well would it be for us all, if we strove more to realize the power and presence of our great spiritual enemy, and prayed more to be delivered from him. It was a true saying of an eminent Christian, now gone to rest, "No prayer is complete which does not contain a petition to be kept from the devil."

We see, in the last place, from these verses, *how complete is our Lord's power and authority over the devil*. We see it in the cry of the unclean spirit, "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." We see it in the command, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit," and the immediate obedience that followed. We see it in the blessed change that at once took place in him that was possessed: he was found "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." We see it in the petition of all the devils,—*"Send us into the swine,"* confessing their consciousness that they could do nothing without leave. All these things show that one mightier than Satan was there. Strong as the great enemy of man was, he was in the presence of One stronger than he. Numerous as his hosts were, he was confronted with One who could command more than twelve legions of angels. "Where the word of the king is, there is power." (Eccles. viii. 4.)

The truth here taught is full of strong consolation for all true Christians. We live in a world full of difficulties and snares. We are ourselves weak and compassed with infirmity. The awful thought that we have a mighty spiritual enemy ever near us, subtle, powerful, and malicious as Satan is, might well disquiet us, and cast us down. But, thanks be unto God, we have in Jesus an almighty Friend, who is "able to save us to the uttermost." He has already triumphed over Satan on the cross. He will ever triumph over him in the hearts of all believers, and intercede for them, that their faith fail not. And He will finally triumph over Satan completely, when He shall come forth at the second advent, and bind him in the bottomless pit.