

(Matthew 8:28-34)

Prologue: Facing the Unseen

It was a cloudy afternoon at the Presswood house. Ariel sat by the window, flipping through her science textbook, her eyes widening with fascination as she read about invisible forces like gravity and magnetism. The soft tapping of rain on the window added to the cozy, contemplative atmosphere. Across the room, Alice was sprawled on the floor, her crayons scattered around her as she carefully drew a “battle plan” for Mr. Fluffernutter. Stick-figure armies and a fortress labeled “The Bunny Base” took shape on the page, each detail adding to the imaginative defense of her beloved stuffed bunny.

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, looking up, “do you think there are forces we can’t see that affect us, like in this book?”

Ryan, who was organizing some tools nearby, nodded. “Absolutely. And the Bible talks about some of those forces—spiritual ones.”

“Spiritual forces?” Alice asked, intrigued. “Like angels?”

“Yes,” Ryan said, sitting down. “And sometimes darker forces—like demons. But here’s the good news: Jesus has complete authority over them. He proved that time and time again.”

“Did He fight them?” Alice asked, her eyes wide.

“In a way,” Ryan said. “But not with weapons. Jesus showed His power with just His words.”

“Can we see one of those moments?” Ariel asked, her curiosity piqued.

“Let’s fire up the Time Audit Machine,” Ryan said with a grin. “This is a moment you won’t forget.”

The Journey Begins: Confronting the Demonic

The Time Audit Machine hummed to life, the gentle vibration filling the garage as Ariel tapped the glowing controls. Alice eagerly positioned Mr. Fluffernutter beside her, making sure her fluffy companion was ready for the adventure ahead.

“Coordinates locked: Region of the Gadarenes, 27-29 CE. Objective: witness Jesus’ authority over demons.”

With a flash of light, the family was transported to a remote, rocky region near the Sea of Galilee. The air was heavy with humidity, and the distant cries of animals echoed through the hills.

“Where are we?” Ariel asked, scanning the eerie landscape.

“This is the land of the Gadarenes,” Ryan said, pointing toward a nearby cemetery. “Watch closely—something incredible is about to happen.”

The Possessed Men

From the shadows of the tombs emerged two men, their appearance wild and terrifying. The air was thick with the stench of decay, and their matted hair hung in tangled clumps. Their torn clothing

flapped in the wind, barely concealing the torment etched across their faces. The eerie silence was broken only by the ragged breaths of the men, their eyes wide with an anguish that spoke of years of suffering. Their eyes were wide, filled with an anguish that spoke of years of suffering.

“They’re possessed,” Ryan explained softly. “Demons have taken control of them, driving them to live in these tombs, far from everyone else.”

The men ran toward Jesus, their voices filled with rage and fear as they cried out:

“What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29)

“They know who He is,” Ariel whispered, astonished.

“Even demons recognize Jesus’ authority,” Ryan said. “They know He’s the Son of God and that He has power over them.”

The Plea of the Demons

The family watched as the men fell to their knees before Jesus, their voices trembling. Nearby, a large herd of pigs grazed on a hillside.

“If Thou cast us out,” the demons begged, “suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.” (Matthew 8:31)

“Why would they want to go into pigs?” Alice asked, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter.

“Demons need something to control,” Ryan explained. “But they knew they had no choice but to leave the men if Jesus commanded it.”

Jesus’ Command

With a single word, Jesus spoke: “Go.” (Matthew 8:32)

The demons fled from the men and entered the pigs. The entire herd—over two thousand pigs—suddenly shrieked in panic, their squeals echoing across the hills. Their eyes were wide with terror as they rushed down the steep hillside, the ground trembling under the weight of their stampede. Dust filled the air as their hooves thundered across the rocky slope, and with a deafening roar, they plunged into the sea, drowning in the churning water below.

Alice gasped. “All the pigs? Why did that happen?”

“The pigs couldn’t handle the destructive power of the demons,” Ryan said. “It shows just how dangerous those forces are—and how much Jesus’ power is needed to stop them.”

The Response of the Town

As the men, now free and calm, thanked Jesus, word of the event spread quickly to the nearby town. The Presswoods followed as the townspeople came to see what had happened.

“They should be happy,” Ariel said. “Those men were saved!”

But instead, the townspeople looked afraid. They begged Jesus to leave their region, worried about the loss of the pigs and the power they had just witnessed.

“Why would they send Him away?” Alice asked, frowning.

“Sometimes people fear what they don’t understand,” Ryan said. “Even though Jesus had just done something amazing, they couldn’t see past their fear and their loss.”

Ariel looked thoughtful. “But how does this apply to us today?”

Ryan smiled gently. “Well, Ariel, while we may not encounter visible demons like in the story, we do face spiritual battles every day—like fear, doubt, and temptation. These things can try to control us or make us feel powerless, just like those men felt. But Jesus has authority over those struggles too. He wants us to trust Him to help us overcome them.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tighter. “So, even if we can’t see the bad things, Jesus can make them go away?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Jesus’ power isn’t limited to what we can see. When we trust Him, He helps us face our fears, overcome our doubts, and resist temptations. His authority brings peace and freedom, even in the unseen battles.”

Ariel nodded slowly, her face brightening. “I think I get it. It means that even when things feel overwhelming, we can remember that Jesus is stronger than anything we’re facing.”

“Right,” Ryan said. “It’s about trusting His power, just like those men did, even when it’s hard to see a way out.”

The Men’s Transformation

The family turned back to see the two men, now calm and clothed, speaking with Jesus. Their faces, once twisted with pain, now radiated peace. Tears streamed down their cheeks as they spoke, their voices trembling with gratitude. Jesus stayed with them, speaking to them calmly, His presence reassuring. They promised to tell everyone they could about what Jesus had done for them, their joy and thankfulness evident in every word.

Ariel watched closely, noticing how Jesus not only freed the men but also stayed with them, speaking to them calmly. She looked up at Ryan, her eyes filled with curiosity. “Why did Jesus stay with them after freeing them?”

Ryan smiled. “That’s a good question, Ariel. Jesus doesn’t just use His power and leave—He cares about people deeply. He stayed to reassure them, to show them that they mattered, and that they weren’t alone. His power is always paired with His compassion.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “So, He’s not just powerful—He’s loving too. He wants to make sure people are okay, not just fix their problems.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “His authority is driven by love. He frees people, and then He stays with them, helping them heal and find hope again. That’s what makes Jesus so different—He’s both powerful and deeply caring.”

“Look at them,” Ryan said, his voice filled with wonder. “Jesus didn’t just free them from the demons—He gave them back their lives.”

“So His power isn’t just to destroy,” Ariel observed. “It’s to restore.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said.

Yaya, who had been listening quietly, spoke up. “You know, this reminds me of someone I knew when I was younger. She went through a really difficult time—she lost her job, her home, and felt like everything was falling apart. But then, just like those men, she experienced a kind of restoration. A friend helped her get back on her feet, and she started to see hope again. She always said that it was God who gave her the strength to keep going and that He brought the right people into her life at the right time.”

Ariel looked up, intrigued. “So, even when everything seems lost, God can still bring restoration?”

“Absolutely,” Yaya said with a gentle smile. “Restoration doesn’t always happen in the way we expect, but God is always working to bring healing and hope, just like He did for those men.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “I like that. It means that no matter what happens, God can make things better.”

Ryan nodded. “That’s right, Alice. And that’s why we can trust Him—because His power is not just about authority; it’s about love and restoration. Just like Yaya’s friend and those men, God wants to bring us back to a place of hope and wholeness.”

Returning Home: A Lesson in Authority

Back in the garage, the Time Audit Machine powered down, its hum fading into silence and leaving the family in quiet reflection. Ariel flipped through her notes, her pencil tapping lightly against the paper as she processed what they had just witnessed. Alice, meanwhile, adjusted Mr. Fluffernutter’s imaginary “armor,” her fingers smoothing out his fuzzy ears as if preparing him for the next adventure.

Inspired by what she had seen, Ariel looked up with determination. “I think I’m going to start praying every day for guidance and strength, like how Jesus showed His authority.”

Ryan smiled warmly. “That’s a wonderful idea, Ariel. Daily prayer is a great way to stay connected to God’s power.”

Alice, not wanting to be left out, chimed in. “I’m going to make a ‘trust list’ of things to bring to Jesus when I’m scared!” She hugged Mr. Fluffernutter. “That way, I’ll remember He’s always stronger.”

Ryan nodded, clearly proud. “Those are both amazing ways to put what we learned today into practice. Trusting Jesus isn’t just about big moments—it’s about inviting Him into our everyday challenges, too.”

Ariel smiled, jotting down her new commitment in her notebook. “I think it’ll help me remember that He’s always there, even in the small things.”

Alice grinned. “And I’ll make sure Mr. Fluffernutter and I aren’t afraid of anything, because Jesus is with us!”

Ryan chuckled. “That’s the spirit, Alice. And that’s exactly what Jesus wants—for us to trust Him in every moment, big or small.”

Ariel looked up thoughtfully. “You know, Dad, the spiritual forces we can't see are kind of like gravity. We can't see gravity, but it's powerful and undeniable.”

Ryan smiled, nodding. “That’s a great comparison, Ariel. Gravity is invisible, but we feel its effects constantly, just like spiritual forces. And just like how we understand gravity through its impact, we engage with spiritual realities through prayer and faith.”

“How does that work?” Alice asked, curious.

“Think of prayer and faith as ways we connect with God’s power,” Ryan explained. “It’s like tuning into the right frequency. Just because we can't see something doesn't mean it isn't real or powerful. When we pray, we're recognizing God’s authority and inviting Him into our situations. It makes the invisible spiritual realities concrete for us, just like feeling the pull of gravity.”

Ariel nodded. “So even though we can't see it, trusting in Jesus and praying makes His power real in our lives.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Prayer and faith are how we respond to those unseen forces, trusting in God’s power to guide us, protect us, and help us stand strong.”

“Jesus wasn’t afraid of the demons,” Ariel said. “He showed them who was really in charge.”

“That’s the heart of it,” Ryan said. “Jesus has authority over everything—visible and invisible. And He uses that authority to bring freedom and healing.”

Alice looked up, her eyes shining with determination. “Since Jesus is stronger than demons, I don’t need to be afraid of anything!”

Ryan smiled at her bold statement but knelt beside her, his expression gentle. “You’re right, Alice—Jesus is stronger than anything we could ever face, and His power is always with us. But it’s also important to have a healthy awareness. There are things in this world that can be dangerous, and God gives us wisdom to navigate those situations. Trusting Jesus means we’re not paralyzed by fear, but it also means we use the wisdom He gives us to stay safe.”

Ariel, listening closely, nodded. “So, it’s about trusting Jesus but also being wise in the choices we make?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “We trust that Jesus is our protector, and we also take care of ourselves and others with the wisdom He provides. Faith isn’t about ignoring danger—it’s about knowing we’re never alone when facing it and making choices that honor God.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “I think I get it. I can be brave because Jesus is with me, but also smart because He wants me to be safe.”

Ryan smiled proudly. “That’s it, Alice. It’s about balancing trust in Jesus’ power with the wisdom He gives us. That’s how we live out our faith in action.”

Ariel looked thoughtful. “I want to learn how to do that better—trusting Jesus but also making good choices. It’s like being strong and wise at the same time.”

Ryan nodded. “Exactly, Ariel. And that’s something we can all grow in together.”

Reflection: A Power Like No Other

That evening, Ariel read aloud from Matthew 8:

“‘What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?’”

The family sat quietly, reflecting on the awe-inspiring authority of Jesus.

“Even the demons had to obey Him,” Ryan said, his voice steady. “That’s the kind of power we can trust completely—because it’s not just power, it’s a loving authority that protects and restores.”

“And it’s a power that loves us,” Ariel added. “That’s what makes it so amazing.”

Alice held up Mr. Fluffernutter proudly. “I think Jesus is the best hero ever!”

“And the most real,” Ryan said with a grin.

Takeaway: Authority Over Darkness

Jesus’ encounter with the demon-possessed men in Matthew 8:28-34 reveals His absolute authority over the forces of darkness. He didn’t just command the demons to leave—He restored lives, brought peace, and showed His power to heal what was broken. With a single command, He frees the men, demonstrating His unmatched power and compassion. This story reminds us that no matter how frightening or destructive the forces we face may seem, Jesus is greater. His authority brings freedom, peace, and restoration to all who trust in Him.