A person with long reddish-brown hair, wearing a plaid shirt and a large red backpack, stands on a grassy mountain peak with arms outstretched. The background shows a vast landscape with mountains and a cloudy sky. A large red number '3' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

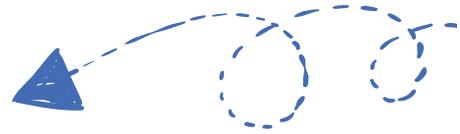
# 3

## Lord, I will go! *Free Me*

(Mark 5:19)

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most recognized Christian leaders of the recent times was Charles Colson. He became distinguished as a great writer, but, besides that, as someone preoccupied for those who suffered in prison. However, in the past, Charles Colson, was known as the “genius of evil”. For years he served the presidency in the United States and he was involved in political scandals and abuse of power. After being found guilty of various charges against him, Charles Colson was sentenced to prison and remained incarcerated for seven months, but in prison he was touched by the Lord and experienced the forgiveness of his sins. From then on, he became a new person. When the news



of the conversion of Colson to Christianity leaked to the press, in 1973, the *Boston Globe* expressed “If Mr. Colson can repent from his sins, there is hope for all.”

Colson was freed, not only from the physical prison, but also of his spiritual prison. Today, I would like us to meditate on the power of Jesus to give liberty. For that I invite you to accompany me with your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 5, and let’s study what appears in verses 1 to 20.

## DEVELOPMENT

The Gospel of Mark is the second of the four gospels. Even though this gospel appears as the second after Matthew, scholars say that it was the first gospel written. As an interesting piece of information, I would like to highlight that the name of this gospel should not be the Gospel according to Mark, but instead the Gospel according to Peter. You may ask “why?” Simple, because it was Peter who dictated the gospel to Mark. So, the gospel of Mark is nothing more and nothing less than the experiences told by Peter of his walk with Jesus Christ.

Before continuing, it’s important that you know who Mark was. According to the book of Acts, Mark was the son of a woman called Maria, owner of the house where Peter was after being freed from prison by the angel (Acts 12:12). The main name of Mark was John, and it’s because of this that in church he is known as John Mark (Acts 12:25). Mark was the companion of Paul and Barnabas in his first missionary trip, but upon seeing the dangers and the problems that a missionary’s life had, he returned. However, Barnabas gave him a second opportunity, becoming then a great leader, preacher and writer used by God (Acts 15:39).

The story of Mark shows us the value of a second opportunity. It could be that some youth that you know, as Mark, are discouraged in the faith. What do they need? A Barnabas that would help them and tell them that in Jesus they can find a new opportunity!

Mark wrote many stories about Jesus and the power that he has to liberate. But of all the stories that are registered in his gospel, the most moving and



dramatic one is the encounter that Jesus had with the Gadarene who was possessed.

Let's read together this fascinating story registered in chapter 5 of the Gospel according to Mark:

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. <sup>4</sup>For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup>Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. (Mark 5:1-6)

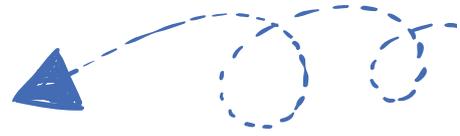
The day before that encounter, Jesus was with His disciples in the eye of the storm (Mark 4:35-41). But amid that storm that threatened to sink the boat, the Master's voice was heard saying: "Quiet, be still!" (Mark 4:39). Upon Jesus' command, the storm ceased and then came tranquility!

The following morning, Jesus and His disciples disembarked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, near the city called Gadara. When they arrived there, someone gave them an unusual welcome. From the tombs came a man dragging thick chains. His body was bleeding, product of the wound that he inflicted upon himself. His long and tangled hair, combined with his red eyes, gave the impression that that man, more than a human, looked like a wild beast. Looking at this scene, I know you might ask: Why this man acted this way? Why did he live in the tombs and tortured himself? The Bible tells us that this man was being dominated "with an impure spirit" (Mark 5:2).

Sadly, this man was not acting under his own will, instead he was dominated by spiritual forces of evil. In other words, he was under the dominion of demons (Mark 5:12).

Friends, at the present time, people consider the stories of the Bible as mere fiction. For many the existence of Satan and demons is no more than a lie but allow me to tell you that the Bible tells us that Satan exists and that he has a battle with the children of God. In the letter of Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 12, it affirms: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

FREE ME



against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Likewise, in 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 8, we are warned: “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

Satan exists and his purposes are not good. Do you know what the enemy wants to do with the life of the people? Look at what Jesus said to us regarding the plans of the enemy: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.” (John 10:10)

The enemy seeks to destroy our lives. He doesn't want anything good for people. He only seeks to fill our lives with darkness, pain and sadness. Moreover, we should know that although Satan's power is great, the power of our God is even greater.

The story tells us that when the possessed Gadarene came to where Jesus was, he fell on his feet. In that scene Jesus and Satan are face to face again. The enemy seeks to maintain his victim enslaved and Jesus seeks to give liberty. The story continues saying:

“When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. <sup>7</sup>He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

<sup>11</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.” (Mark 5:6-13)

Blessed be the name of the Lord! That man that for many years had been a victim of the power of darkness was liberated by Jesus. His emotional chains were broken! His mind was restored! What a powerful liberator is our God!



What happened afterwards? The story tells us that when that man was liberated by Jesus, he prayed that He would allow him to be with Him (Mark 5:18). But Jesus did not allow it, instead He told him “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” (Mark 5:19)

In the fulfillment of the commandment of Jesus, this man, that previously was a victim of the power of Satan, departed and “began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.” (Mark 5:20). Now that he was a free man, he began telling others of the wonders that Jesus had done in his life!

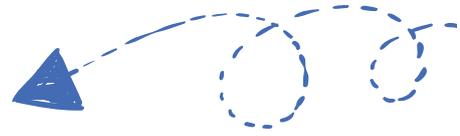
Dear friends, this story shows us the power of Jesus to liberate. There aren't any chains that Jesus cannot break. There aren't any prisons that Jesus cannot open. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has the power of liberating us from the power of darkness. Do you doubt it? Look at what the Bible says in Colossians 1:12-14: “and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Did you understand? God, through Jesus Christ, has liberated us from the power of darkness. The power of God is great. He can liberate you from anything that enslaves you. Today you can go out from the place saying: “I am free in Jesus.”

## CONCLUSION

What happened with Charles Colson after leaving prison? The same thing that occurred with the possessed Gadarene: he departed and told others of the wonders of God in his life.

The story says that one day, a little bit before leaving prison, Colson was attending to his own things in the dormitory in prison, while other inmates were playing cards. Suddenly, one of the players, a six-foot prisoner, named Archie, shouted: “Hey Colson, you are leaving here soon. What are you going to do for us?”



Suddenly, the whole room stayed silent. All ears strained to hear the answer: “I will help in some way”, responded Colson, “I will never forget you guys.”

“Bull!” shouted Archie, while he threw the cards on the table. “Everyone says that. I’ve seen many like you that come and go. All say the same things while they are inside. Then when they leave, they forget quickly. There is no one who worries about us. No one!”

But today, almost 35 years after this conversation, thousands and thousands of Christian volunteers from churches, in 113 countries around the world, worry enough to visit the prison, help the inmates, help their families, and share the Good News of Christ with the prisoners.

This, thanks to Colson, who in 1976 founded *Prison Fellowship's Endowment Fund*, which, jointly with the churches, has become the most extensive brotherhood to help prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

The possessed Gadarene was liberated and immediately he started to tell of the wonders that God had done in his life. Charles Colson was liberated and immediately he initiated a ministry to help those who suffered in the prisons of all the world. In the same way, when we experience the liberty that the gospel grants us, we can't remain silent, instead we will depart to say how great are the things that God has done in our lives.

My prayer is that today you experience the liberty that only Jesus can give you. I assure you that you won't be able to remain silent, instead, just like the man that was freed from the demons, you will also say: “Lord, I will go.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who was Mark and what does his story teach us?
2. Why did the man from Gadara lived chained in the tombs?
3. What did the previously demon possessed man ask when Jesus freed him?
4. What happens in the life of the people who experience liberty in Jesus?