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THE DAY PAUL REFUSED HELP FROM THE DEVIL

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 66
ACTS 16:11-18

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ACTS 16:11-18 "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

We are now in the Second Missionary Journey of Paul. We have seen how the writer of the Acts is now using the word "We". Dr. Luke, who wrote this book, is now traveling along with Paul and thus he used the word "We". This "We" meant Paul, Luke, Silas and Timothy. They loosed from Troas. Now Troas is ancient Troy and how they got Troas out of Troy none of the linguists have been able to figure out. But it is the same place. Troy was destroyed many times, and when Alexander the Great came to Troy and found it had been destroyed, he set about in the rebuilding of this ancient city. Paul had been hindered from going elsewhere and he is now ready to cross over into Europe. The vision from the man in Macedonia was definite and real and Paul is now moving under divine orders and divine direction.

First they sailed to the Island of Samothracia. It was a natural place to spend the night for it had a fabulous harbor and a peak that extended into the sky 5,500 feet. By this peak the sailors could chart their course. The second day they moved on to Neapolis, and this was the harbor for Philippi. The phrase "Sailed before the wind" means that they had favorable winds and they made the journey of 125 miles in two days. This was a good record for a sailing ship of that day. You see, when God wants his man at a certain place, he can get him there in a hurry.

ACTS 16:12 "And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days." Ten miles from the port of Neapolis was the city of Philippi. Here is where Mark Antony and Octavius met Brutus and Cassius and defeated them. It became a Roman Colony under Octavius and all who lived there were Roman citizens. It was named for Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. The highest honor Rome could give a city was to make it a colony of the Roman Empire. No citizen here could ever be scourged. They were under the protection of Roman law. This is a picture of the travels of Alexander the Great in reserve. He came from Philippi across to Troy and seeing it in ruins, commanded that it be rebuilt. He then went on to defeat the Persians. At this time Europe was the center of heathenism but there was a maximum number of people in Europe who had positive volition toward God. In the next twenty years there would be a great revival of Christianity in Europe. Here at Philippi Paul would give a great impetus to this evangelistic wave. After this tour Paul should have moved on into Italy and then on to Spain and other parts of Europe, but he turned back the other way, went back to Jerusalem and made a terrible mistake which led to four years in prison. The three great cities of Macedonia at this time were Thessalonica, Amphipolis, and Philippi. So we read that they were in that city "Abiding certain days". It means that they had to wait for the leadership of God to take their next step. They were waiting for an opportunity.

ACTS 16:13 "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Paul noticed that each sabbath a group of Jews would leave the city and go out on the river, so he decided to follow them. This river was quite famous for its fountains of water and this is the reason the city was founded here. The Jews were few in number and they had no synagogue in Philippi. Out on the river these Jewish women had a place for prayer and Paul and his group followed them to this place.

ACTS 16:14 "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Please notice that the first converts in Europe were women. Women seemed to have positive volition and were more receptive than men. Lydia was a very capable business woman and she had excellent business judgment. She was from Thyatira and in that place the water had a certain chemical in it which aided in the dyeing process. She was a seller of purple. The color to which this refers was more of a crimson than purple. It says, "She kept on worshipping" and with positive volition she "kept on listening" to Paul and his companions. Immediately she knew that this was the message she had been waiting to hear. "Whose heart the Lord opened" is a very interesting phrase. "Heart" is a synonym for soul, and here referred to the mentality and old sin nature of her soul. Her mind was opened. Now the mentality of the soul, unaided, cannot understand spiritual things. The Holy Spirit took the truth of the gospel and made it real to her soul. Thus as the Holy Spirit conveyed the meaning of the message to her mentality, she believed. The word "opened" is from "dianoigo" and means "to open a way through a closed barrier". She gave close attention to the message which came from the authority of Paul.

ACTS 16:15 "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." This lets us know she was saved. In the New Testament no one is ever baptized until after being saved. Not only was Lydia saved but also the members of her household. This means she took the gospel message to them. A key person was saved first, then as she witnessed to them they were saved one by one. Baptism means down with human good and up with divine good. Notice the first thing she did after her salvation. She invited Paul to come into her house. So the first meeting place on the church in Europe was in the house of Lydia in Philippi.

ACTS 16:16 "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying" This certain damsel means a Greek slave girl. She kept on having a spirit of divination. The word translated "spirit" here is "Puthon" and is the word from which we get Python. We are told that Apollo had a special snake to guard the Oracle of Delphi. From this came the idea that a snake would throw his voice and guard the holy place. This slave girl was possessed with a spirit of "throwing of the voice" and she could prophesy coming events. There was quite a syndicate built around her and she brought her masters much material gain. Soothsaying means prophesying.

ACTS 16:17 "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." So this maid kept on following Paul and just kept on saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation". Please notice that everything that she was saying was correct. So we have a demon possessed slave girl trying to help Paul in the work of the Lord. This was Satan's attempt to get into the act. If Paul was going to accomplish his goal then he must remain separated from religion and demons. Greece was the heathen center of the world.

Greece was the world center of homosexuality and fewer people in Greece had positive volition toward God than any other country in the earth. The culture of Greece was philosophical and therefore negative volition. There were very few saved from Greece but multitudes of Persians were saved. This is why demon possession could have such deep roots in Greece. The Greeks were the lowest of the low as far as spirituality was concerned. So in this verse we have the story of how this demon possessed girl went around and announced the meetings for Paul. She spoke nothing but the truth about Paul, but Paul had sense enough to know that he didn't need any help from the Devil. His help must come from God or it wouldn't amount to anything. The thing we are facing is this--would Paul compromise his faith?

ACTS 16:18 "And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." The words "But Paul" lets us know that he is not going to compromise. They didn't need any help from the Devil. You see, we need help from no one but the Lord. One of the most difficult jobs I have as Pastor of this church is to keep the Devil's ideas out of Immanuel Church. There are so many people who want to go Satan's way and do things according to Satan's plans. But Satan can get to people only with ideas. And when people don't know doctrine, and don't know the clear, plain teaching of the Word of God, then it is that the Devil hits them with his ideas. And they want to get these ideas into the life of the church. They want us to become conscious of public relations. They want us to major on entertaining young people rather than training them and teaching them. But I contend that if you build a church on Bible doctrine, then it will last forever. If you have Bible doctrine in your mind you will make it, and if you do not have Bible doctrine in your mind you will not make it. If we give these young people doctrine, then they can go anywhere and hold their own and not be confused and overcome by false teaching. Now Paul had sense enough to know that you can't compromise with the Devil. In other words, don't let the Greek slave girl make your announcements for you. No Madison Avenue techniques can be used to replace the Word of God. Now as long as I am Pastor of this church then this is the way it is going to be here. I'm going to stay with the Word of God no matter what happens. I hope you read me loud and clear.

We read here "Paul being displeased, turned and said to the spirit". This demon Spirit would recognize Paul. In one place in the New Testament we hear a demon say, "Christ I know and Paul I know, but who are you?" Mark 3:11-12 tells the story about how evil spirits wanted to sponsor Christ as the Son of God and Jesus told them to "Shut up". Christ wasn't going to line up with any sort of partnership like that. Jesus refused help from Satan in the temptations and on the cross. So here Paul is simply following the example of Christ. There can be no peaceful coexistence with Christ and Satan. Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan". Now Paul and his party were getting some good publicity from this girl. But remember this--THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL MUST NEVER BE UTTERED BY THOSE WHO ARE NOT TRUE TO THE GOSPEL. This is a great principle for all Christians. There must never be any compromise in our lives and in our witness. The gospel must be presented without compromise.

So Paul commanded this evil spirit to come out of her and this poor slave girl was converted. The conversion of this girl also led to the solution of a social problem. Salvation leads to the solution of social evils. Now there are multitudes today who are enamored over social action. They are being taught on every hand that the solution to man's problems is social reformation. Please remember that the Word of God teaches that the solution to man's problems is regeneration. Social action has never improved the Devil's world and it never will. The Nation Council of Churches is for social action and religion is all in favor of social action. But remember, God's plan is regeneration. God's plan is personal, not collective. You don't save society, you save people one by one.