

The slave girl of Philippi

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[0 : 0 0] Now let us turn our thoughts this morning to Acts chapter 16 at verse 16. Acts chapter 16 at verse 16.

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, Then these men are the servants of the Most High God, which show 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.

And when her master saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace and to the rulers and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe being Romans.

[1 : 1 1] And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates rent off their clothes and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Now, it wasn't a small work that was done by Paul and Silas at Philippi. As we have seen, there was the conversion of Lydia, the businesswoman whose occupation was in the famous dye trade of the times.

And now we have here the miraculous cure and the deliverance of this notorious slave girl. And what I would like us to do this morning is to consider the condition of this girl and her remarkable deliverance from the power of evil.

Let us then for a little while look at this slave girl of Philippi. Who she was, we are not told. We are just told that she was a girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination.

And this indicates to her that this girl was in a state of spiritual bondage. Now, if you have a margin Bible, you will notice how the spirit of divination is translated in this way, that she had the spirit of Python.

[2 : 5 6] Persons who prophesied under the supposed inspiration of the Greek god Apollo were said to have the spirit of Python.

And that just really means they had the spirit of divination. They were able to look into the mysteries that couldn't be fathomed by human beings.

And so these people that had this spirit of Python were consulted. They were consulted about problems such as the recovery of lost possessions.

They were consulted about things that had to do with the spirit. Just in the same way as the witch of Endor was consulted by Saul when he wanted Samuel to come back from the dead in order for Samuel to tell him what the outcome of the battle of Mount Gilboa would be.

And of course, we know how mediums are being consulted today. It seems a strange thing to me that the police force will often call in the mediums maybe if it is to find a lost body in the hope that these people will be able to tell them that they've seen something and that the body that they are looking for is in such and such a place.

[4 : 29] And there are so many too who are going to these mediums it might be the politicians who are going to them to find out how this will turn out or how that will turn out.

You see, the devil develops many lines of attack against the truth of God. And on the one hand he may succeed in persuading us to discount God altogether and to rely upon other forces that are outside of God.

And when the devil achieves that sort of thing he makes atheism a very popular thing among people. Or on the other hand he persuades the incredulous in society to consult the oracles to consult things like astrology theosophy the occult and these things become popular.

But however it is that the devil operates his intention always is to subvert the truth and to subject those who become involved to a spiritual slavery a slavery that enslaves them to what is evil.

And this is what had happened you see in the case of this poor demented slave girl. And what I say and that is this it's foolish to underestimate the power of evil and we must never do so.

[6 : 20] It's the power of evil that made Peter deny his master. It's the power of evil that moved Judas Iscariot to betray Christ and that eventually drove Judas Iscariot to a suicide's death.

And let us remember that the same power of evil is operating today with disastrous consequences for the human race.

As we look at our present day situation and consider those who influence men to do evil we cannot but conclude that these men are demon possessed.

you consider the amount of pornographic literature that is to be had today. You consider the pornographic film material that is being shown in the cinema or that is being shown on television.

What is it that is moving these dirty minded men to do this sort of thing? It's the power of evil. And here we find that not only was this slave girl in a state of spiritual bondage but she was in a state of physical subjection as well.

[7 : 52] It wasn't just that she was in the grip of an evil spirit but she was in the grip of mercenary men. Men who were making a fortune out of this poor girl.

She was a slave. She was merely manipulated by them to do for them what they wanted her to do in order that it might bring them gain.

It's a monstrous thing when men traffic in human beings. And let's not forget that men are exploiting human beings today.

We haven't got past the old slave trade when they used to bring the black people from Africa and take them across to the plantations of the West. We've still got human exploitation.

The exploitation of young people. the exploitation of ordinary people by these huge concerns that are making great profits at the expense of human misery.

[9 : 10] And it's a monstrous thing when men traffic in human beings. When they exploit their fellow creatures to their own advantage and for their own gain.

especially when they make that gain at the expense of the weaknesses of poor people.

And this was the diabolical nature of these men. She brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. Ah, this is one of the glories of Christianity.

It's what you don't find in other religions. No matter the religion that you may mention here this morning you won't find this about them.

And this is one of the glories of the Christian religion. That it makes men free. It grants freedom from the power of darkness.

[10 : 19] It grants freedom from the interests of those who would overwhelm and destroy us. And just as this demented slave girl was liberated from the destructive forces that made capital out of her weakness so it is today the drunkard can be freed from the tyranny of his drink.

My friend if we didn't believe that sort of thing there would be no further cause to preach the gospel. This is one of the glories of Christ that Christ can give you freedom.

I don't know if someone here might be under the influence of drink or not at this present moment but if he is perhaps a slave to drink is there someone a slave to drink here?

You say minister it's easy enough for you to speak but I can't break the habit. I've tried to break the habit but it's impossible for me to do it.

I say you can. Isn't the power of God greater than the power of men? Isn't the power of Christ greater than the power of drink?

[11 : 43] And if Christ comes into the life he will break that power and deliver you from the tyranny of drink.

You might say it's not drink that's my problem it's gambling. Oh yes I suppose there are people in the free church who have got a gambling problem and anything you see that comes to you that shows to you how you can be rich in a very short time so easily so quickly it gets the hold of you and you feel yourself drawn to try this to try that to become involved in this form of gambling in that form of gambling whether it be trying the football pools whether it be trying the place the ball competition whether it be trying bingo or any of these forms of gambling you say you know I've got caught up in it I've got a craze for it I can't break this habit that I've got into

I say you can just as this poor demented slave girl was delivered from the tyranny that oppressed her I say you can be delivered from that tyranny that is oppressing you it might be drug addiction you've got into the habit of taking drugs you didn't think it would happen to you you know it's so easy to get into the habit of something isn't it perhaps at the beginning you took it as a kind of medicine but now it's got the hold of you or it might be you see the experimentation by young people in the field of drugs and now you're being tormented by that addiction the power of God is greater than the power of men or the unclean person you see he can be he can be delivered or she can be delivered from that terribly corrupting vice that has taken over in their lives for many days we are told this unfortunate girl followed

Paul and his helpers crying these men are the servants of the most high God who show unto us the way of salvation now this was an undoubtedly true testimony and as such as it was a true testimony it might be asked why didn't Paul allow that testimony and why didn't he accept it you see he rebuked the girl because of what she was crying and what was she crying these are the servants of the most high God wouldn't you have thought that Paul would have said ah well this girl she's saying what is true so we will allow her to say she's a good testimony or she's giving a good us well the reason for Paul not accepting that testimony was this it was a testimony of evil and a testimony of evil cannot be accepted because remember this that the devil never allies himself with truth and the devil never allies himself for the promotion of truth this girl was not doing something that was praiseworthy what this girl was doing was something that would inevitably in the end discredit the gospel and for that reason you see

Paul was grieved we read in the Bible that the devils believe in God and they tremble but theirs is not a saving belief there was an occasion when Jesus healed many and not only did he heal many but he exercised the demons from those who were devil possessed and it's recorded on that occasion the devils also came out of many crying out and saying thou art Christ the son of God but it goes on to say this and he rebuking them that's the devils suffered them not to speak for they knew that he was Christ in other words you see our Lord wouldn't accept the testimony of the devils on the side of the truth because the devil is the father of lies and any assessment or any testimony from that source from the devil must be based upon false premises and so in similar fashion

[17 : 22] Paul was grieved and he refused to accept this girl's testimony but let us notice this the deliverance of this girl now we have considered Paul's reason for intervening in this way but let's remember that the gospel has a humanitarian thrust as well as a spiritual thrust and if we begin to divorce the humanitarian thrust of the gospel from the spiritual thrust we are doing something that is wrong I dare say that sometimes we in the free church have erred in this respect we felt perhaps too much that the social gospel is nothing but a social gospel and so we've had nothing to do with the social side and perhaps our emphasis has been entirely and purely on the spiritual side but let us remember that we are our brother's keeper in many ways more than one and that there ought to be a humanitarianism about our testimony as a church there ought to be a compassion among us for those who are less fortunate than we are and here you see as far as Paul was concerned he was sorry for the tragic condition of the girl and it was indicated to him by God that he ought to intervene in this situation and so he turned and said to the spirit that was within the girl

I commend thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her now in all these miracles of healing we notice that they are done in the name and by the authority of Christ this is not something that can be accomplished by human effort indeed what can human effort do against the forces of darkness what can your power or my power do against the whole night of hell you recall how in the parable of the strong man armed our Lord tells us that when a citadel is kept by a strong person who is fully armed with the necessary essentials to keep that fortress then says our Lord it takes an incredibly stronger man to come along and to withdraw from the strong man his weaponry and relieve the beleaguered citadel and so it is in the realm of the spirit the heart you see of this girl was held in the grip of Satan and as far as this girl was concerned she could only be freed by the power of

Christ I ask you are you afraid of the power of evil you say yes and so well you might be but I tell you this you can take comfort from the power of our Lord for the power of Christ is far greater than the power of evil and so in the name and by the power of Christ this slave girl was miraculously cured from demon possession and the cure was instantaneous he came out that is this evil spirit of divination came out the same hour heart oh there could be no doubt that this was a miracle because this can be seen in the reaction of the girl's masters when they saw that their exploitation of the girl had ended that she was delivered from the grip of evil the anger of these men knew no bounds you see if the girl's powers had been based on mere deceit they could have continued their nefarious trade but now they couldn't because

God's power had brought a miraculous and an impressive change and you see what I was talking about earlier on when I said that the power of God is greater in the human life than the power of evil I said that the power of God could deliver the drunkard the drug addict the power of God could deliver the man who is subject to the corruption of vice power of God can deliver you from the evil of gambling because if the power of God could deliver this girl from this demon possession can the power of Christ not deal with you and your problem and me with mine but let's look at the reaction of her masters as far as they were concerned earthly gain meant more to them than human happiness and this is the sad feature of our present day life that earthly gain means more to so many people than human happiness and that's why these evil men who are exploiting our young people whether it be in the realm of sex whether it be in the realm of drugs whether it be in the realm of drink these evil men are not interested in these young people as such as human beings as individuals they are only interested in their money they are only interested in advancing and in promoting their own interests not in promoting the well-being of these poor unfortunate people that are in their grip and instead of these men at this time being glad that this poor wretched member of society this girl had been delivered from the corruption and the destruction of evil they were enraged because they saw that the hope of their gains was gone and when men begin to lose their ill-gotten gains you can be sure that they will soon show it and this is why whenever

Christianity attacks vested interests trouble soon begins to follow that's why if the church takes up any strong line against the distillers or the brewers my word there is a rumpus supposing revival were to come to Inverness supposing people in their masses were converted and it's not impossible instead of them going perhaps along to the pubs you see or Eden Court or any of these places they might be found night after night you see at the prayer meeting oh you say that's too miserable no it's not miserable at all once you've tasted you know that the Lord is gracious you won't find prayer difficult you won't find the spiritual realm difficult but what

[26 : 33] I do say and that is the supposing revival did sweep Inverness and people were withdrawn from these places soon there would be a hue and cry the church is damaging us the church is interfering with the people the church has no right to be doing what she is doing oh the bingo hall owners would have a lot to say and the humanists you can be sure of this that they would raise their voices and they would go to any length these people to discredit the church once you see the church begins to go against their particular way of life it's the attitude of Ahab all over again and the attitude of Ahab manifests itself against the spirit of Elijah in every generation you see

Elijah the Old Testament prophet what did he do when he tried to recall the people of his day to their true destiny he tried to recall the people of his day to their true relationship to God but his demands were unfavorable as far as the royal house was concerned King Ahab and his royal party they were against Elijah because Elijah was against their way of life and Ahab soon nicknamed Elijah the troubler of Israel Israel Oh here he comes again the troubler of Israel and of course we in the free church we've often had that kind of nickname thrown at us because we've said certain things that are unpopular you see to the majority of the people Oh these free kirkers they're so narrow minded they do nothing but cause trouble and strife they are the troublers all because we try to bring people back to

God and back to a proper relationship with God the happiness you see that is offered to us by the vested interests of the day it's like the froth that has no body and that soon disappears but more than that these evil men you see misinterpreted the good work that was done by Paul at Philippi they used every kind of argument to persuade the people against the disciples against the Christian cause what did they say about the Christianity of Paul and Silas they said that Christianity was nothing but an agitation it was a bad influence upon their society it was disruptive their teachings were at variance with what was commonly held by the masses these men they said being

Jews do exceedingly trouble our city they teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive neither to observe being Romans indeed the reaction then to Paul's theology and to Paul's Christian activity is no less than the reaction today against any form of vital witnessing in the interests of the cause of Christ but the reaction you see went further and Paul and Silas were taken and mercilessly beaten and cast into prison and their feet made fast in the stocks now why did these two men Paul and Silas why did they suffer this outrageous injustice and this indignity was it because Paul and Silas were essentially evil men was it because that they had done something to the populace that deserved this treatment was it because they had destroyed this poor girl and made her life a misery no they didn't do anything like that they were the means of this poor girl's deliverance and freedom they had come you see to this place they had preached the glorious gospel of salvation and this poor girl by the grace of

God had been delivered from the power of evil from the grip of cruel and avaricious men and yet this is what they received and all this happened to Paul and Silas because earlier on in the chapter as you can see they had been obedient to the Macedonian call the men of Philippi who had cried to them come over and help us you know when you and I respond to a Macedonian call like that we mustn't forget the implications that might be involved in that Macedonian call because the Macedonian call may eventually find us in prison just as Paul and Silas found themselves in prison at Philippi but oh it doesn't matter if you do find yourself in the prison at

[32 : 55] Philippi in response to the Macedonian call because wasn't it a great triumph for these men wasn't it a great diadem in their crown that here this poor girl was given her freedom freedom from the devil freedom from the power of evil and freedom from the grip of evil men I say what happened then in Paul's day can happen in this day in which we are living I pointed out to you and I just reemphasize it again the manifestations of evil that were prevalent in the days of the apostles these same manifestations of evil are prevalent with us today men are in the grip of evil today there are forces of darkness enslaving men and women how can they be made free only by the power of

God which is proclaimed in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that's the gospel thank God that we still proclaim let us pray oh Lord our God we give thee thanks for that power that delivers from the corrupting influence of the force of darkness that is abroad in the world and we pray that we might indeed share in the spread of this gospel in the proclamation of this power of Christ to deliver and we would ask thee oh God that we might see signs as the apostle did in his day of men and women and young people being delivered from darkness being delivered from the evil of men and being granted their glorious freedom and liberty in

Christ be with us throughout the remainder of thy day come out with us we pray thee in the evening as we gather in thy name and forgive our sins for Jesus sake amen