

Speaking the Right Message with a Wrong Spirit

Acts 16:16-24

Our text mentions a “*damsel*”—young woman (unmarried)—who was possessed with “*a spirit of divination.*” She was a “soothsayer” or fortune teller (v. 16 cf. Dt. 18:10). She wasn’t a fake, but literally possessed with an evil spirit—a demon.

This “*damsel*” had “*masters*” (v. 19) indicating she was probably a slave.

➡ “*Divination*” is the ability to speak secret knowledge (prophecy) from a source other than God.

The Greek word translated “*divination*” is “python.” In Greek mythology, this was a large snake that was connected with predicting the future and fortune telling. Jeanne Dixon claimed her work of predicting the future began after dreaming a large serpent wrapped himself around her and looked into her eyes.

Fortune tellers are big business now-a-days (using a crystal ball, cards, astrology, or reading a person’s palm). “Fortune cookies” supposed to predict something about your future.

➡ My sermon is “ ”

Visualize the scene. Paul and Silas would be preaching and this damsel would CRY OUT (v. 17), “*These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*” This went on for “*many days*” (v. 18). She was doing what every Christian should be doing!

Verse 16—This damsel spoke the right message... she followed the right men...! BUT, she had the wrong spirit!

What she said was not what you would expect a demon possessed person to say. You would expect her to say some very untruthful and wicked things about Paul and Silas. But she spoke the truth. Paul and Silas were indeed “*servants of the Most High God, who show... the way of salvation.*”

While she agreed with what Paul and Silas was doing, she had never received the truth that they were preaching. She had a wrong spirit!

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Some might ask, “Why wouldn’t Paul welcome this damsel’s *free advertising*? Because is it never right to employ the devil to do anything—even when it seems he is doing the right thing!

(vs. 17-18).

Sometimes a devil may speak the truth (Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:23-25; 5:7). But, Christ would not receive their testimony. Neither would Paul. Why? Because, if Paul accepted the damsel’s testimony, it would give the devil creditability or it could compromise Paul’s own creditability. People would get the wrong impression that Paul was in league with the occult.

People would think since Paul agreed with what this demon possessed woman was saying, everything else the devil said must be right also.

➡ The Bible mentions _____:

1. Hosea 4:12— . This spirit is strong in our society today.
 - There may be people who agree with what we preach... pass out Gospel tracts... and wave Gospel signs, but they are possessed by this evil spirit. While they engage in a Gospel ministry, they are involved in sexual sin.
 - They may even say “Amen” as the preacher proclaims God’s Word.
 - This spirit may often be seen on so-called “Christian television.”
 - There is a “disconnect” between what they are doing and the spirit in which they are doing it.
2. Psalm 78:8— . This spirit can be seen in the behavior on the streets our society (marches). They resist authority.
3. Ecclesiastes 7:9— . A person with this spirit is always enraged, irritable, and can never be appeased. The least little thing will set them off. It is NOT their personality—It is an evil spirit / a wrong spirit.

- People with this spirit may sing in the choir, usher, teach S.S. or even stand up and give a testimony, yet they have a wrong spirit.
4. Ephesians 2:2— . The refuse to obey instructions.
 - Parents and teachers in schools deal with this spirit in children everyday.
 - Pastors often have people with this spirit among their congregation. They agree with the hymns they sing, and the program of the church while having a disobedient spirit.
 5. Proverbs 16:18— . This is the spirit of pride.
 - Sometimes you will find this spirit in people who know the Bible really well (1 Cor. 8:1). You can never tell them anything, because they think they know it all. Some preachers may be possessed with this spirit.
 - Rather than be “*puffed up*” about how much you know, we must be humble and admit, “*I know nothing yet as I ought to know.*”
 6. I Kings 22:22— Someone who is a deceiver.
 7. 2 Timothy 1:7— .
 8. 1 John 4:3— .
 9. 1 John 4:6— .
 10. Our text—Acts 16:16— .
- 3 things about a person who has a wrong spirit, but says the right things.

A. What’s wrong with this picture: A person sings, “Oh How I Love

and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

- A person cannot live in rebellion and say, "I love God." If you have a rebellious spirit, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. You cannot say, "I'm a witch, but I love God." It won't work!

(Mt. 15:7-8).

- God is more interested in where your heart is than what your lips speak!
- I could tell my wife "I love you," a hundred times a day, but if I have girlfriends in ten different cities, my heart is not right. It is a lying spirit.
- You can tell God you love Him all day long, but if you have idols in your heart (Ezek. 14:3-7), you have a wrong spirit.



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(Acts 16:18).

➡ What this damsel said annoyed and grieved the Apostle Paul. He recognized her spirit was not of God. It grieved Paul because it grieved the Holy Spirit within him.

- We should be grieved when we recognize a person with a wrong spirit. What grieves God, should grieve you!
- For example, a person stands up to testify, but you know they have a wrong spirit (i.e. angry spirit; rebellious spirit; haughty spirit). Although what they say may be true, it doesn't "ring" true. God's Spirit does not bear witness to it.

: It wasn't until Paul decided to put a stop to this wrong spirit that things got hard on him (vs. 19-24). They are falsely accused, lied about, and imprisoned. But in prison they began a jail ministry!

A pastor may recognize a wrong spirit in a church member. As long as he leaves this person alone, things will be OK. But if he tries to help this person to repent, or he rebukes that foul spirit, the trouble starts! If that

person doesn't get right (or get saved), they will cause a lot of grief to the church. They will leave the church and begin telling lies about the church or the pastor causing others to leave the church.

Hebrews 13:17—It is the responsibility of a pastor is to watch over your soul. He will give account to God for the people God has entrusted to him. When a person refuses to submit to a pastor's spiritual authority concerning a sin in their life, it grieves that pastor. It grieves a pastor when he is more concerned for someone's soul than that person is for his own soul.

If you have a wrong spirit, and God leads a pastor to preach on that wrong spirit, you need to get it right. If you don't, "*this is unprofitable for you.*"