

Matthew 8:28-34 / Luke 8:26-39

THE PAIN WE BRING ON OURSELVES

“The wages sin pays is death.”
(Romans 6:23)

Two things take the joy out of life; **sorrow**, what life does to us (the storm at sea) and **sin**, what we do to ourselves (the two wild men on the shore). When my mother was choking to death with emphysema, she said, “Bobby, this is my fault. I began smoking when I was thirteen.”

After the storm, Jesus and His men landed in Gadara on the Southeastern shore, a Gentile area with a few Jews. Two wild, naked men, full of demons came running towards them from the graveyard where the townspeople forced them to live. They hurt people who came by and they screamed and “cut themselves”. They snapped any chains used to bind them.

They knelt before Jesus, but when He commanded the demons to leave, the demons spoke to Him through them. They begged Him not to send them to hell, but to send them into a herd of pigs they saw in the distance. Jesus did this and the whole herd ran down the steep hill and drowned. The men were calmed by Jesus, and sat fully clothed with Him and the Twelve. When the townspeople saw what had happened they were terrified and begged Jesus to leave.

He did, and the two men wanted to go with Him, but He told them to go home and tell people what God, in His mercy, had done for them. They did and when Jesus came back a few months later, huge crowds came to Him for healing.

Reading this, we want to say, “Yea, right! Am I supposed to believe this?” Many Christians love to waste their time debating if demons are real and if they can **possess** Christians or just

oppress them. This is of little good to you and me; but what we do know is that pure, unadulterated evil is real. Something inside of adults lead them to have sex with children and kill them; to get college educated men in Germany to round up Jewish men, women and children, shoot them and bury them, for the “good of their country”.

I could go on and on, but you get the picture, we have seen “evil” in others, and if we are honest, in ourselves. Things like this led George Bernard Shaw to say, “If there is life on other planets, they must be using earth for their insane asylum.” In one country song, a girl said this of the chief of demons, when she was tempted by a boy to break her moral code:

“Lord it’s the devil, would You look at him.
I’ve heard about him but I never dreamed
he’d have blue eyes and blue jeans.”

We all want to be happy. We get married to find it and we get divorced; we make more money or we give money away. If we do find it we are the most fortunate people on earth. We may not be “pretty” as the world measures it; or have money or a winsome personality, etc; but if we are happy, we have what many movie stars and millionaires don’t have.

In my sixty years of helping hurting people, most of the pain I see comes from making bad choices and giving in to the evil voices inside us –what we do to ourselves. A man who grew up in my long pastorate came to see me. He said, “Preacher Bob, something you said when I was a teenager, has come true in my life. I joined a spa, met an old girlfriend, had a short affair and now I am about to lose my wife and children. What you said was:

“Sin will always take you further than you want to go; keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay!