

SATAN, SELF, SIN AND THE SAVIOR

“And He asked him, What is your name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.”

Mark 5:9

I THINK the text suggests to us something about Satan something about sin and the Savior.

1. Without any preface, let us at once seek to find in the text SOMETHING ABOUT SATAN.

Although an unclean spirit, Legion, like his master, Satan, is very apt to lie. There is no doubt that here, in the Presence of Christ, he spoke the truth when he said, “My name is Legion: for we are many.” So the first thought suggested by the name, “Legion,” is that there are many demons against whom we have to be on the watch in this world. There is one great master power of evil who is called, “your adversary the devil,” but there are also multitudes of demons under his control who are all, like himself, full of hatred to God and to goodness and bent upon doing as much harm as they can to the Kingdom of Christ among men. We do not know how numerous these evil spirits are, but there is reason to believe that there are very many of them, so that it will be no easy task to overcome them—and it is no wonder that there is so much evil in the world when there are so many evil spirits constantly seeking to lead men astray.

The next idea connected with the name, “Legion,” is that of organization, for a Roman legion was not merely a large band of soldiers, but it was a thoroughly organized band of several thousands of men who had taken the oath of allegiance to the Roman emperor and who yielded implicit obedience to the centurions and other officers who were placed in authority over them. In like manner we have reason to believe that the vast multitudes of evil spirits are not an undisciplined mob, but that they are organized and controlled even as they were when the devil and his angels fought against Michael and his angels. No doubt they are able to consult and conspire together, and to work unitedly for the attainment of some common end. Satan is called the Prince of the power of the air, and the name, Prince, implies followers who come and go at his command and do his bidding. We who have most to do with fighting against this demoniacal legion know that we have no easy task, and we can say, as Paul did, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” It would be impossible for us to be victors in this dread conflict had we not on our side One who is more mighty than all who can be against us!

But the name, “Legion,” not only suggests the idea of many who are thoroughly organized for fighting, it also conveys the idea of unity. The unclean spirit said, “My name is Legion,” as if the legion were himself and he were the legion. It is a great art in war when a whole battalion can be made to move as one man. The Roman phalanx was so often victorious because the men composing it were compacted into one solid body—and that seems to be one of the characteristics of the powers of darkness. It is a sickening thought that while Christians frequently quarrel, we never hear of devils doing so. The Church of God is divided but the kingdom of darkness appears to be one. Whatever internal strife there may be between evil spirits, we have no hint of it here—they all seemed to act in complete unison. Whether hate is a more compacting principle than love, I will not venture to say, but certainly these haters of God and of His Truth appear to be knit together as though they were one devil rather than a multitude of evil spirits! Yet the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ are not knit together as one man under His blessed rule. Herein lies the force of the Evil One—that his host is so united as to be called a legion, moving forward in absolute union as one great evil power! As you, Beloved, think of this great host all banded together for one purpose—and that purpose your destruction—flying like vast hordes of locusts bent on devastating

every place they visit, you must realize that you can never overcome the numerous, organized, united forces of evil by your own unaided strength!

The name, "Legion," also suggests a great band of soldiers marshaled for war—not a company of people engaged in peaceful avocations, but an armed host marching to battle at their commander's orders! The Roman legionnaires were protected with heavy armor and they carried short sharp swords with which they did terrible execution. When they went forth to war, it was as when a tornado sweeps away the stubble or a fire sets a forest ablaze until it is utterly consumed. They were mighty men, trained and disciplined for war from their youth up! And Satan and his myrmidons have been for these six thousand years familiar with the art of injuring and ruining men! They are expert in the use of their deadly weapons—they know what arrows in their quiver will find the joints in your harness, my Brother, and what fiery darts will be most effective against you, my Sister. While reading the 18th Psalm today, I especially noticed what David says in the 5th verse, "The sorrows (the marginal reading is "the cords") of Hell compassed me about," as though some infernal powers had cast ropes all around him and were drawing them ever more tightly hoping to enclose the Psalmist in bonds from which he could not escape! Then he adds, "The snares of death confronted me," as though his enemies, whether men or devils, had laid deadly traps in which they hoped to ensnare him. This is what the evil spirits are constantly doing with regard to you, Beloved, and you will be wise if you do what David tells us that he did—"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears"—and then you, too, will before long be able to say with David, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them who hated me: for they were too strong for me."

Further, the name, "Legion," is of historical interest. I have not time to relate the brave deeds of some of the most noted of the Roman legions. The record of them was cherished by their successors just as the heroic exploits of famous British regiments are kept in memory in our own land today. As you think of the legions of evil spirits that are still doing their wicked master's will, you will see that they have some things in their past history wherein they can glory, though their glory will be turned to shame. The banners of our soldiers tell of victories won on many a hard-fought field. The first inscription on the black flag of Diabolus is the one word, "Eden." If Satan can be capable of any enjoyment, it must be a very sweet morsel for him to roll under his tongue when he thinks of the victory that he gained in Paradise, when the whole human race, in the person of its representative, Adam, was so ignominiously overthrown! It is true that since then he has had more defeats than victories and that, by this time, he must have had at least many a foretaste of that final bruising of his head which was foretold in the Garden, yet he still perseveres in his hopeless task of leading on his condemned legions against the followers of that great King against whom he revolted so long ago. The indomitable pluck of Satan is a thing which deserves to be imitated by Christians. The only point in which I can hold him up for your admiration is this—desperate as his cause is, he still presses on with it! Foiled as he has been ten thousand times, he is still ready for the fray. Oh, that we had half as much holy courage as he has of unholy impudence, that we might face our foes as boldly as he faces his! With such a blessed cause as our Master's is, oh, that we had valor worthy of it!

So, Christian, I bid you again to look at your great adversary, that you may realize how stern is the conflict in which you are engaged. You are often afraid of Satan, but he is never afraid of you. If you turn your back in the day of battle, it is not likely that he will turn his. If you are to come off more than conqueror in this lifelong fight, you must be no mere feather-bed soldier. If you have only the name of a Christian, and not the nature of a Christian, defeat must certainly await you. Count the cost of this campaign before you commence it—see whether your force of one thousand is likely to prevail against your adversary's hundred thousand—and then, as you realize your own insufficiency, cry to the Strong for strength! Rely upon your Almighty Ally, and in His might go forth to this holy war rejoicing in the assurance that "the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

II. Now, turning from that part of the subject, let us next find here SOMETHING ABOUT SELF.

I believe there are some persons in this congregation who are, in a measure, desirous of salvation, yet they despair of ever being able to attain to it. We generally have some in these seats who are anxious about their eternal safety, but who fear that they never can be saved—their sins are too many, their infirmities too great, their temptations too strong and the circumstances in which they are placed too unfavorable. They conclude that while other sinners may be saved, there is no hope for them. Let us see how the case of this poor demoniac resembles theirs! Someone has said that his answer to Christ's question was, first, the proud opposition of a heart that wanted an argument for resistance to Christ and, secondly, the mournful complaint of a being conscious of its miserable condition! In each case it may be instructive to some here.

First, there was much pride in the answer, "Legion, for we are many." And there is also much pride in those sinners who despair of being saved because of the greatness of their sin. When men are resolved not to part with their sins, they generally use one of these two arguments. They either say, "Our sins are so great that we know we shall never get to Heaven, so we may as well keep on sinning." Or else, "We can turn from sin whenever we please. Repentance is such a simple matter that we can attend to it at any time, so we will put it off as long as we can." These are quite opposite extremes, but the exchange from the one to the other can be made very rapidly. If a man needs an excuse for clinging to his sin, he can always find one, and any lie will satisfy the soul that is resolved not to be saved! Suppose, my Friend, you were suffering from some deadly disease which a noted physician offered to cure, but you were unwilling to take his medicine? Your foolish heart might suggest to you two reasons for not taking it. The first would be, "My case is so desperate that no medicine can do me any good." And the other would be, "The medicine is so potent that if I take it in a year's time, when I am much worse than I am now, it will still cure me." Neither of these would be a valid reason for not taking the medicine at once! And if a man died through refusing to take it, a verdict of *felo de se* would be perfectly justifiable! There are multitudes of souls who are lost because they do not believe that Christ can save them and, on the other hand, probably there are quite as many lost because they think it is such an easy thing to be saved that it can be settled any time that they please! I implore you, dear Friends, not to use any argument for refusing Christ! Why should you argue yourselves into eternal ruin? Have you not some better use to which to put your wits than to reason on Satan's side to your own destruction? Rather, account the testimony of God's Word that your sins, even though they may be a legion, or more than that, are not too many to be forgiven! Believe that there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to make you whiter than snow and that He is "mighty to save" even you, for, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." If you are possessed by a legion of demons, trust in Him whose almighty arm can overthrow the whole lot of them!

This name, "Legion," also suggests to us the mournful utterance of self-consciousness sorrowing over its sin. Surely in this congregation there are some who are saying, "Alas, our sins are many and they have brought us into a most pitiful plight! We have not only withered hands, but we have lame feet, we have blind eyes, we have deaf ears and, worst of all, a heart that is dead as the stones of the street! From the soles of our feet to the crown of our head there is no soundness in us—just wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." My dear Friends, if you truthfully utter that sorrowful lament, I am glad to hear it! And whether you know it or not, that state of things is really a reason why God is likely to save you! Let me remind you of some of the arguments that we find in the Word of God. There is one in the 18th Psalm to which I referred you just now. David says of the Lord, "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me." He was unable to cope with his adversaries, so he trusted the Lord to deliver him—and He did! There is a similar argument concerning the stone that covered the Savior's sepulcher. The women said, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, "for"—for what?—"for it was very great." If it had not been very great, they might have rolled it away themselves! But as it was too heavy for them to move, the angel rolled it away for them. David is a great master of this kind of argument. In Psalm 25:11, he prays, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." That seems a strange plea to urge, yet it is one that prevails with God. If I plead to be pardoned because I am not a great sinner, I am legal and carnal. But if I plead to be pardoned because I am such a great sinner, I am moved by an evangelical motive and there is room for the display of Divine Grace to one who confesses his need of it! This is like the poor sufferer who cries out to the doctor, "O Sir, do attend to me, for mine is a desperate case!" Or like the beggar in the street who pleads,

“Give me help, for I am starving.” You must use your need and the greatness of your need as an argument with the Lord! There are some whom I know here who would almost give their eyes if they could only feel their sin as much as you do. They want to be troubled more about it, they want to despair more over it. Well, they are foolish, and so are you! They are foolish in desiring to despair more, and you are foolish in wishing that you did not despair as much. You should, all of you, give up looking to yourselves, and go to Jesus just as you are and trust to Him to save you!

III. Now I come to the last point, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR SINS AND OUR SAVIOR. Our sins are very much like Satan—they are his children and they are very much like their father.

Our sins may rightly be called legion. Oh, how many they are! I cannot count them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea or the stars of the sky! Yet while they are so many, I may also say of them that they are one, for there is a dreadful unity about our sin. One sin very seldom checks another, it sometimes does, but more frequently one sin incites another. I have heard it said that some men would be mean if they were not proud, but I have seen people who have been very proud and also very mean. I have known some who have been very bad-tempered, but it was said that they would not display their temper in certain places because they feared they would be losers by doing so, only it was added that they indulged themselves all the more freely in other directions and so made up for their selfish self-restraint. Except in such ways as these, I do not think that one sin is a check upon another, but on the other hand, one sin very often leads to others. If you turn one devil out at the front door, he often comes in again at the back—and brings with him 10 other devils worse than himself! You must have proved how easy it is to get rid of one vice only to fall into another. Did you ever pray with all your heart against sloth, and then feel proud to think how busy you were getting? Then, when you got rid of your pride, you found that despondency was following close behind! And when you had fought against despondency and overcome it, there was presumption pressing to the front! So will you find it till your dying day, but I trust that you will also find that though your sins are many, and though there is a terrible unity about them by which they work together to ruin you, your experience will be, like David’s, so that you will be able to say, “They were too strong for me, but the Lord delivered me.”

That brings me to my last point, which is this, the Lord Jesus Christ can as easily cast out a legion of sins as He can cast out one. If I had only committed one sin in the whole of my life, I should have needed an Omnipotent Savior to put away that one sin by the Sacrifice of Himself. And if I could have committed all the sins that have ever been committed by all the sinners in the whole world, I should not have needed any greater Savior than I have now! If I had only one disposition towards evil, one vice that needed to be overcome, or one evil tendency that had to be counteracted, I should need the Almighty Power of the ever-blessed Spirit to accomplish the task. And if my heart is a cage full of unclean birds, that same Holy Spirit can drive them all out! When the Lord comes into the field of battle, we need not trouble about counting the numbers of the enemy, for He is the Lord of Hosts, and He is, in Himself, mightier than all who can be gathered against Him—He can overthrow all the forces of evil as easily as He cast the legion of devils out of that poor demoniac!

Perhaps some of you are just now in great trouble because of your inward corruptions. It may be that you have lately had such a sight of them as you have never before had in all your lives. Well, dear Friends, this may humble you, but I pray that you will not let it cause you to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ. Never forget that the King of kings is still reigning supreme over all the powers of darkness! Satan may rage and rave in his great wrath, but there is a bit in his mouth and a bridle on his jaws—and he can be controlled and restrained just as the Lord pleases. He who rules the roaring billows and rides upon the wings of the wind can make all the forces of evil subservient to His will. Even when the devil is permitted to attack the children of God, there is always a limit set beyond which he cannot go, as there was in the case of Job. To my mind, the poor Patriarch sitting down among the ashes, smitten with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, and yet resignedly saying to his wife, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” is a much nobler being than Satan reigning among the fiends of the Pit! Job might have laughed Satan to scorn as messenger after messenger came to tell him that his oxen and asses were stolen and his servants slain by the Sabeans, that his sheep had been burned up by lightning, that his camels had been carried away by the Chaldeans and last and

worst of all, that his children had been killed by the great wind from the wilderness that smote the four corners of the house where they were eating and drinking. And I think that was what Job practically did when, with sublime resignation, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." How glorious was the Patriarch's victory when he had been still further tried, yet was able to utter that grand declaration of his faith in God, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"!

But how much more glorious was the victory of the Man, Christ Jesus, over His great adversary and ours! When "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was nailed to the Cross, Satan thought that he had won the day. The old serpent had stung Him to death, vainly imagining that all was over with Him. I think I see the arch-fiend gloating over the awful agonies of the dying Savior and maliciously taunting Him as He hung there apparently forsaken by God and man. "Ah," he said, "Seed of the woman, I have indeed bruised Your heel. I have made men reject You and put You to death! I have vexed and tormented You, I have scorned and scouted You and You have not a word to say for Yourself. And now Your soul must soon depart out of Your body." Yet as the devil was still pouring out his vainglorious boasts and taunts, with a mighty voice, the expiring Savior cried, "It is finished," and in that moment His soul sprang upon the enemy and utterly routed him forever! "You have conquered, O Galilean!" is said to have been the dying cry of Julian the apostate, and Satan might have said the same, for when Jesus nailed to His Cross the handwriting that was against us, "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself," for that is the marginal reading of Colossians 2:15 and, therefore, with Dr. Watts—

*"I sing my Savior's wondrous death;
He conquered when He fell!
'Tis finished!' said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of Hell!
His Cross a sure foundation laid
For Glory and renown,
When through the regions of the dead
He passed to reach the crown"*

Yes, Jesus triumphed in the very hour that looked like the time of His defeat! So praise Him, you bright spirits before the Throne of God, and imitate Him, you saints still here below, for—

*"As surely as He overcame,
And triumphed once for you,
So surely you that love His name
Shall triumph in Him too"—*

even though your foes are named Legion, for they are many. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.