



4/21/26

I love today's passage! It's such a beautiful picture of what being in the presence of God can do. We can't see Him or touch Him... YET. But He's here with us now... just as He was with Paul back then. Having Him here with us changes EVERYTHING. I hope and pray that you and I will look for evidences of God's grace today. If we look, we will find them. Amen!

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Acts 16:16-34

In the story of Jesus sending the legion of demons to the pigs, the demon possessed man looked like he was crazy, naked and hurting himself, living among the tombs. In the story of Jesus casting out a demon on the Sabbath, the demon possessed man wasn't described. He just cried out the name of Jesus as the Holy One of God. Only, he wasn't worshiping Jesus. He was trying to disrupt His teaching. In both cases, Jesus commanded the demons to leave those they possessed and they had to obey. He had the absolute authority to do it.

In today's passage, it wasn't Jesus who cast out a demon. It was the Apostle Paul. But I need to pay close attention to what happened and what was said. Paul did not cast the demon out by his own authority. Though God gives me many of His attributes as I grow in Him... love, joy, peace, patience, etc... He does not give me His absolute authority or His place as the Judge. Let me never get my role confused. Any authority I have is way less than His, and I still bow to Him as the absolute Ruler and Judge... and I always will.

So... Paul and the missionaries with him were headed to the place of prayer. While

they were going, a demon possessed slave girl who had "the spirit of divination" started following them around. This Gentile slave girl was not seeming to be crazy like the demon possessed man with the pigs. She was actually making her slave owners a lot of money by telling people's fortunes. This is important for me to see. Demon possession is not always blatantly noticeable. In fact, 2 Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. He's happy to destroy us in whatever way he can.

This girl's demon possession was obvious to Paul because she continued to follow him and cry out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." She spoke the truth, but not in reverence. Why would that be a problem??? Well, what happens if someone like Paul is trying to speak the truth in love and someone else chases after him yelling all the time? People begin to avoid the one who speaks truth in order to avoid the one who is annoying them. Satan is willing even to speak truth if it can push someone away from God. That means Satan KNOWS the truth. That means I need to pay much more attention to God's word AND be much more diligent in allowing the Holy Spirit to fill me and lead me so that I can know what is from God and what is a lie.

Well... after several days of this slave girl yelling that Paul was a servant of the Most High God, Paul got annoyed. Let me just quickly see something important. With Jesus, the demons called Him "the Holy One of God" and "Son of the Most High God." With Paul, the demons called him "SERVANT of the Most High God." The demons recognize the difference between Jesus and me. He IS God. I AM His servant!!!

How did Paul handle it? He said to the spirit, "I command you IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST to come out of her." Paul did not speak by his own authority. And let me just remember this. Paul had more authority from God than I'll ever have. He was an apostle. No apostles were ever appointed by God after the 12 disciples and Paul. In the ocean of God's authority, He granted about 2 drops to Paul and maybe 1 drop to me.

What happened when Paul spoke by the authority of Jesus Christ? The demon left her. How do I know that it WAS completely by the authority of Jesus? In Acts 19, there were some guys called "the sons of Sceva" who thought it was cool that "God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul." These guys wanted to get in on the action, so they tried to cast out demons. They tried to cast them out by

saying to the demons, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims..." But the demon said to them, "Jesus I KNOW, and Paul I RECOGNIZE, but who are you?" And the ONE demon attacked ALL the sons of Sceva and beat them up badly. The demons are not afraid of me. They are afraid of Jesus!!!

Well... when Paul, by the power of God at work, commanded the demon to leave the slave girl, he left... and the departed demon took her fortune telling skills with him. This made her owners VERY MAD! They didn't care at all about her. They just cared about the future money they just lost. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them before the magistrates. They lied and said they were breaking the law. Without hearing any defense from Paul and Silas, they beat them and threw them into prison.

Now... I would think that Paul and Silas would be pretty upset about that. With blood dripping from them they were put in the inner prison which is used for the worst criminals. Their bleeding feet were locked in the stocks. But here's the thing... THEY WEREN'T MAD!!! They weren't crying out to God, "How could You do this when we have been so faithful to You???" No... they were praying and singing hymns to God all the way up until midnight. All the prisoners had to be dumbfounded by their joy!!! They were listening to the songs and prayers... and God sent an earthquake so that their chains all fell off and the doors of the prison were opened!!!

This is what amazes me even more. When the chains fell off, no one moved... not even the prisoners! The jailer expected them all to escape, and he knew the punishment he would receive for losing them would be severe and cruel. So he was about to fall on his sword until Paul yelled out, "Don't do it! We're all here!" Wow. I'm sure this jailer had treated Paul and Silas very harshly. All they cared about was his soul. Paul held no grudge. He wanted to protect this man so that his death would not be eternal spiritual death.

The jailer was so shocked that he asked them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Sirs? That's a sign of respect. I'm sure that was the first time they heard him call them "sirs." Before that, he probably called them things like "scum, losers, worthless pieces of trash," but not "sirs." Proverbs 16:7 says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." That's so cool.

Paul and Silas answered the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Never once did Paul or Silas try to draw attention to themselves or get anything for themselves, even though the jailer ended up washing their wounds. But they didn't ask for that. They just wanted to proclaim the gospel to this man and his family, and they all responded and were saved.

That day, a slave girl was delivered from a demon. A jailer and his whole family were saved from eternal separation from God. I would bet that at least some of those prisoners were saved. This is ALL because of the authority of Jesus working in and through His people... His servants.

O Lord, let me be Your faithful servant. Let me be grateful and humble so that when I'm treated like a servant by others, I don't resent it... but I always consider it an honor to be viewed as a servant of the Most High God. Let any suffering I experience be an opportunity to cling to You more. The truth is, Paul and Silas were physically bound in chains, but they were free. And I am free in You. Your love and power surround me much closer than any chain can. Praise Your Name!!!