

Mark 5:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Mark elaborates: '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.' The repetition emphasizes supernatural strength and human helplessness. 'Often bound' shows repeated attempts; 'plucked asunder' (*διεσπάσθαι*) and 'broken in pieces' (*συντετρῖψθαι*) demonstrate irresistible force. The conclusion: 'neither could any man tame him' (*οὐδεὶς ἴσχυεν αὐτὸν δαμάσαι*). The verb 'tame' (*δαμάζω*) is used for wild animals—the demoniac was beyond human control, dangerous, untamable. Only divine power could liberate him. This sets up Christ's victory.

Historical Context

Ancient world recognized degrees of demonic possession—mild influence to complete control. This case represents extreme possession: superhuman strength, self-destructive behavior, social isolation, failed human interventions. Gentile regions practiced various exorcism methods, all ineffective against severe cases. The inability to 'tame' him reflects hopeless prognosis—society could only isolate, not cure. Mark's vivid details (possibly from Peter's eyewitness account) emphasize miracle's magnitude. Jesus' upcoming exorcism will demonstrate power surpassing all human and demonic forces. Early church used such miracles evangelistically—proving Christ's deity and authority.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing spiritual enemies' power (while less than Christ's) guard against naivety?
2. What situations seem 'untamable' in your life, and how does Christ's authority address them?
3. How does this passage demonstrate the gospel's power in seemingly hopeless situations?

Interlinear Text

διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν πολλάκις πέδας καὶ ἀλύσεις
Because G3588 **him** **had been often** **the fetters** **and** **chains**
G1223 G846 G4178 G3976 G2532 G254

δεδέσθαι καὶ διεσπάσθαι ὑπ' αὐτὸν τὰς ἀλύσεις
bound **and** **had been plucked asunder** **by** **him** **G3588** **chains**
G1210 G2532 G1288 G5259 G846 G254

καὶ τὰς πέδας συντετρῖφθαι καὶ οὐδεὶς αὐτὸν ἴσχυεν
and **G3588** **the fetters** **broken in pieces** **and** **G3762** **him** **could**
G2532 G3976 G4937 G2532 G846 G2480

δαμάσαι·

any man tame

G1150