

Luke 8:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

Analysis

(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) Luke provides parenthetical background explaining the demon's desperate plea. "For he had commanded" (parēngeilen gar, παρήγγειλεν γάρ) uses pluperfect tense, indicating Jesus had already issued the command before the demon's outcry. "The unclean spirit" (tō pneumati tō akathartō, τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ) emphasizes moral defilement—demons are spiritually polluted, defiling whatever they touch.

"For oftentimes it had caught him" (pollois gar chronois synērpakei auton, πολλοῖς γὰρ χρόνοις συνηρπάκει αὐτόν) describes repeated violent seizures over extended time. The verb "caught" (συνηρπάκει) means to seize violently, snatch away, or overpower. "He was kept bound with chains and in fetters" (edesmeueto halysesi kai pedais phyllassomenos, ἐδεσμεύετο ἀλύσεσι καὶ πέδαις φυλασσόμενος) reveals desperate attempts to restrain him. "Chains" (ἀλύσεσι) bound hands/wrists; "fetters" (πέδαις) bound feet/ankles—maximum security restraint.

Yet "he brake the bands" (dierrhēssen ta desma, διερρήσσειν τὰ δεσμά), demonstrating supernatural strength. The imperfect tense indicates repeated breaking—not once but habitually. "Was driven of the devil into the wilderness"

(ἔλαυνετο ὑπὸ τοῦ δαίμονίου εἰς τὰς ἐρήμους) shows the man had no control—the demon drove him like a beast to desolate places. This verse portrays complete demonic domination: physical violence, superhuman strength used for self-destruction, total loss of autonomy. Human solutions proved utterly inadequate—only Christ's authority could deliver him.

Historical Context

Ancient methods for handling violent mentally ill or demon-possessed individuals were crude—restraint, isolation, or abandonment. Chains and fetters were iron shackles, heavy and painful. That this man repeatedly broke them demonstrated either extraordinary strength or demonic power (Mark 5:4 emphasizes no one could subdue him). The wilderness (ἐρήμους) refers to uninhabited, desolate regions—rocky areas unsuitable for agriculture or habitation.

First-century understanding attributed such behavior to demonic activity, not merely mental illness. Modern medicine recognizes conditions producing violent behavior, superhuman strength, and personality fragmentation. However, the Gospel accounts describe phenomena transcending naturalistic explanation—the demons' theological knowledge, their recognition of Jesus' identity, their plea for alternative housing (swine), and the dramatic transformation post-exorcism all indicate genuine spiritual reality.

That society's only response was restraint and isolation reveals human helplessness before demonic power. Chains couldn't hold him; guards couldn't control him. This magnifies Christ's authority—where human power failed completely, Jesus' word succeeded instantly. The early church saw in this account encouragement for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:12)—no demonic stronghold is too powerful for Christ to break.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the failure of chains and fetters to restrain the demoniac illustrate human inability to solve spiritual problems through natural means?
2. What parallels exist between demonic bondage in this passage and addictions or besetting sins that resist human willpower?
3. How does this verse's description of complete demonic control challenge modern tendency to minimize spiritual warfare realities?

Interlinear Text

Παρήγγελλεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ ἐξελθεῖν
he had commanded (For G3588 spirit G3588 the unclean to come
G3853 G1063 G4151 G169 G1831

ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλοῖς γὰρ χρόνοις συνηρπάκει
out of G3588 the man oftentimes (For G5550 it had caught
G575 G444 G4183 G1063 G4884

αὐτὸν καὶ ἐδεσμεῖτο ἀλύσεσιν καὶ πέδαις φυλασσόμενος
him and bound with chains and in fetters he was kept
G846 G2532 G1196 G254 G2532 G3976 G5442

καὶ διαρρήσσων τὰ δεσμὰ ἡλαύνετο ὑπὸ τοῦ
and he brake G3588 the bands and was driven of G3588
G2532 G1284 G1199 G1643 G5259

δαίμονος εἰς τὰς ἐρήμους
the devil into G3588 the wilderness
G1142 G1519 G2048