

THURSDAY, MAY 30 | Screams of hindrance or cry for help?

Acts 16:16-19 16Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” 18She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. 19When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

The “we” in this passage is Paul and Silas. The events before they began their travel to the place of prayer were much to be celebrated. A woman named Lydia and her entire household had been baptized. They had stayed at her home and were now on their way to a place of prayer when this girl started berating them, or was she?

This girl was possessed by a ‘spirit of Python’ and she acted as the body for this ventriloquist spirit. Her slave owners made money from this by people coming to her, asking questions and this spirit would speak through her to answer those questions. The spirit spoke but this girl’s mouth wouldn’t move, like a ventriloquist’s doll. So she wasn’t actually doing the fortune telling, it was the spirit. This gives us a clue as to why she was following Paul and Silas, crying out over and over.

It’s apparent Paul couldn’t take the cries any longer. An annoyance. That is how I’ve heard it taught so many times. But she wasn’t doing it just to annoy them. This girl, when not being used by the spirit, was thinking on her own and recognized these were men of God. She understood she could be delivered out of this state. The spirit could control some of her, but it couldn’t control all of her. If we simply say she wanted to annoy them, I believe we lose her humanity. The continued crying was not her berating them, but a plea for help.

Her incessant shouting was hindering the disciples’ work, though, so Paul turned and cast out the spirit. This did two things. One, it relieved her of her misery. Two, it took away her ability to make money for her owners. The effects of this resulted in Paul and Silas being dragged away to face the authorities.

On one hand, it looks like the disciples just had a spiritual mountain-top experience and were then bombarded by an evil attack: the girl. On the other hand, they went from one spiritual high to another, being able to deliver this girl from this evil spirit then having to face the authorities. I choose the second! Two positive spiritual experiences then comes the obstacle.

How many times have you had a wonderful encounter with the Holy Spirit then face a trial? Going before the authorities wouldn’t be the end of Paul and Silas’ troubles. It goes to show you, you’re in good company. Satan knows our guard is down after we’ve been worshipping, praising and basking in the glory of what God has done. Paul and Silas were on their way to a house of prayer. They weren’t leaving space for the enemy to sneak in. What a great example for us! Don’t give the enemy one sliver of daylight to slither in your life especially after you’ve experienced a spiritual awakening. Let us take note from Paul and Silas and remember to keep our eyes on Jesus. Continue to pray.

Response: Make note of the most recent experience you’ve had with God. Journal or make a point to share it

with someone. Thank God for what he has done!

MEMORY VERSE *Philippians 2:12* – “So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and understanding.”