Acts Chapter 16 Verse 16

* (This word for *divination* in the Greek is the word, literally, *python*) I read the writings of a pastor in Post Falls, Idaho and in context of this scene, what he wrote comforted me. This is what he said, *“There are a great many times when the preacher should feel inadequate for his task. He is expected to preach the whole counsel of God, and to expound the scriptures that are given to him, but many times those scriptures* ***only begin*** *to reveal the subject.”*
* In context of this specific verse, he continued, *“We know that demons exist, because the Bible reveals that to us. But whether they are here this morning, and what they are attempting to do, we are not told. We aren’t told what they look like or what they sound like. We know their beginning and their ending, but not their middle so to speak. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to study a subject like this as far as the Bible reveals it. But I think that to study it any farther than the scriptures, to go beyond the Bible, would actually put us into the very camp of the Devil. Only fools venture in where the angels of God fear to tread.”*
* There is a lot of this scene that confuses me and a lot of this scene that we are not given. **Luke simply records what happened**… How was this girl possessed? What happened? Where’s she from, what’s her background…is there some sort of causality? We’re not told. And Luke simply says here, perhaps not knowing it would cost me personally so much confusion, that ***she was possessed with a spirit of divination.***
* In the Bible we are told of all kinds of *“spirits,”* and I say that with *“air quotes.”* I’ll tell you why in a moment… Genesis 7:22 speaks of the *“spirit of life”* that was taken at the time of the flood from all of the earth save Noah and his **yacht**… Exodus 28:3 mentions the *“spirit of wisdom.”* Numbers 5 speaks of the *“spirit of jealousy.”* Judges 9:23 talks about the *“spirit of ill will.”* There are many others mentioned…*the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of judgment and even the spirit of burning…*
* The point I’m driving towards is that these spirits mentioned are not ***angelic beings*** possessing the earthly host to drum up these qualities. Folks, I implore you to study context and truly seek to understand the Word of God rather than allowing yourself to fall prey to folks trying to fit the Word of God into their own agenda. Here…a ***standalone situation*** simply mentioned by Luke…we would do well to understand that this is not **the** spirit of divination because the Bible does not teach there is one as such, but rather she is possessed by **a** spirit of divination…
* This is important because folks can assign ownership of a problem to a demon such as the *demon of alcoholism* or the *demon of adultery* and begin to rebuke a **fictitious culprit**…and in doing so, never address the real problem. ***The problem is sin…and the cure is Jesus.*** This specific scene is definitely demon possession but even in that clarity there is confusion and question. How is this demon, demons on the scene today, able to tell the future…?
* They can’t. They are created beings, not gods…they cannot read minds or know what the future holds. But they have had thousands of years to study human behavior and therefore ***prediction*** for them is most likely quite simple…and they can work to influence or **steer** events towards a previously predicted conclusion. Now, this is interesting…early manuscripts tell us her name was *cookie*…and therefore…she was the original **fortune cookie!** HA!! Ok, we move on…

Acts Chapter 16 Verses 17 – 18

* One may wonder why Paul would do this. The message was **good.** Really, it was **right.** It wasn’t so much the message that was the problem…***the issue was the source.*** What was behind the message was demonic and if unchecked, over time, without a doubt, the message would have changed. (Like a fish ***hooked by bait*** – bait without the hook is **good**!) There are many folks and groups out there that have good messages and really are great people from the outside looking in…but their ultimate agenda is to have you deny Jesus…or better said, deny who Jesus said He really is…it wasn’t the message that annoyed Paul, ***it was the source.***
* One additional thought. Everyone knew this girl was a *diviner.* A fortune teller…and for many days she has gone around **reinforcing** what Paul and Silas was preaching. You need to see this. Paul wanted the ministry of God Most High **in no way connected** to the ministry of divination. So, good as it may be…Paul would not allow it to continue.

Acts Chapter 16 Verses 19 – 24

* Seems a bit *harsh*, this punishment…all they are accused of is teaching customs and troubling the city…but here’s what’s really going on. Paul and Silas are thrown into prison, **not** Luke and Timothy. Why? Because Paul and Silas are Jews. Luke is gentile and Timothy is half-gentile. The truth is that this Roman province, these Romans thought poorly of Jews…and for these Jews to be *disturbing the peace* of the Roman people was unacceptable.

Acts Chapter 16 Verse 25

* I really want you to take notice of this…***instead of cursing men, including themselves, they blessed God.*** They are in a prison, shackled, beat down by this world…literally…but they ***turn their eyes to heaven*** and they ***tune their hearts to the Lord***…It’s not like they’re happy or joyful that they are in prison or that they are comfortable as their bodies ache from the blows of their enemy’s weapons…there’s no happiness here, their happenings and happenstance is terrible…but where is the profit and where is the value in *hate and anger and fuming and seething?*
* We are not instructed to give thanks **for** every circumstance. That’s not possible. Not practical. Sadistic. BUT, we are commanded to give thanks **IN** every circumstance. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Why? Because in the Lord, this should be natural…not the *thanks*…what should be natural is that in the Lord, ***we are above the circumstance.*** Our hope is heaven and our home is not here…therefore ***when we don’t fit, we don’t fret.*** It almost makes sense to us! They turn to the Lord and I love the practicality of the next events…*(Fence nail story)*

Acts Chapter 16 Verses 26 – 29

* This hardened guard ***fell down*** trembling. Why? Not because the gates were open but because Paul and the rest of them were still there. Don’t miss this, the man was more affected by the love and grace in the lives of Paul and Silas *(the above the circumstance existence)* than any earthquake and miracle of iron being ripped apart…the circumstance said run but ***love*** said stay…

Acts Chapter 16 Verses 30 – 34

* Look at this trail of events. Paul and Silas freed a young girl. Her evil masters had them beaten and jailed wrongly for it. ***In the midst of great unfairness, Paul and Silas blessed God.*** God provided opportunity *through that* for them to witness to this jailer. This jailer then goes from suicidal to abounding in joy, saved unto all eternity, him and his entire household. Now, ***tell me again how you can’t get your attitude out of the ditch today?***  This makes me check my heart and direct my mind so that jailers like this don’t go to hell on my watch.
* Paul and Silas may have been beaten with rods and thrown into prison ***just*** to save this keeper of the prison. In heaven, if you were to ask Paul if he thought it fair to suffer for this cause, Paul would comment that he’d gladly do it again. And then he’d look over at this man and his whole family in heaven!

Acts Chapter 16 Verses 35 – 40

* Why did Paul not reveal this earlier? It could be that they didn’t have opportunity…but…it is more likely that Paul sensed the Lord directing him to hold his peace…and I pray for strength to know this better and walk in this faithfully, ***that my rights are not as important as God’s will in my life***…The great missionary David Livingstone said it this way once, *“I am prepared to go anywhere, so long as it is forward.”*
* Finally in this chapter we have seen several people freed. The slave girl, Lydia, the jailer, even Timothy and perhaps Luke…all of them, ***something different, some different way***…it doesn’t really matter how they were saved, how they were freed and brought to the Lord, it just matters that they were…all that matters is this one question from each and every heart…, *“What must I do to be saved?”*