

Acts Chapter 16

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[0 : 0 0] Well, you will recall that in our last session together, I left you with an assignment, and I don't know how strenuously you worked on it, but we are in Acts chapter 16, and we are dealing with a very extraordinary case of demon possession.

This is a phenomena that still exists today, but it certainly is not on the scale that it was during the time of our Lord. As you go through the Gospels, it becomes very apparent that Christ is confronted on a number of occasions by individuals who are indwelt by demons.

In each case, I think these were engastromuthos demons. That is, they are demons that indwelt, that occupied the person's body, controlled them entirely, and used their vocal cords to give out their message.

In one of the places in the Gospels, our Lord is confronted by this demoniac, and he screams out, I know thee who thou art, the Son of God.

Art thou come to torment us before the time? This kind of thing. And Christ cast the demons out. Now, the way that many approach these subjects of demon possession in the Bible today is through a pipeline of unbelief.

[1 : 1 7] And their unbelief runs all through the Scriptures. They can explain everything away. For instance, Jesus didn't actually walk on the water. He was on a shoal or a bank or a sandbar that made it look like he was walking on water, but it was only a couple of inches deep.

And it appeared that he was walking on water, but he wasn't really. They have ways of explaining away everything. These are people who are committed to naturalism. They believe we lived in a closed system and that there is no possibility of the miraculous even occurring.

So they are called naturalists. And they believe that the supposed incidents of demonic indwelling in the New Testament were not that at all.

These people had mental illness. And it was commonly believed by these people who didn't know any better and were uneducated, etc., that they were actually indwelt by a demon.

And you can see this even back in ancient Egypt where they have examined the remains of some mummies and have opened some skulls.

[2 : 3 0] And there have been instances where they could determine that the physicians of that day, the surgeons of that day, had actually bored into the skull of some of these people with the intent of making a way of exit for the demonic spirits that were indwelling them and making them do these bizarre things.

Well, there is no question there is a reality of mental illness. There is no question that there are brain abnormalities that make people do really weird and strange things.

And we call these people insane. Our institutions are occupied by some of these people who really do believe they are Jesus Christ.

And they really do believe they are God. And they really do believe they... And it is real to them. And we call this mental illness. There are brain abnormalities. There are chemical problems that can take place in the brain that can result in people doing all kinds of bizarre things.

And one of the common explanations for biblical demonism is that these people were not indwelt by anything. The evil spirits that they talked about don't even exist.

[3 : 50] These people were simply suffering from mental illness or they were suffering from epilepsy. And in a case of a grand mal seizure with which I am personally very familiar, a person completely loses control of their body.

They begin flailing arms and legs, flailing every which way simply because they are not in control of their body. And they are literally unconscious at the time, although they may appear to be awake.

I've personally witnessed these grand mal seizures with our daughter literally hundreds of times over her 30 years. And during that time, she's completely out of it.

So the explanation for the Bible deniers is that's what this was. That was epilepsy. But they didn't know what to call it. So they just said they were indwelt by a demon. But you must understand to take a position like that terribly reduces the character and nature of our Lord to either being ignorant of what was actually taking place or to be aware of what was actually taking place.

But he went along with the common diagnosis of the day and didn't contradict it and played the game, if you will. Neither position is acceptable, of course. There were and there still are legitimate cases of demon possession.

[5 : 14] I have never actually witnessed one. But I've talked to missionaries who have. And they say it is a terrifying experience. And you go to certain places where the gospel has made virtually no inroads at all.

And you will find examples of this. And I'm thinking principally in areas of Africa and Asia, particularly in Tibet and Nepal. And this does go on.

These demons, I don't know. I don't know how it is they are able to enter a person's body. These demons are spirit beings.

They themselves are not physical. But they want a physical body to inhabit. And it would appear to me, I don't know this and I don't know much about it, but it would appear to me that there has to be some kind of cooperation on the part of the person who is indwelt for this demon to come in.

It's some kind of an invitation. And the idea of anyone inviting demonic spirits to indwell their body is really bizarre in and of itself.

[6 : 24] And the people who do that are people who are seeking some kind of power or ability outside and beyond themselves.

And they are willing to place themselves in cooperation with these demonic spirits who can do that and who can actually indwell a person.

And, of course, the downside of it is these demonic spirits never, ever deliver what is anticipated or promised.

It is like demonic spirits, as far as we can determine, are fallen angels. And their master is Satan himself.

And he has all kinds of enticements and temptations and promises, but he never makes good on them. We are familiar of late of people in high positions of authority who make promises and are unable to deliver on them.

[7 : 27] But that is common to fallen humanity. So, in this particular case, when Paul arrives in this town of Philippi, here in Acts chapter 16, they have a ministry with a local group of Jewish women.

The men are gone because they've been kicked out of town. Philippi is a Roman colony, and I think Acts 18 makes that clear, as does 16.

And all of the Jews, that is, male Jews, have been forced to leave the town if Philippi is acting in concert with Rome. It is Rome that made Philippi a colony, and they accorded them special privileges and benefits and tax breaks and so on for their loyalty to Rome.

And Paul goes there looking for the synagogue, of course, but the synagogue's empty because there aren't any men there. So, he goes out to the river, and there's a group of women there, and one of them is named Lydia, and she is a businesswoman of her day.

And she is presented with the gospel, and those who are with her believe on Christ with the gospel that Paul preached, except as they would go back each day to this place at the riverside to minister to these people, they were encountered by a girl who was demon-possessed, and she had some kind of supernatural ability to predict kind of future events.

[8 : 59] Now, this is basically reduced to fortune-telling. That's what we're talking about. And this girl, we're not given her age, but this girl was controlled by a small group of men who utilized her services and made money off of her.

And in Acts chapter 16, we read, beginning with verse 16, Acts 16, 16.

And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, and this would have been out, I think, out by the river that was mentioned earlier in the chapter, a certain slave girl, having a spirit of divination, met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

Now, let me just inject a couple of things here about slavery in biblical days. There is slavery in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. And it is not to be confused with the slavery with which we are familiar that was practiced here in the United States in the 1800s.

Slavery in biblical times was almost exclusively the result of two things. One was an inability to pay a debt that you owed so you could sell yourself to the one to whom you owed the debt until the debt was worked off, and then you were free.

[10 : 38] There were Hebrews in the Old Testament who had Hebrew slaves. It had nothing to do with color. Nothing to do with race. It had everything to do with being in debt and not able to honor the debt.

So, you didn't have any material things to hawk to raise money to pay the debt. So, you sold yourself. And Jacob did that.

Jacob did that to his crooked uncle, Laban, when he worked seven years to purchase Rachel. And then, the old switcheroo, he ended up with Leah.

So, he worked another seven years. This is like an indentured servant caring for the flocks of his uncle until that debt was paid. And when those 14 years were paid off, that's when he decided, I've had enough of this.

And he took his two wives and they headed out. And the story is there in Genesis. So, slavery in the Bible has nothing to do with people owning people. And that's an entirely different thing than the kind of slavery we experience.

[11 : 45] So, we need to keep that in mind. And then, this girl is following after Paul and us. And I think the expression and us refers to Dr. Luke and those who were with him.

Because he apparently joined them at Troas. And they are part of this company. This is just a small band. I would take it that it is Paul and Silas and Luke and maybe one or two others.

This was like a little missionary team. And this slave girl is crying out, following after them. And she is saying, These men are bondservants of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you, that is the local people, the way of salvation.

And she continued doing this for many days. And she was saying, But Paul was greatly annoyed. The assignment I left you with last week was, why was he annoyed?

This gal was an advertising vehicle for them. She was expressing why they were there and what they were doing. And one would think that Paul would say, All advertisement and publicity is good.

[13 : 00] This girl is spreading the word as to what we are doing. But as you read on, We read that Paul was greatly annoyed. And turned to her and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And it came out at that very moment. Now, why was Paul greatly annoyed when all this girl was doing was actually telling the truth?

She was, I mean, she might have looked like a common kind of John the Baptizer, who was the forerunner of Paul and is announcing to everybody, Hey, this guy has come to tell us the truth.

Dick, what do you think? Well, I read a couple different things about that. The one, she was undermining their authority by being who she was, the evil spirit.

In Jewish law at that time, the Jews, the Jewish law, didn't like any kind of magical. They were against any kind of magic.

[14 : 11] Soothsayers they were called, yeah. So, they're with the Jews, preaching to the Jews. All right. So, if she's credible, and she is like under the same tent as Paul and Silas at the time, saying the same thing, so that gives her credit.

And I think the whole thing goes back to power from the Spirit. I think Satan wants the power. He acknowledges, you are God.

I mean, every time he confronts Jesus, he says, you are God. Yeah. But he still wants to retain that power, that command over that.

So, I don't know. Does that make sense? Okay. I don't doubt that that is involved, at least involved. What do you think, Joe? It kind of goes along with that, but the means to the end is wrong.

The means, it's right about, you know, preaching salvation for us, but the means is wrong. Using this girl, having this demon do it is the wrong thing. Just like Robin Hood, you know, robbing from the poor, or robbing from the rich to give to the poor.

[15 : 24] That's the wrong means to help the poor. Yeah. Helping the poor is good, just like what she was saying was good, but the means is wrong. Terribly wrong. It's sinful to do what she's doing, and he can, you know, have a wrong means to divide in.

Okay. Any other thoughts? You know, when you're trying to sell yourself, or whatever service you provide, sometimes it doesn't work to try to wave your flag.

Somebody else can wave your flag for you, but you want to be careful who waves your flag. You want to be announced by someone who has credibility.

Okay. These are all good points. Somebody else. Dick? Well, it says there are, in the other friends places, all the noise.

In the other places, it's worn out. And if you think he does jobs to do, and somebody else is always interfering, and you can feel responsible for him, you know, he just has enough foot.

[16 : 30] And so, I don't know, I just think that a friend wasn't until he gets worn out from her. Okay.

And it probably didn't ruin the people that they were trying to talk to in a bad way. Okay. Okay. You're all on track here, I think.

Roger. Roger. Were the women allowed to speak like that? In and of? Well, this was, you know, an outdoor public kind of setting, and they were probably accustomed to this woman doing things like this.

So, I don't know. Of course, in a strict Jewish sense, like in a synagogue, you know, women were not permitted to speak. In fact, they were even separated from the men. Men sat on one side. The women sat on another side.

Mike? I wonder if they didn't all realize that this woman was a charlatan and would be discovered as such, you know.

[17 : 31] They didn't really believe what she was saying. She was kind of mocking Paul. I think you're on something there, big time. Yes, Dana.

And then, along that same line, and what Marty said, the reverse of what Marty said, is that she's gaining credibility from Paul now.

And at some later date, after she gained that credibility, she'll leave people astray, lead them in the wrong direction. And it's good to stop it now before. Okay.

And apparently, this went on for quite some time, see. Yeah. Richard? Why didn't he just cast out the demon and let him go on? I don't see why he didn't do that.

Why did he let it go on and on and on? I don't know. We are not told. We are not told why. We are just told that Paul was really annoyed, irritated by it.

[18 : 33] And greatly annoyed is the text I have here in the New American Standard. Any other thoughts? John?

Is this the first miracle that Paul does? They send him handkerchiefs and scarves and stuff for him to touch if people are healed.

Mm-hmm. And it's just a thought. Now, probably this is the way I'll say it. But Paul wanted to authenticate his apostleship by doing this, by casting out his demons.

But that's the mid-century dream of the knowledge. And maybe he's had compassion on the earth. Okay? Okay? Yeah, Rod?

Is there ever an instance where a person occupied could throw the demon out? Or did they want to say he took control of the demon? I do not know of any case.

[19 : 35] I'm not saying there aren't any. But I do not know of any case where the person indwelt was able to exorcise the demon themselves.

Because the demon has absolute power and control over the person that it indwells. And there is no instance that I know of where anybody has been able to exorcise the demon from themselves.

Well, I'll give you my take on it. But it's just a Wiseman opinion. And there's no way, of course, that I can verify it. But I think the reason that Paul was annoyed by this is not because the woman was not telling the truth.

Because she was telling the truth. But as Mike inferred a moment ago, I think she was telling the truth in a mocking, sarcastic kind of way.

And that doesn't come across in the text. Because unless it tells you in the text that she was sarcastically saying this, you wouldn't know that.

[20 : 48] You just read it. But you cannot, in reading the text, you cannot get a tone of voice. So it wasn't, in my estimation, it wasn't what she was saying that was wrong with it.

It was how she was saying it. She was saying it in a mocking, derogatory, derisive way. Instead of saying, and giving the impression, these men are bondservants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.

Now that's in a positive kind of approach. But what if she was saying it like this? These men are bondservants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.

Is there a difference? Would that irritate you? Would that get to you after a while? Coming from her like that?

That's my guess. But it's just a wise man guess. And like I said, I can't insist on it. But that would get to me, if somebody were saying that, in a mocking, derisive, sarcastic way.

[22 : 02] And other people that have heard that might think, therefore it's not truthful. It's really not the case. Exactly. She's casting aspersion upon it, doubt upon it, phoniness upon it.

They're fakers. Yeah, they're fakers. Exactly. Exactly. So that would not be a positive impact. That would not be a positive sell or any kind of a reinforcement to what Paul was saying.

It would be negative and derogatory. So let's continue on. Yes. There would be no reason why the masters wouldn't be dispersed through the crowd, kind of encouraging and kind of making gestures or something like that too.

Oh yeah. Well, you're absolutely right. We don't have any idea exactly what all was taking place here because it's a rather scanty account that we have. Dana?

The other thing is the masters are getting profits on it. And that's wrong. Yeah. That's what's wrong with the whole thing. Yeah. That's true too. That's why I got the means. See, the means is wrong. Yeah. Some people take the position regarding anything that the end justifies the means.

[23 : 13] It doesn't make any difference how you do it as long as you get to where you want to go. And that's a real political kind of thing too, you know. I wonder if I just picture this as a square right here.

And you follow those two to the square every day. And she's at this point. And it says she follows them. I think it's just one of those questions where they just come together and give them points. Probably.

Like because that's where he's making any money by. People come up and keep going and make their fortune. Yeah. Yeah. And they just happen to be coming by each day and it just gets to them. Yeah. In that sense. I think so.

I think you're right. Absolutely. You just kind of have to try to imagine this being a very public kind of setting. And people are gathered around. People are talking. People are listening. And then after this gal makes her statement like this, each time she does, there's probably a new batch of people there.

And the whole community is talking about this whole thing. So in a sense, even negative publicity can be good. But in this case, the way she is using it, the way she is saying it, it casts dispersion and doubt and a lack of credibility on who Paul is and what he is saying.

[24 : 22] Jeff? Yeah. I kind of liken it to the Pharisees and Sadducees when they crucified Jesus. I think on the cross, Jesus of Nazareth, they wanted to, I think, say, professes to be king of the Jews.

And remember they just called king of the Jews. Yeah. It was a fact, but it was a mocking. Yeah. A mocking, a ridicule. Absolutely. Any other thoughts?

Well, the food is already here and I don't want it to get cold. So you go right ahead and eat and we'll cut our study short a little bit this morning.

But if we accomplished just an examination of that, then next week we'll take up the actual casting out of the demon and connect that with some incidents that our Lord had in the Gospels.

And then we'll talk a little bit about demon possession today. I get it. But this is a real thing, fellas. This is not show business. You said you thought we had demon possessions today.

[25 : 29] Yeah. Do you think people here in the United States have the evil, evil no syndrome that would be classified as they do?

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. And, you know, there is one kind, I need to touch on this. There is one particular kind of demonic indwelling that seems to be most common, particularly in the Gospels, and mentioned a number of times.

And I don't know if you've picked up on it or not, but I know you will recognize the term when you hear it. It's called an unclean spirit. And this uncleanliness has to do with physical, sexual immorality.

The unclean spirit. It is a filthy spirit. It is a degrading spirit. One that brings with it inordinate sexual desires and all kinds of stuff like we're seeing today.

And I'm not saying that these people are indwelt by demons, but it would be easy to understand how they could be called people with an unclean spirit. Yeah. Some people on the news, here within the last three or four months, where a guy rapes a three-year-old girl or a two-year-old girl, know that there's got to be, he's either totally evil, sexually deprived, something is wrong with that person.

[27 : 05] So it has to be an evil mind that would do something like that. There's no two ways around it. And, you know, we see this going on all the day. And, fellas, my guess is what we hear about and what we read about is just the tip of the iceberg.

Most of this stuff doesn't even go reported. Dana? Andy Perrin used to be the Clark County jail chaplain. And she came and spoke to our group one time, and she said that all the people in downtown in the jail that she serviced, there were only two people she met that were really evil.

Yeah. Other people were there just to dump things or, you know. Yeah. But evil is a different thing. Yeah. It really is. And there is evil out there, no question about it.

And, you know, to have an evil spirit, and I don't want to belabor the point, but this ties in with the human spirit that every one of us has. Every human being has a human spirit, whether they're Christian, non-Christian, or whatever.

It's got nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. It's part of our humanity. We are made up of body, spirit, and soul. The body plus the spirit equals the soul. And there are people whose spirit is just thoroughly degraded and evil.

[28 : 26] And we see the consequences of evil spirits like that. That, however, is different from an actual demonic being indwelling that person, but it does control the individual spirit.

We'll pursue this a little bit more next week, but thanks for your input and enjoy your breakfast. Richard, what did you have? I just want to talk about evil spirits. Remember when they were cast into swine?

Yeah. They said, send us into the swine. Yeah. I don't know if you can speak to that or not. That's why. They do want to have a body, apparently, to be in.

And what happens to them? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, that is a problematic passage. Essentially, keep this in mind.

And what happens when a person is indwelt is that they come completely under the powers and dominion of that spirit. They no longer have a viable volition.

[29 : 24] It is the volition of the evil spirit that simply takes over them, victimizes them, uses them however he wants. What's interesting is that evil spirit always destroys.

That's true. Like the swine. Yeah. Yeah. It's always negative and it's always destructive. And in that sense, of course, it is counterproductive to who God is and what he does.

God is the creator and the sustainer. One of the names that is given, one of the several names that is given to Satan is Apollyon. And the word literally means the destroyer.

And it's found particularly in the book of Revelation. So, thanks, guys, for your input. Enjoy your breakfast. We'll continue this next week. Thank you.