

# Deceived by Sin

by Walter Chantry

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*The sermon highlights the deception of sin and Satan, which leads people to react negatively to the gospel message, but Jesus Christ offers liberation from sin's slavery and ultimate victory.*

**Duration:** 33:32

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:21, Matthew 5:3-10, Matthew 6:33, Mark 5:7, Luke 2:11, Luke 19:10, Romans 7:13

**Topics:** "Sin And Deception", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a story from Mark chapter 5 that illustrates the concepts discussed in recent weeks in Romans. The story is about a man possessed by demons who encounters Jesus. The speaker emphasizes that sin and Satan deceive and destroy people, and that hesitation or refusal to come to Jesus is a deceit within the heart. The sermon highlights the contrast between the negative reaction of the possessed man and the seemingly rational people who reject Jesus, emphasizing the twisted and deceived state of their minds.

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## Transcript

For our meditation this morning, let's turn back to Mark chapter 5. I've chosen to look at this amazing incident from the life of our Lord to see in a biographical form what we've been studying in recent weeks in Romans. At this season of the year, it would not be good to start into a new section in Romans 7, but this incident from the gospel illustrates what we've just been studying in Romans. No need for you to turn there, but just listen to two verses, the last two that we've considered in Romans 7. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me.

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid for sin that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. Sin and Satan deceive men and slay men. Sin hoodwinks a man and then puts him to death.

Satan and sin are exceedingly sinful. They are malicious and wicked to the highest degree, and there is no worse word in the English language than sin. Now at this time of year, we are thinking of Jesus' birth, and the angels announced when Jesus was born unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

And then they sang glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill to men. Now that is a very pleasant and cheerful and bright and positive announcement of the coming of Jesus Christ. And so our

hymns about the birth of Christ speak of such wonderful joy that comes because he entered into the world.

And yet will you notice in Mark chapter 5 what the gathering madman thought when he saw Jesus? You find it in verse 7, in the words that he spoke to Jesus. He cried with a loud voice and said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, thou son of the most high God? I adore you by God, that you torment me not. Why do you bother me, Jesus, son of the most high God? Swear to God that you will not torture me, Jesus, was the words of this man.

All his reactions to the Jesus who came with joy and pleasant and positive announcements, his reactions were dread and terror and revulsion and dismay at the presence of Christ. The Savior disturbed him. He saw Jesus as a threat.

He wanted Jesus to leave him, to depart. All that he could imagine Christ doing to him was torturing him. You see, the man was deceived by sin and Satan into upside down reasoning.

Christ came to bring joy and salvation and pleasantness, and he expected the worst when he saw Jesus. The Savior with peace and goodwill is perceived by this poor fellow to be a tormentor, an executioner of some kind. Now, this is an extreme case of a man who was driven insane by demonic possessions.

And the scene that we have in Mark 5 is weird. Perhaps the power of it is even lost in just reading the account of it. It seems through its familiarity to be a very subdued incident, but it was not at all.

Jesus was just stepping out of the boat that had brought him across the sea. And we read in verse 2 that immediately, just as he was stepping out of the boat, a wild man came rushing out of the caves that were used as tombs in this region of Gadara. It was a very rocky area with caves sloping down to the seaside, and a wild man came rushing out of the caves immediately upon his stepping out of the boat.

And we read in the account that for some time this man had been living in the tomb, and the people did not dare to walk by that region because he was running naked through this area, and he was cutting himself with stones, and there were ear-splitting screams day and night reverberating through the rocks. He had a superhuman strength. They had put fetters and chains upon him, steel chains literally, and he burst them time and time again.

No one could control this madman. And so we see that with a visible fierceness he rushed toward the landing where Christ and the disciples were just getting out of the boat, and no doubt the disciples were so horror-struck that they were frozen to the spot momentarily. But as this shouting maniac came rushing toward them, he threw himself at the feet of Jesus Christ, and we find in verse 7 that he shrieked at the top of his lungs, and that's what it means in verse 7, that he cried with a loud voice.

He shrieked at the top of his lungs. 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. The whole incident has an eerie glow like you might expect from a horror movie.

A naked wild man who is scarred and perhaps bleeding with self-inflicted wounds is writhing on the ground and bellowing as loud as he can, this message to Jesus Christ. But you see, it takes exaggerated cases to teach us some of the common ills of men. It takes a far advanced disease for a man to see what his sickness is.

I suppose that when doctors are studying how to detect symptoms, they first look at the more advanced cases, and only later through the trained eye do they learn how to discern the start of the same diseases. Well, this poor fellow is a caricature of thousands who are deceived and destroyed by sin and Satan, who are terrified by the Savior. And he prayed a horrible prayer that Jesus would leave him and have nothing to do with him.

But notice, if you will, later down in verses 14 to 17, the people who were considered to be perfectly in their right mind came out to see what had happened, and they saw this madman in his right mind, in clothes and sitting at the feet of Jesus. And when they saw it, verse 15, they were afraid. And verse 17, they began to pray to Jesus that he would leave them.

And by the end of the story, you wonder if the madman was any more demon-possessed than these other people. Certainly he was no more deceived, and he was no closer to destruction than they were, and their response to Jesus Christ was precisely as his was, a negative reaction to a very positive gospel-carrying Savior. Thousands of people react opposite to the gospel message, the good news which has come as we know it at Christmas time, frightened by him who is meek and lowly of heart, instinctively wanting to be rid of the Savior of men and not bothered by him.

It speaks of minds that are twisted and deceived. What this story is illustrating is that any hesitation to come to Jesus Christ for the salvation that he offers, any hesitation is satanic. Any refusal to embrace the Savior, even momentarily, is a deceit within the heart, a deceit by sin and by the devil.

And really this poor gathering maniac was eventually saved, and those who seemed to be in the right minds were lost through the very same inward attitude of heart. And there are some sitting here who are still disturbed by the gospel. When Christ draws near with the power of his Spirit in meetings where the gospel is being preached, and it doesn't happen too often, but when that power is felt by everyone who is present, there comes a setting of the jaw and a gritting of the teeth and holding on to the edge of your seat and hoping to make it through one more time.

The one thing you desire to escape is the presence and the influence of the Son of God, because sin has deceived you and Satan has deceived you. This madman is given to let you see yourself, to see in a blown-up form what this attitude of heart is that rejects the gospel, the good news. The fearful thing is that this demonic response came amidst orthodox doctrine and understanding of the profoundest truth.

You'll notice in this passage that the maniac, the savage man in the story, in verse 6, not only knew but felt the majesty and dignity of Jesus Christ. He was compelled to fall down before him in worship and recognition of his majesty. He felt the powers of Jesus Christ.

In verse 7, we see he knew the identity of Christ. You are the Son of the Most High God, he confessed. In the same verse, he acknowledged the authority of Christ.

He had the right to punish this man or torment him as he would, and with it all, there's an admission that his sins deserved the damnation which was certainly approaching him. So you see, it is possible to be well instructed in the most profound truths of Christianity, and even to feel the power of these things. This man felt these things very deeply, and know beyond a shadow of a doubt the majesty and reality and heavenliness of Christ, and the certainty of hell, and yet have a negative response to Jesus Christ, because sin warps the mind.

It turns men's thinking upside down, and it brings out prayers the very opposite that the gospel is meant to bring. What is a prayer, after all? Some people practice how to say something that sounds nice to the ears of other people. A prayer is the offering up of the desire of the heart to God, and God reads the desires of men's hearts, and this man desired for Jesus Christ to leave him.

And so do some of you who are here, desire that you would not have to hear of this Christ and feel these powers of heaven any longer. Well, for the moment, will you at least note that sin has deceived you. You look at the Lamb of God and think of him as a wolf.

You perceive the Savior of sinners to be the tormentor of sinners. You think somehow that being saved would be a tragedy, and you don't want it. Now, how wicked is sin, and how vile is Satan to take the best things and twist men's minds with respect to them.

But that's what sin does. It deceives men, and through the deceit, it kills men. Now, why would such a miserable specimen of suffering as this poor fellow was try to chase away his only hope? What was it that led this ruined hulk of humanity to say such self-destroying things of Christ? Well, first, if you read his statement in verse 7, you find that he thought Jesus would make him miserable.

That's exactly what he thought. Don't torment me. Why don't you leave me alone? He thought Jesus would make him miserable.

That's one of the chief lies of the wicked one in every age. And especially he uses that argument with teenagers, young teenagers, that somehow if you come to Jesus Christ, it's the most miserable thing that could happen to you. That's why the legend persists that the Puritans were stern, prune-faced folks with a dour spirit and morose, unhappy existence.

But we don't have to protect these Puritans of the past age. That's what people think of sober Christians today. I mean, of Christians who are serious about being holy and serving the Lord.

Young people tend to think that is the worst possible existence. And that's why a number of you are hoping that Jesus Christ will depart from you and that you won't have to constantly go through the feelings and the impressions of spiritual powers in the presence of Christians and worship services. I mean, the absolute worst thing is to be near holy people and people who are interested in worship.

Oh, how these Christians must suffer in a straitjacket of holiness. How dull a life it is to worship and keep commandments and serve God. The good times are to be had elsewhere.

That's exactly what this man thought. The good time is somewhere else. Jesus is a torment.

He'll make me miserable. But if you think that, just wait a minute and look who's talking. Look who's talking in this passage.

This madman asks Jesus not to torment him, not to spoil his fun. I mean, he knew what happy living was all about, didn't he? He was having a ball living in the tomb. Every night he had a great time gashing his flesh with sharp stones.

I mean, that was fun. Don't you torment me, Jesus, by taking away these good times and shrieking at the top of his lungs. I think he was the original rock star.

If he could have only given these unearthly shrieks with the accompaniment of an electric guitar that was amplified and recorded it, he could have made a million. And don't say that those fellows aren't clever, either, or don't have talent. I mean, he was a genius.

He invented the Gadarene disco. What you do, you see, you go to your local graveyard and you dance naked in the moonlight. And while you're gyrating through the tombstones, you gash your flesh with sharp stones and shriek at the top of your lungs.

That is the ultimate in fun. He was really where it was all at. And the more dangerous it is, the more exciting it is, and the more wonderful it must be.

This fellow didn't want Jesus to take his fun away. He was living with gusto. But do you see what he preferred? He preferred to be with the dead and not with the living.

It was an antisocial behavior that drove him away from everybody. They tried to keep him out in the desert. They didn't want anything to do with him.

And then the self-inflicted harm. That's why the devil is called Apollyon. Apollyon means the destroyer.

And the way he destroys is to get people to destroy themselves. The shameful nakedness. The bellicose insanity.

That's why wicked people have to be so loud in their fun. So rollicking it all. That's all they've got.

But he thought he was really living. And that being with Jesus would be torment. He really thought that.

And he fell down in worship and begged Jesus, please go away. Don't you torment me. And he thought his was the best life.

Now some of you really think that Christians are dead. And that the unconverted are the people who are alive. That's what this fella thought.

He thought being in the tombs was where it was at. He preferred the skulls and the bones to those who were alive in Jesus Christ. Now it's true.

If you had been there and you had gone into Gadara and been with the people who got up in the morning and went to work and earned money and brought it home and used it to feed their children and sat by the fireside with their boys and girls and the mothers who got up and baked the bread and then through the rest of the day had to till the garden and make supper for the family and all of this routine that was going. That's not where the action was at. It was out there with legion.

It was out by the seaside. That's where the fun was. It was wild out there.

But you follow legion and you will eventually alienate yourself from all men. Because the way of the world and the way of the flesh and the way of the devil is to do your own thing and you'll do your own thing until nobody can live with you including other worldlings. And when they try to put chains on you you'll snap them and say you can't tell me what to do.

And if you follow legion you will gas yourself over and over again in a self-destroying orgy. Smoking grass and snorting coke and getting stoned with a six pack is slicing up the flesh. Who has woe? Who has

sorrow? It's the drunk.

It's the alcoholic who is in trouble. And he's brought it all upon himself. Sexual immorality is a plunge downhill with the pigs.

Do you notice what happened? Christ took the demons and put them in the pigs so the man could see what he was really doing to himself. They destroyed themselves. That's what he was doing.

With cutting his flesh he was destroying himself. Greed, the pursuit of riches. What does the Bible say? They that want to be rich fall into many hurtful lusts.

And they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Now of course nobody sets out to be an alcoholic. Just a little slice of life is all they want.

Nobody sets out to be a hooker. Just a little bit of adult humor here or there is what they want. Nobody wants to be a miser.

Just a little glamour to life is all that they're seeking. Well what you do is start with a few little scratches with these sharp stones. But as the sin proceeds the gases get deeper and deeper.

People say I don't want to blow myself up. I just want to play with the dynamite. Sin destroys.

It destroys. Oh the world looks bright. There's so many good times offered.

That's why it's called legion. Legion. But in the end of them all is self-destruction.

Meanwhile the Christians with their quiet lives are meant to rejoice in the Lord always and again to rejoice. And even the madmen know it in certain moments. When you realize that you'd like to die like a Christian even if you'd like to live with the wild men of the world.

Well he thought Jesus would make him miserable. The second thing he thought was that Jesus would take away his liberty. He really thought that.

He said just let me alone. Don't bother me. Don't restrict me.

You hear comments like this all the time. Why don't people keep their religion private instead of always talking to others about what they believe? That's the great cry of America. Now fine if you want to believe something just don't tell me because it infringes on the right for me to think what I want to think and believe what I want to believe.

Just keep it to yourself. And now the courts of America have joined this side of the satanic movement where the judges are ruling that if anybody tells children in the classroom what's right and what's good that they're infringing on their liberty. Judges are saying that and they mean it.

Well you see the devil has always taken the language of Zion and used it for hell. He always talked about liberty when what he means is slavery. Have you ever noticed that the communists who are the worst tyrants in the world and wouldn't let people step out of line for a moment are always talking about liberty and freedom.

They always use those words. And you've heard of the civil liberty union. And on and on it goes.

Well that's exactly what was happening. This fellow really believed that he had liberty and Christ would enslave him and restrict him. And aren't there some of you who have thought that if you become a Christian it will keep you back? It will restrict you? You're under the dominion of sin.

It's already so warped your mind that it's kept you from the one thing that's good for you. So don't press me with Christianity. Don't make me go to church.

Don't insist that I be with people who are holy. No, Christ came to set men free. If you continue in my word you'll be my disciples indeed and you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free.

Christ is the liberator. Satan is the slave driver. Sin is the slave driver.

And if even for a moment you wonder about that and do not come to Christ because of that, it shows that he's got you and you're in his hands. He came into the world to save his people. Do you think that he came to make you miserable? Do you think that being a Christian would restrict your liberty? What other reason could there be for not coming to Christ? He offers life, eternal life.

He offers the forgiveness of sins. He offers an inheritance that is eternal, will never fade away. He offers victory over the world, over the sin, over the devil.

He offers ultimate victory with him sitting upon his throne wearing a crown. Why would a moment of hesitation be in any man's heart? Unless he thought somehow he was going to lose his pleasure or his liberty. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world and preached, it's interesting that the first New Testament illustration of his preaching begins with the beatitudes, big words.

But each one of them begins, happy is the man who is poor in spirit. Happy are those who mourn. Happy are the pure in heart.

Happy are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Happy are the people who suffer for righteousness' sake. Righteousness and happiness are joined together and he came to give us righteousness and happiness.

When men believed on Christ, they ran through the temple leaping and praising God. When Paul and Silas were put in prison, they couldn't sleep at night for being so happy in the Lord and they sang and woke the gaoler up. And when a woman was saved from her immorality, she wept for joy at the feet of Jesus Christ.

If you think that Christ will make you unhappy, then you are in the grip of Satan and of sin, just like this madman. It is sheer madness to think that for a moment about Christ. And don't get drawn away by that brand of Christianity that wants to make you think that it's all right to have Jesus at all the world's pleasures too and do everything just like the world, just with a little different wording added on.

Now we have our Christian rock group. They can shriek with different words. And where the world runs to gluttony, now what they do is open restaurants, even in this area, where Christians can go and eat for three hours while they listen to gospel music.

You just put a little different flavor on it and you do just what the world did. Happiness and holiness are joined together. And the man who hungers and thirsts after holiness, after righteousness, he is the man who is happy.

Why isn't there satisfaction for you? Why isn't there real happiness? It's because there's no real holiness. You haven't come to Christ. Christ is a good king.

Satan is the slave driver. And if you think that coming to Christ will make you restricted, you are already a captive. Well, by all means, do not.

Do not ever allow your heart consciously to say what this man said in verse 7. What do I have to do with you, Jesus, thou son of the most high God? Swear to me that you will not torment me. Why don't you go away? It's interesting in this story that even though this slave of sin prayed to Jesus that he wouldn't save him, notice that, he prayed that Jesus would leave him alone. And when he prayed that, Jesus didn't hear the prayer, but he saved him in spite of the prayer.

And we can sympathize with you who are still captive to sin, because every one of us, for the most part, can remember times when the mention of Jesus made us groan, when we winced, when we were Christians who were interested in holiness and talking about spiritual things and sermons where there was some reality. We wanted to get away. Thank God he didn't let us get away.

But that's not always what the Lord does. You notice in verse 17 that they began to pray that Jesus would depart from him, and he did it to most of them. He left them alone, but not entirely.

For in verse 19, first after he had transformed the chief of sinners, he sent the chief of sinners to live with them and make them uncomfortable and to remind them of Jesus and to tell them, no, he doesn't make people miserable, he makes them happy. And he is compassionate to the sinner. Christians are nothing but the chief of sinners who have been changed by the grace of God and are meant to live here to make you uncomfortable and to talk about holiness and talk about Christ and to exude what holiness and righteousness and proper living is so that you feel uncomfortable in your sins and so that you realize that they are the people who are happy and the worldling who is so loud with his laughter because he's got to cover up the aching heart inside and he's got to pretend that he's happy.

He's the man who's unhappy. You see, the text is urging you to be turned and to hold on to a shred of hope that Jesus Christ might deliver you. Never ask to be free of Christ or his word or his church or his people or his spirit's presence or the power of sermons or of testimony that you hear.

Your worldly laughs are hollow and you are not satisfied. Your lifestyle is selfish and it will lead to the ultimate loneliness as you do your own thing and please yourself and nobody else can stand you. Your ways are destruction.

You cannot be the first person in history to play with fire and not get burned, to gas yourself with the rocks and not be cut. Your ways are shameful. It is shameful not to believe on Christ and embrace him at once.

With gladness, men of old received him. Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Peace on earth, goodwill to men.

He came to save his people from his sin. Positive, glorious, happy message. That's what the gospel is about.

And any way your mind changes it and turns it even momentarily is satanic. But it's why people run from the church. They can't endure a life of sin and the pricking conscience of being reminded of the destruction that they are bringing on themselves.

Some people like the orthodox truths of the church. They like to hear that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, that there is a heaven, that there is a hell. They'd even like some of the formality of being present at worship because that silences Mr. Conscience and they don't like to hear the conscience.

But oh, they don't like preaching that gets down to where they are and tells them that sin is sin and that they're slaves and they need it because they want the pleasures of sin even though they don't satisfy. They want to spend their money for that which isn't bread they can't eat. They're never satisfied.

But you see Christians cannot approve of sin and preachers cannot approve of sin and cannot allow you to sit in the pew and be comfortable. Will you go away from Christ? Many have done so because they're like the madman, I want to be left alone in my way, thinking that happiness is in wild self-destruction. Or will you ask Christ to go away? How could you possibly do that? He can put you in your right mind.

Will you notice that Christ had power over the devil? At his will he cast out the devils from this man. Oh you love to think that you've got it all together and you can go as far as you want and not any further and you can do with your life what you want to do and you understand all that's in the world. Satan and sin are stronger than you are and wiser than you are and deceitful and destroying.

But Christ is stronger than Satan and wiser than Satan and in him there is light and in him there is hope. Don't pray what was prayed in verse 7. Rather pray what the man prayed when he was in his right mind. Verse 18, when he was come into the ship on his way after having healed the man.

He that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. That's happiness, that's joy, that's satisfaction to be with Christ. And I tell you that even the sorrows that Christians experience are because they're not with Christ enough or not close enough with Christ.

Because when they're with him they can suffer for righteousness, they can rejoice and be exceeding glad. Christ preaches if you don't believe. Let's bow together and pray.

Oh Lord our God we thank you for the joyous message of the Savior who came with the mission and the power to put captive men free, to put madmen in their right minds, to make miserable men happy. And when we read the tale of this wild man we have no question father as to when he was mad and when he was miserable and when he was happy and sane. Lord from the story let each man here present know his own heart's condition and those who are yet mad and yet miserable in their lives all may they this day be brought to Christ and set free from Satan and sin.

We pray in the Savior's name. Amen.

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