

20261018 EVELEIGH CHURCH TOMMY PENDERGEST MY SHACKLES HAVE SHACKLES: TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST FINAL

(0:00 - 1:17)

We are back in the book of Luke again. Luke chapter 8, going to be in verse 26. I'm going to read several verses here.

So, and they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when he come out onto the land, he was met by a certain man from the city who was possessed with demons, and who had not put any clothing on for a long time and was not living in a house, but in tombs. And seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before him and said in a loud voice, what do I have to do with you, Jesus, son of the most high God? I beg you, do not torment me.

(1:19 - 4:49)

For he had been commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man, for it had seized him many times, and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would burst his fetters and be driven by the demons into the desert. And Jesus asked him, what is your name? And he said, legion, for many demons had entered him, and they were entreating him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now there was a herd of swine, that's pigs, feeding there on the mountain, and the demons entreated him to permit them to enter the swine, and he gave them permission.

The demons came out from the man into the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it to the city and out in the country. And the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at his feet, Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind, and they became frightened.

And those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked him to depart from them, for they were gripped with great fear. And he got into the boat and returned.

But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging him that he might accompany him, but he sent him away, saying, Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you. And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." It's a lot of scripture there. It's a great event.

Let's pray, and then we'll try to get somewhere here. Father God, I love you and praise you, and I thank you for your Word, Lord, and I ask that you would help me today, Father, to convey your message from this, that we would hear it, and in it, Lord, that we would be blessed. Father, I trust

you.

In Jesus' name, amen. So the hot topic here is transformation. I don't know about everybody else, but I do this quite often.

I sit and think about where I was and where I am from time to time. Now, if you don't do this, and you don't sit and think about these things, and it doesn't run through your mind, that's okay. But I think of all the differences, and God often brings to mind all the things that he's done in my life.

He reminds me of his power to save and his power to change. In Romans chapter 12, verse 2, the Word of God says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Be transformed.

Now, often transformation, it's a hard word, and we oftentimes, we see transformation, it's a gradual thing. It takes time, right? It's over a period of time. But those that are closest to us can often see that transformation pretty fast.

(4:49 - 5:06)

You know, when there's day-to-day contact with somebody, that transformation, that transforming grace of God is sometimes really, really fast, and it kind of, it'll shock you. I mean, it comes like really hard and really fast. And this change, this transformation, it should be obvious.

(5:09 - 7:09)

It should be. Now, there are times that we are fooled. We're fooled by folks that simply try to do better or try to be better.

They're making an effort on their own, and their filthiness is like, like, or their righteousness, I'm sorry, Jamila, their righteousness is like filthy rags, Isaiah 64, 6. But those changes are brought on by themselves. They're making an effort to no end. True change can only come through new birth, through new life.

True change only comes through Christ. True change comes only through the power of Jesus Christ in your life. This event points out, it points so many hard truths, and I'm fixing to get into them.

You just got to bear with me so I can get through the introduction here. Because the fact of the matter is, we may not be possessed by many demons, but we are possessed by the world and the things thereof. And this, this, listen, this story's got some strange twists.

You know, you would think that Jesus would deny the request of the demons, and he would deny the request of the unbelievers, and he would grant the request of the eager follower, but he didn't.

In fact, he granted the request of the demons, and he agreed to the appeals of the group of unbelievers, and then he denied the, the entreaties, the, the, the begging, if you will, of legion to come. He just, he said no.

And he had done, he had transformed his life, but he sent him back to his family. So that's, that's an interesting concept, and I, you think, why? And I'll give you some quick answers. You can like them or not like them.

(7:10 - 7:56)

He didn't seem, he didn't send the demons into the abyss because it wasn't time for the final judgment. When the final judgments come, he will. He didn't request the, the, or he didn't stay around when he was requested to leave by the locals because his actual mission while he was here was more so to the Jews, not to the Gentiles.

So, you know, why? Jesus rarely forces himself on anybody, so if you don't want him hanging out at your house, he'll probably leave. It's one of the scary things about church, right? If you don't want him hanging out in your church, you'll probably leave. And he had the former demoniac legion, he had him stay because he needed a witness to the Gentiles in that area.

(7:58 - 10:27)

He says in verse 39, he says, return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you. That's probably where we fell the most as Christians, describing the great things that God has done for us. We're way, way better at complaining about the great places that God has made us go to.

So this, of course, raises a couple questions I want you to ponder on your heart today as we go through this, and you can dig with them and see where it goes. To what extent, ask yourself this, to what extent am I experiencing the transforming power of Christ? To what extent? People often ask the question, how do I know that I'm saved? And I'll tell you a simple truth that'll help you. If you're still the same old person you were before, you're probably not.

There are certain things that you can only explain by the changing power of Christ in your life. Well, why do you do this or why do you do that? Because listen, God is doing something in my life and I'm not sure, but I have to do it this way. Things have to be different.

And it may not be huge changes all at once, but there's always going to be some changes. They're going to occur. The other hot topic that you need to think about here is, to what extent am I proclaiming the transformation that Christ has brought into my life? Who are you telling about the changing power of Christ in your life? Even if they're not listening to you, because listen, I'm used to that.

Who are you telling? So in this event, Jesus has gone across the sea, he calmed the storm, and

now he comes on shore and there's this demon-possessed man named Legion, and he casts a curse on him. Now, is it possible that he crossed the sea through the storm just for this point? Yeah. Is it possible he did this just to teach the transforming power of the Son of God and the Word of God to his disciples? Yeah.

We need to know today that there's no sin too great that he can't forgive. There's no stronghold that he can't break. There's no life too far gone that he can't save it.

You cannot be too lost to be found. It's not possible. You can't be too stubborn.

(10:27 - 14:14)

You can't be too prideful. You can't be too hard-hearted. None of those things can stop him from breaking you if he wants to.

I keep thinking, and this verse just keeps beating me up. In Mark 3, verse 13, the Word of God says, "...and he went up on the mountain and summoned those whom he himself wanted, and they came to him." Isn't that an interesting scripture? He called the ones he wanted and they came to him. Strange how that worked.

And then if you go on and read the rest of that, "...from those he picked twelve, and he called them apostles." And now you may be thinking, well, Brother Tommy, I don't know that God's summoning me. Well, that's good, because I don't know either. I don't know that he's summoning you or not.

But I think when he does summon you, I think you'll know. I think you'll know and I think you won't be able to sit still. And I think you'll find yourself just eager to get to something, somewhere, somehow.

There'll be something within your heart that says, I've got to know. I've got to have it. I want what somebody else has got.

One of the greatest testimonies is when someone looks at you and says, I want what you have, because it's obvious what you have. That's powerful. But when they ask that question, you need to be able to tell them about what you have.

So if you're taking notes today, this is probably where you want to start with some notes. Number one, Christ has the power to transform lives. I'll say it again, Christ has the power to transform lives.

In the previous miracle, we see him on the sea. He goes to sleep. There's a big storm that comes.

He wakes up and he literally has power and control over nature, over the natural. In the event

that we see today, he has power over the supernatural. Even the demons do what he says do.

We see him give peace in a storm. Then we see him give peace to a soul. What storm do you have today? What storm in your life is needing to be spoken to? What storm in your life needs the peace of Christ? I want you to try to focus this morning.

I know sometimes we get really sidetracked. I want to talk to you a little bit about this transformation. Christ's power is necessary for transformation.

You cannot do it by yourself. You're just not good enough. You're not.

You see, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It's the gospel that changes us. It's the gospel that moves within us and inside of us.

It's the power of God. It is the Holy Spirit. It is everything that he has that changes us.

Jesus didn't use some clever strategy to come and try to convince legion to make a decision to accept him. He didn't come to him and say, let me lay this out and be basic with you and tell you all these things. It was simply by his power.

He simply commanded it and it happened. It was by the power of God. Legion didn't decide to turn over a new leaf.

He didn't decide to try harder. He didn't sign up for a 12-step program to overcome his addiction to demons. You'll catch in a few minutes.

The gospel is the power of God. It's the power of God giving new life to a previously dead sinner. It's not a second chance.

(14:15 - 14:34)

If you're looking for a second chance, you need to go find a self-help book. God is not the God of second chances. He is the God of new life.

It is different. God causes one to be born again. If God does not change the heart, then there is no lasting change.

(14:35 - 14:48)

Ezekiel 26 or Ezekiel 36, 26 through 27. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

(14:48 - 14:59)

And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. I love the word there, cause you to walk in my statutes. And you will be careful to observe my ordinances.

(14:59 - 15:15)

If God causes you to walk in his statutes, even after salvation, it's not about you. It's about him. Oftentimes we think that it came from our own power.

(15:18 - 15:44)

I want to help you this morning. It doesn't come from your power. Man's effort will always fall short.

You know what man's effort, man's answer, man's solution to legions problem was? They bound him in shackles and chains and put a guard on him. That's man's solution. Man's solution to your religious problem is their religious effort.

(15:45 - 18:56)

Man's solution is to take religion and shackle you and bind you and tell you that religion, if you follow these simple rules, you'll be OK. That's man's solution to your problem. God's solution is not found in shackles and chains.

God's solution is found in freedom. God's solution is found in understanding Jesus as your Lord and Savior and having a relationship that separates and transforms you from the one that's shackled in chains. You are shackled in the chains of your sin.

You are set free in Christ Jesus. Man's solution is to add shackles to your shackles. That's man's solution to your problem.

That's the same thing they did here to Legion. Human solutions don't fix spiritual problems. Those needing transformation are simply in Satan's domain.

There's two kinds. There really is. There's two kinds.

There's Legion. Legion's obvious, all right? And for those of you that didn't know me before, I was the obvious one, OK? It wasn't a big secret I needed something. People didn't look and say, you know, he may be or he may not be.

I don't think there was anybody that ever looked at me before I gave my life to Christ and said, that guy right there is probably a Christian. I think they probably looked at me and said, that guy right there is probably going to spend eternity in hell. There was no confusion.

There was no looking at me and saying, I don't know. So I'm type one. I'm type one lost person.

I'm also type one saved. But then the other ones are those who innocently came to see. The people of the region, the people of the area, they came to see what was going on.

And at first glance, they were decent, respectable citizens, right? But at a closer look, we find some problems with them. It was these people that were OK and at home with demons in their region. It was OK to have Legion in their region filled with demons as long as we kept him chained and shackled.

And I'll ask you, and you can take it for what it's worth, does the demonic hang out in your house? Brother Tommy, I don't know. If you don't know, then they probably do. Does the demonic hang out in your town or in your county, in your area? The people of that area, they were more concerned with the loss of their pigs than with the man that was possessed by demons.

They were more concerned with the loss of their hogs than with the healing of a man. Church, is your stuff more important than the work of Christ? Because, listen, there are days that I'm concerned. Do you understand the people of that region, they begged Jesus to leave? Can you picture this in your mind? They begged the Son of God to leave and they were fine with the demons staying.

(18:58 - 19:17)

Is that the kind of church we have? Is that the kind of county we live in? Is that the kind of place where we reside? That we would be fine with demonic crap and yet we force God out and tell God, listen, I don't need you here. It says, the Word of God says here, they were frightened by Jesus. They were scared of Jesus.

(19:17 - 19:30)

They were frightened by him, but they were OK with demons hanging out in their homes. Brother Tommy, I'm not OK with that. That's great.

(19:34 - 20:26)

That's great. When the truth of God's Word threatens your lifestyle or it threatens your choices, how do you respond? Oh, whoops. Well, now, there's certain things that I got to do in certain places I got to be and, you know, sometimes church just gets in the way and my relationship with Jesus, I don't have time to pray.

Get up earlier. You have more time. We use this expression that a person is good.

That's the word generally. Well, they're good. I heard somebody say something about a family member of mine one time.

They said, well, I think that they're good. They're a good person. And I said, well, you don't know them.

(20:27 - 21:32)

They said, what do you mean? I said, they're a wretched, black-hearted sinner. They said, how do you know? I said, because the Word of God says they are. It says there's nobody good.

No, not one, none of them. And they kind of looked at me funny. I said, it's OK, because I'm a wretched, black-hearted sinner, too.

That's simply saved by the grace of God, which is transforming me and has transformed me. You see, our characterization set this thing up to be a bad thing. These kind of folks, they walk around in camouflage.

To first appearance, they look like good citizens and good folks. We look at them and say, yeah, that's a good guy. He's a good person.

She's a good person. But their motives and their ideas and their desires are not. They're just simply not obvious.

They don't look like Legion. I mean, bless my heart, I came from that lifestyle. I looked like him.

The difference was obvious. It takes a while to figure people out sometimes. But they often reveal themselves.

(21:34 - 22:46)

They focus on I. That's a word we use a lot, I. It's about me or it's about my stuff or my status. I get tickled sometimes because I'm supposed to look the part. I don't do very good at that.

I'm just going to tell you, this is me and this is what you get. No one is too difficult for Christ to transform. Those who are obvious seem harder to us.

But I'm going to tell you from personal experience, the ones who are obvious are easier. The ones that blend in, that are in camouflage, that look like a Christian and act like a Christian and do all the stuff and all the things, those are harder to transform because they think they're OK. They think they figured it out.

They think they're OK, but they've never made a commitment to Christ. They've never surrendered. They've never given it over.

They think they're OK and we can't tell the difference. So we don't know how to witness to them. We don't know what to say to them or how to talk to them.

(22:47 - 23:04)

When I come across Legion, when I come across my old self, it's easy to talk to that guy because I know where he's at. I can see it. Obvious people really don't have a hard time admitting they're sinners.

(23:06 - 23:54)

It's the ones that are walking around in camouflage. The ones that are hidden, they don't want to admit it. The next thing this morning, Christ's teaching is necessary for this transformation.

It's necessary. In verse 35, and the people went out to see what had happened and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, sitting at the feet of a teacher as an expression for being a student under them. This man who was demon possessed, who was just a complete maniac and just everything that you can imagine that a sinful person could be had gone from that to sitting, literally sitting at the feet of Jesus and been in study.

(23:54 - 24:03)

He was sitting at the feet of Jesus. How long did he get? I don't know. I don't know how much time it took for the herdsmen to go and to report everything they had seen.

(24:03 - 24:10)

I don't know. I don't know. What I do know is he's sitting at the feet of Jesus.

(24:10 - 24:19)

Jesus has given him instruction. I'm sure he was telling him who God is, right? He was telling him who he is, who Jesus is. He was telling him what it meant to live a godly life.

(24:22 - 25:47)

You see, the problem is salvation has to be followed up with sound teaching. It has to be followed with sound doctrine. It has to be followed so that this new convert can be fully transformed through the renewing of their mind.

We call that word sanctification. Sanctification is not a one time event. It is a lifelong event.

And to be sanctified and set apart for Christ, you have to spend time with him. I mean, it's only natural that Legion wanted to follow Jesus, not just spiritually. He literally wanted to follow him.

It's only natural that he wanted to be around him. You think about this, of all the things that he delivered him from, all the demons that he cast out of his life, all the things that Jesus removed instantaneously. Why would Legion not pursue him? Why would he not want him? He would seek him with everything.

So I'm going to make a bold statement, and it probably will be offensive, but that's okay. Genuinely saved people desire to sit at the feet of Jesus. Genuinely saved people desire to sit at the feet of Jesus.

They desire to learn. They want to be sanctified. They want to be in church.

They want sound doctrine. They want to grow closer to Jesus and thus to the Father. They will seek the one who sought and saved them.

(25:48 - 26:03)

That is a natural reaction of a believer, a genuinely saved person. Well, Brother Tommy, I know people that are saved that don't go to church. Well, congratulations.

(26:05 - 26:11)

I don't. That's pretty hard. Well, I didn't come to tickle your ears.

(26:14 - 27:11)

You see, the problem is we don't want to be holy and reverent. What we want is a watered down liberal garbage that can make us feel good so we can go home at the end of the day and say, well, everything's good here. We want to walk around in our sin and call ourselves holy and say, well, you know, I just can't do any better.

Well, no, you can't do any better. You're not good enough and you can't do any better. But if you'll surrender your life to Christ, he'll clean you up.

He will do better in you. God says, listen, he commands you to be holy because he is holy. He doesn't say try to be holy.

He says, just be holy. Be like him, be transformed, walk in righteousness. Coach Smart always says it boils down to how much Jesus do you want? How much do you want? If you're saved, you should want it all.

(27:13 - 27:24)

I mean, that's that's the truth of it, right? If you're saved, you should want it all. You should pray, Lord, don't start. Listen, don't don't stop with a moment.

(27:25 - 28:19)

I want a life transformed in you. The second thing this morning, second big thing. I don't know how many things I've done so far, but the second big thing.

My outline is usually pretty sloppy. Christ commands those whose lives he has transformed to proclaim it. If you have truly experienced God's transformation, God's transforming power, then you simply can't keep your mouth shut.

You can't do it. You got to express it. I mean, you just.

You got to see it. You got to tell people you can't help yourself. You just got to.

Now, there's a couple of ways you do this. First, you're going to exhibit a transformed life, right? Your life's going to look different. It's just going to look different.

(28:22 - 28:39)

Legion was naked, wild, violent, complete maniac. After Jesus sets him free, he's sitting down at Jesus's feet. He's clothed and he's in his right mind.

Brother Tommy, I don't have that testimony. OK, I understand. Not everybody does.

(28:40 - 30:25)

But let's talk about a few things that might be a part of your testimony. How's your attitude? Is your attitude still the same or has it changed? Have you gone from being like just mad at everybody to all of a sudden you've got a cheerful heart and you're thankful? Do you grumble and complain all the time? Philippians 2, 14 and 15 says, do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among who you appear as lights in the world. You should look different.

Do you encourage and build people up or do you still tear them down? Are you self-centered or are you servant centered? I love when the transition happens and you guys probably don't see it. You probably don't pay attention. I love when the transition happens, when the self-centered person becomes servant centered.

When that transition happens, I smile and in my mind I think, OK, they got it. They figured it out. They see it.

They know it. That transition is huge. Are you still living for the same things that the world's living for? Do you blend in with the world or do you stick out like a sore thumb? There are certain places that I go that I stick out like a sore thumb.

(30:27 - 30:45)

Do you? Because here's the truth for you. I may not look like Christ yet, but I just don't look like the world anymore. And I honestly just don't fit in.

(30:49 - 31:06)

Jesus tells Legion to go home and tell what great things God has done for you. What a powerful statement. I grew up in this beautiful little town far, far from here.

(31:09 - 32:10)

It was a great town full of loving people and everybody took care of everybody. Most of the people in the town called my grandmother and grandfather, they called them Aunt Florence and Uncle Henry. No blood relation at all.

That's just the kind of town we grew up in. It was really special. I mean, it was really neat.

And I always thought as a kid growing up and throughout most of my life, I always thought there really was no criminal element in my little town, no rough element in my little town. It was like the perfect little town. And then when I became an adult, one day I realized that that criminal element was my family.

That's why I didn't recognize who it was. We were the criminal element. And when the folks that knew me as a kid, when they hear and see what God has done in my life, it brings smiles to their faces.

(32:16 - 34:00)

What's the power of your testimony? I mean, how do you go? How do you walk? How do you get there? That's I mean. But I mean, I don't understand how do I go and how do I go and share my testimony? How do I go and tell people about Jesus? How do I do it? How do I go? Well, you go in obedience and zeal, okay? Be on fire. Be on fire for Christ.

If you're on fire for Christ, if you're just all you get is just be on fire and you'll be fine. It's that easy. Just be on fire.

Well, you know, I get worn down by the war. Listen, you ain't no more worn down than I am. Just be on fire for it.

Well, I can't always be on fire. Yes, you can. You can be on fire for Christ.

It's okay to shout. It's okay to yell. It's okay to get excited.

The next thing you might be wondering, to whom do I go? Where do I go? I mean, you told me how. Just go with obedience and zeal. Love the Lord and go with fire in your heart.

Who do I go to? The word of God says right here, go to your house. This is your home. Go to your family and tell them what God has done.

Go to your friends. Now, you may lose some friends. I did.

But go tell them about Jesus anyways. Start with the people that you know because the people that you know know the old you. And when they see the new you, they'll recognize it.

They will see it. They'll recognize Christ in you. Now you're thinking, well, what do I say? Just tell them your story.

(34:02 - 34:50)

Tell them about God's grace in that story. Your personal testimony. If you ain't got a personal testimony, then you ain't paying attention.

Tell your personal testimony. Learn it and practice it. I speak, listen.

I'm out mowing grass. I'm speaking my testimony out loud so when I run into the right person, I can tell them what Christ is doing in my life. Share the gospel.

I don't know how to share the gospel. Tell them who God is. One true God.

God of the universe. Just and righteous and holy. Tell them who you are and who they are.

That's always good. Tell them, say, listen, I'm a sinner in need of forgiveness. And that's good because so are you.

(34:52 - 35:07)

Every last person has sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They fall short of his holy, righteous, just character. Tell them who Jesus is.

(35:09 - 35:26)

Explain to them that Jesus didn't just die for me. He died instead of me. He took my punishment.

He paid the penalty. He paid the ransom. He paid the wage.

(35:27 - 35:42)

Romans 6.23 says the wages of sin is death. He died for me and in my place. Stress grace.

God's grace. It's not about works. It's not about your effort.

(35:43 - 35:53)

It's about grace. It's a free gift. Legion went to Jesus naked, wild, possessed, covered in blood and dirt and sin.

(35:54 - 36:19)

Think of the mess he walked up to him in. All that garbage, all that junk and everything he came packing with him up there. Jesus could have looked at him and said, go clean yourself up and get

rid of all that mess and come back and I'll save you.

It's not what he did. He saved him just like he was in the midst of all that mess and everything else. He cleansed him and healed him and saved him.

(36:19 - 36:37)

Romans 5.8 says that God demonstrates his love toward us and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. When God came and got me, when Jesus came and got me, he didn't say, Tommy, you need to clean up all the mess. He just said, follow me.

(36:41 - 37:40)

I wonder today, is he moving in your life? Are you experiencing his transforming power daily? And that's important. Maybe you've been saved for 15 years or 20 years or 30 years or 75 years. Are you still experiencing his transforming power in your life? Is he still working out the kinks in your life, the little stuff? Is he still convicting you over the small things? Is he still working your life toward things that honor and glorify him? Has he changed your life? And are you telling people about that life change? One of our biggest problems with being transformed, and this is just simple truth.

(37:42 - 39:11)

We hang on to our past way too long. We do. Some of it's good.

There's a reason that God reminds me of who I used to be because he wants me to praise him for who he is and what he's done. This morning, I'm going to ask Ian to come up, just Ian. I don't know where you're at today.

I really don't. I don't know what you're dealing with. I don't know what your struggle is.

I don't know where you're at today. I don't know what your plans are. That's good.

I don't know what your plans are today. I do know that God may wreck your plans today. That's quite possible.

And if God wrecks your plans today, then I need you to surrender to him wrecking your plans. But more than me needing you to surrender to that, you need to surrender to God wrecking your plans today. Because if he's going to wreck your plans, he's wrecking them for a reason.

Stand with me this morning. Father God, we love you and praise you this morning, Father. I pray, Lord, that you open up our hearts to receive what you have for us today.

(39:12 - 39:15)

In Jesus name, amen.