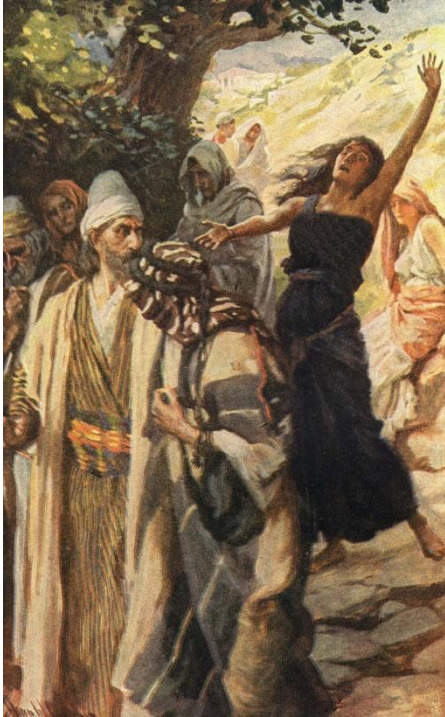


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 6



PAUL MEETS A DEMON-POSSESSED WOMAN

Scripture Text: Acts 16:16-24

God had led Paul and Silas to Philippi in Europe. But not all was smooth sailing. The devil also was there to challenge their work. A soothsayer followed the Apostles. This is one who tells of future events or hidden knowledge by the help of unseen powers—a fortune teller. She advertised the preachers and their message. Paul, in Jesus' name, cast the demon out of the woman. The masters of the soothsayer imprisoned Paul and Silas. They were placed in stocks, a wooden frame with holes in which the feet were confined for punishment. What made the girl's action wrong? We can find the answer to this question in the Scripture. There is only one sure defense against the power of Satan. God commands us to have nothing to do with demons or their works.

MEMORY VERSE: *Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.*

—*Leviticus 19:31*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**1 Peter 1:1-16** Present blessings.

Tue.—**1 Peter 1:17-25** Future blessings.

Wed.—**Ephesians 1:15-23** Prayer for wisdom, knowledge.

Thu.—**John 4:1-14** Living water within.

Fri.—**1 Corinthians 1:17-31** God chooses to use lowly things.

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 2 Blessings of life in Christ.

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Acts 16:16-17 As we went to prayer . . . Paul's company was staying at Lydia's house. They were going to a prayer meeting, perhaps at the meeting place by the riverside. A **damsel**—unmarried girl—met them. She did **soothsaying** for money. She could do this because she was **possessed with a spirit of divination**—a demon who could tell secret things. She followed the Apostles, shouting an announcement that the men were **servants of the most high God**, and showing **the way of salvation**.

The girl's statements were true, but something was wrong about this. She was working under control of the wrong spirit, the spirit of Satan. A demon lived within her. Satan tells the truth when it serves his purpose to trap people. But he is a liar from the beginning. Satan's kingdom is directly opposed to God's, and it is wrong for us, God's creation, to have anything to do with Satan. Read what God says about putting our trust in such spirits in **Deuteronomy 18:10-12**. They are an abomination to God. In **1 Chronicles 10:13-14** Saul was destroyed for it. **2 Chronicles 33:6** tells of the sins of Manasseh, King of Judah. **Jeremiah 10:2** lets us know that trusting in astrology—signs of the stars and of the zodiac—is wrong. **Galatians 5:20** states that witchcraft is a work of the flesh and sinful. In **Revelation 21:8** we are given the end of sorcerers, and it shows the company they keep. In **Acts 19:19** we find that books on just such things were burned as sinful by people of Ephesus after they were saved.

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LESSON 6

Present-Day Witchcraft

This evil is not a thing of the past only, for we have it today. In many forms it is present all around us. Superstition, belief in signs, spiritualism, Ouija boards, fortune telling, voodoo, hex, casting spells, doctoring by charms and magic formulas, trances, séances, work of mediums, and demon possession—all are parts of the same evil system. It is the devil trying to gain control of the souls of men, women, and children. It is dangerous to venture into his territory, however harmless it may appear at first. The devil is stronger than men. We cannot in our own strength be a match for him. There is a one hundred percent effective defense. It is the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

Acts 16:18 Paul was patient, but after many days he became **grieved** and commanded the evil spirit **in the name of Jesus Christ**—the only One with authority and power over him—**to come out of her. And he came out.**

Jesus has power over demons (**Luke 4:35-36**), He gave His twelve Apostles power over them (**Matthew 10:1**), and He promised this power to His church (**Mark 16:17**).

Some Things to Learn About Demons

(1) Demons are evil spirits that can live in people. They are persons. This one is referred to as "he." (2) They are intelligent beings, having greater knowledge and insight than humans. This one knew who Paul and the others were, what their business was, and the truth of their message. (3) They can take control and possess humans. (4) They are of different kinds, as of divination, of infirmity, dumb spirits, and many others, but always evil. (5) Only God's power can cast out demons. (6) Only God's power can protect us from demons and their works.

Suffering for Christ

Acts 16:19-24 **When her masters saw . . .** The girl was not free. Bound by a demon and also bound to human masters, her slavery was of the worst kind. Now she was free, and **the hope of their gains**—in money—**was gone**. Angered, they **caught Paul and Silas, and drew them . . . unto the rulers**. They accused them of (1) being Jews, the subject nation, (2) troubling the city, and (3) teaching customs contrary to Roman law.

The accusations stirred up the multitude that turned against the Apostles. Public opinion influenced the rulers. They **rent off the clothes** of Paul and Silas and ordered beating. **Many stripes**, marked by blood and pain were laid upon them. Not satisfied, **they cast them into prison**. The jailer, obeying an order **to keep them safely**, as one would dangerous criminals, **thrust them**—roughly—**into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks**. What Paul had done was according to God's Law and with God's help, but these innocent men had to suffer for their actions.

The aims of the church and the aims of the world are opposed. They belong to kingdoms directly opposite each other. For this reason the activity and success of the church brings persecution from the world. It did for Paul and Silas. But as they suffered in the body, they had joy within. They were hurting on the outside, but feeling good on the inside. They still had spiritual victory, as we shall see. To serve Jesus, we, too, will have to suffer for Him.

Read the Memory Verse. We are not to **seek after wizards**. Dabbling in these things, one is in danger of becoming demon possessed. This is God's Word with authority above any other word, whether of a government or group or individual.