

I. Introduction

A. Let's get right into Scripture:

1. *And as Jesus disembarked, a man from the town who was possessed by evil spirits met him. He had worn no clothes for a long time and did not live inside a home, but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he let out a howl and fell down in front of him, yelling, "What have you got to do with me, you Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, please, don't torment me." For Jesus was commanding the evil spirit to come out of the man. Again and again the evil spirit had taken control of him, and though he was bound with chains and fetters and closely watched, he would snap his bonds and go off into the desert with the devil at his heels.* (Luke 8:27-29, Phil)
2. The poor, heartbreaking, pitiful man. Invaded by demons. Legions of them. Naked. Matted in his own filth. Out of his mind. Crazy. Broken. Unwashed. Uncleaned. Ungroomed. Unloved. Unwanted. An animal. Living among the tombs. Shrieking. Crying out. Superhuman strength. Out of control. Hounded again and again by the devil at his heels.
 - a) The devil is the ultimate abuser.
 - b) The devil is the ultimate molester.
 - c) The devil is the ultimate accuser.
3. I read of this poor man, and I ache for him. I feel empathy for him. To the devil, he is a pawn. To the demons, just a plaything. They feast on his brokenness, and like flies, they swarm to his wounds.
4. Jesus comes to him with great compassion. The impossible happens. Jesus saves this man. He delivers him. He casts out the demons. In a matter of hours, a lifetime of devastation is undone.
 - a) *These people came out to see what had happened, and approached Jesus. They found the man, whom the evil spirits had left, sitting down at Jesus' feet, properly clothed and quite sane...* (Luke 8:35, Phil)

B. The Bible says:

1. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?* (Proverbs 18:14, KJV)
2. Our topic today is
 - a) **A Wounded Spirit**
3. A wounded spirit, who can bear? We live in a fallen world. We live in a world that is morally broken.
4. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine. And it is a pain machine where the devil roams freely.
5. We live in a world that is at war spiritually. The Bible paints the picture of sinister and evil forces lined up against us, ready to break our hearts.
6. When you add all of this together, the inescapable consequence is a wounded spirit. The Hebrew term for a wounded spirit conveys the idea of a shattering blow to the deepest part of your being. A kind of spiritual concussion.
7. This still happens today.
8. I am not saying that any of us is demon possessed — if you are a Christian, that is impossible.
 - a) I am not saying that any of us today is that broken and out of control and living among tombs as that demonized man in Luke.
 - b) What I am saying is that there is a corner in every human heart that has been clawed and scratched and bitten and torn by the evil and sin in this world.
 - c) That is the wounded spirit.
 - (1) It is the mother of all dysfunction, addiction, narcissism, relational breakdown, self-sabotage, and emotional brokenness in our lives.
 - d) The wound manifests as a fear and anxiety that won't go away. It festers into a bitterness and anger that turns toxic and hard.
9. The devil is a predator. He hunts the world for any sign of weakness. Like the bully that he is, he seeks out vulnerability. And he swoops in for the kill.
10. But thank God, Satan might be a predator, but he is not the Apex predator. That role belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ alone. And his only prey is the devil, and his demons and the brokenness and evil that they spawn.
11. When the grace of God saves you, blesses you, grows you, and uses you, then it can be said of you...
 - a) **They found the person, whom the evil spirits had left, sitting down at Jesus' feet, properly clothed and quite sane...**

- C. This summer, we've been in a series called Grace Powered Living. The goal is to get God's grace deep down into our souls... so it's more than a concept... it's an actual power and force in our lives. Today is part six in our series.

II. Four Truths About a Wounded Spirit

A. **Spiritual Warfare | A wounded spirit is the devil's favorite weapon to neutralize you in the battle for the gospel.**

1. Satan is a bully. He preys on the weak, the young, the little, the vulnerable. His primary objective is to stop you from getting saved.
2. If he can't stop you from getting saved, his secondary objective is to stop you from growing up spiritually. He hates the Grace Pathway, and a wounded spirit is one of his very best traps to keep you from it.
3. Daniel warns us that devil makes war against the saints.
 - a) *I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.* (Daniel 7:21, NKJV)
4. Jesus warns us that the devil is a thief.
 - a) *"The thief [the devil] does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..."* (John 10:10, NKJV)
5. Why does the devil make war against the Saints? He makes war against us because our primary mission is to spread the gospel. Our primary mission is to bring every person possible under the sway of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) When people receive Jesus, they are delivered from the domain of darkness.

- b) When people receive Jesus, they are set free.
- c) When people receive Jesus, the diabolical forces of darkness lose all rights, all claims, all authority, and all possession of them.
- d) When people receive Jesus, hell loses one more occupant.
 - (1) The devil hates the gospel because every time a person is saved it is a punch in his gut in a kick in his teeth. It proves again that he is a liar and can never fulfill his objective of being like God.
 - (2) And so the devil makes war against the gospel, and against all those who are called to proclaim this brilliant light of the gospel in a dark and dreary world.
 - (3) Christian, the devil hates you and has a horrible plan for your life. And he accomplishes the plan by doing everything you can to inflict a mortal blow against your spirit.
- 6. Because if the devil can stop you, he thinks he can stop the gospel of salvation from flowing to the people that you know and care about. A wounded spirit is the devil's favorite weapon to neutralize you in the battle for the gospel.

B. Core Identity | A wounded spirit is the devil's attempt to redefine your core identity.

- 1. The devil attacked Jesus. He tempted him three times. In two of the temptations, Satan begins by saying,
 - a) "If you are the Son of God..." (Matt 4:3,6).
- 2. This is his strategy.
- 3. The devil calls into question who Jesus is. If he can get Jesus to doubt his truest, deepest identity, then the devil wins. IF you are the Son of God...
- 4. And this is the devil's main strategy in wounding you: he wants to create in you a false identity, a false self, a mask that you wear for the rest of your life.
- 5. When you became a Christian, you became a whole new creation. You became a new person with a new name, new identity, new destiny, new powers, new privileges, a new status, a new everything.
 - a) You are richer than you think.
 - b) You have more power than you realize.
 - c) You have a new name, new status, new privileges, new rights — all because you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior.
 - d) Christian, you have a birthright that staggers the imagination, dazzles the angels, and scares the demons.
 - e) You are the richest person you know.
- 6. The devil hates all this. He will lie, cheat, and steal you right out of your birthright in Jesus Christ.
- 7. This is why the devil wounds your spirit. He is desperately terrified of your rising up to your true royal status in Christ. So instead of you seeing yourself as a sovereign, a ruler, he wants you to see yourself as a victim. Permanently.
- 8. Now, don't get me wrong. The truth is that we have all been victims of other people's sins. We are not denying our victimhood.
- 9. But the truth also is that our victimhood does not have to define us. It is not who you really are. It is not your core identity. It is not your fault.
- 10. Your permanent-victimhood-card is a BIG LIE from the devil, and he wants nothing more than for you to fall for it.
 - a) It is a lie that you are stupid — God made you a genius at something.
 - b) It is a lie that you are weak — you have a power that makes the demons tremble.
 - c) It is a lie that you are to be exploited and used — you are precious to God, and nobody touches you without paying a price.
 - d) It is a lie that your sexuality is permanently damaged, and that there is no hope or redemption for you.
 - e) It is a lie that you don't matter — you matter dearly to God, and you are an integral part of his plan.
 - f) It is a lie that you are ugly, a lie that you are too fat, too skinny, too short, or too tall, too old, or too young. It is a lie that past failures are fatal, and that God has a point of no return. It is a lie that you are worthless, gross, damaged goods, a loser, unforgivable, stuck, and in permanent bondage.
- 11. The devil plays the IF card... IF you are really saved, IF God loves you, IF you did it right, IF you didn't lose your salvation, IF you have power, IF you have value, IF you have worth...
- 12. With God, there is no IF!
- 13. The TRUTH is that you are a member of the Royal Family of God, one of the sovereign rulers of heaven and earth.
- 14. When you know who you are, and when you rise up to your full stature as a royal child of God, the demons fear. They shake in their boots. They flee as fast as they can. There's nothing more terrifying to evil than a child of God who knows who they are and what they have, and who embraces their glorious dominion in Christ.

C. Fear and Anxiety | A wounded spirit plays out in fear and anxiety that make you limp along when God designed you to soar.

- 1. Every time I talk about emotion, I want to make it really clear that sometimes our mental and emotional states are physiological.
 - a) Sometimes our problem can be genetic, not spiritual. Or it could be based on poor nutrition, or not enough sleep, or chronic stress, or a lot of other factors besides spiritual ones.
 - b) There is a prophet named Elijah, who was depressed and borderline suicidal. Do you know what God did for him? God gave him a sandwich and hydration and had him take a long nap. I'm not making this up (1 Kings 19:4-8).
 - c) So when I talk about anxiety, fear, depression, and any of that, sometimes the best place to start is adequate rest and proper nutrition.
 - d) But other times fear and anxiety can rule our lives because of the spiritual battle we are in.
- 2. Fear

- a) Fear is the energy that gets released in the face of danger.
- b) Fear, like anger, is an early warning system. Anger warns you about injustice. Fear warns you about danger.
- c) Many times, your gut feels your fear long before your mind has analyzed it. You feel uneasy, apprehensive, cautious, and you can't explain why. Hold onto that fear, and trust it. Something is happening.
- d) God designed fear to motivate you to take action: raise your shields, take up arms, escape, get out of the situation, run away, defend yourself and your kids and neighbors.
- e) Healthy fear is a good thing. It can save your life.
- f) But fear can also become unhealthy when it becomes the dominant force in your life. So there are hundreds of verses in the Bible that say, Fear not. Go memorize a few. Start with Psalm 127.
- g) Fear has a cousin.
- 3. Anxiety
 - a) All of us have anxieties and concerns in life. That's normal.
 - b) But sometimes anxiety becomes overwhelming. It becomes one of the dominant forces in a person's life. This is not God's plan for you. And God has created ways for you to rise above anxiety.
 - c) This kind of anxiety happens when fear gets traumatized.
 - d) There's been a national trauma with the Covid virus... and anxiety is ramped up to an all time high.
 - (1) A new study finds rates of anxiety and depression have tripled during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kaiser Family Foundation Study, 2020)
 - e) Human beings have a remarkable ability to run mental simulations of future events.
 - (1) This is a good thing. You can imagine what tomorrow will be like. You can plan your future.
 - (2) But it can be an emotionally disruptive thing. Your mind races... If this happens, then that happens, then the next thing happens, then the world implodes and I have no future.
 - (3) If you have kids, you might know the book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. A future simulation of horrible results. That's anxiety. That's worry.
 - (4) That's why Jesus said,
 - (a) *"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."* (Matthew 6:34)
 - (5) And it's why Paul said,
 - (a) *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:6,7)
- 4. The devil can't shackle you with an invasion by demons, you have the Spirit of God within you.
 - a) He can't shackle you with the loss of salvation, you have eternal security.
 - b) But he can shackle you with anxieties and fears of everything that might go wrong.
 - c) He can freeze you in place with fears of rejection or failure or cancel culture.
 - d) The devil can point to one wound, one loss, one rejection, one pain, and convince you it will all happen again.
- 5. You are meant to soar with the eagles, but you're down here pecking bugs off the ground with chickens... because you've been locked in fear mode for decades.
- 6. I'm not judging you. You make sense to me.
 - a) Whatever dangers birthed your fears...
 - b) Whatever traumas birthed your anxieties...
 - (1) You make sense to me. There's a logic to it all.
- 7. But the higher truth and the deeper logic is that Jesus Christ is bigger, better, stronger, and closer than you think. He died on the cross to disarm your sins, and he rose again to unlock new heights of potential.
- 8. The next time you run a mental simulation and it makes you anxious or afraid, picture Jesus walking into the middle of that situation. Run *that* simulation. Picture him turning over the tables of your enemies and driving them out with whips.
- 9. Picture that man among the tomb stones coming face-to-face with the Redeemer, the one with the power to break a spell.
 - a) *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."* (2 Timothy 1:7)
- 10. Run your simulations with Jesus in the picture.... And you will begin to rise above your wounded spirit.
- D. **Hope | Salvation in Christ plus growth to maturity sparks hope in your heart no matter how broken you might be.**
 - 1. We believe in Jesus as Savior. He forgives our sins. He cleanses us. He pardons us. He justifies us. He gives us a relationship with God. He makes us fit for heaven. He gives us eternal life. He stands ready to be your Savior today, if you will only receive him. We believe that Jesus is our Savior.
 - 2. But we believe he is also so much more. We believe that Jesus is our Healer. Not just for our bodies, but for our wounded spirits, too.
 - 3. Jesus came to heal your broken heart. Jesus came to break the bondage of your captivity — to heal your addictions. Jesus came to give you a new name, a new identity. To create a new You that incorporates the very best of who you are into the very best of what you can become... without violating your integrity, without coercing you to be something weird, and without forcing you into some hyper religious mold of what a "good" Christian should look like.
 - 4. Listen to how Jesus described his mission on earth:
 - a) *The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed.* (Luke 4:18)

5. Everything in here gives hope to the wounded spirit in all of us.
6. There is tremendous hope for you today.
 - a) Hope to be an excellent wife or a husband in a healthy, bonded marriage.
 - b) Hope to be devoted parents, rearing your children in a way that brings them maximum blessing and God maximum honor.
 - c) There is hope for you to be permanently past your addictions.
 - d) Permanently past crippling anxieties and controlling fears.
 - e) Permanently past overwhelming depression and despair.
 - f) There is hope for you to achieve your dreams.
 - g) To give and receive love.
 - h) To be normal.
 - i) There is hope for you to be used by God to lead a lost world groping in darkness into the wide open arms of a crucified Savior.
 - j) There is hope for you to lay up mountains of rewards and indescribable treasures in heaven.
 - k) There is hope for you to send the demons running.
 - l) There is hope for you that the wounds you received in childhood no longer dominate the choices you make as an adult.
7. The TRUTH is that you are a member of the Royal Family of God, one of the sovereign rulers of heaven and earth. You are the image of God. God calls you today...
 - a) *"Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem. . . Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive Daughter of Zion."* (Isaiah 52:1, 2, NIV)
8. This is your birthright. It is your destiny. If you choose it, God promises to bring it about.
9. Just like that poor man, so long ago:
 - a) *They found the man, whom the evil spirits had left, sitting down at Jesus' feet, properly clothed and quite sane...* (Luke 8:35, Phil)
 - (1) Properly clothed... clothe yourself with strength, put on your garments of splendor...
 - (2) Quite sane... shake off your dust, rise up, sit enthroned, free yourself from the chains on your neck.
10. God saw your wounded spirit, and he sent his Son to heal you and set you free. Jesus Christ, crucified and risen again, is our hope, all our hope, and our only hope. Amen?