

Come Follow me
Elo Viz production
Week 31
Acts 16-21

The Apostle Paul was a phenomenal missionary. We read about so many incredible things that he did as he preached the gospel and helped to establish the early church. Chapter nineteen has a great story about an exorcist that had seven sons which believed that they could cast out evil spirits in the name of Christ. When they attempted to do so, the evil spirits responded by saying:

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” (Acts 19:15)

I love the lesson that we can learn from this. Is our name known in hell? Are the spirits from the evil realm aware of the faith you have in Jesus? And do they tremble at the power which you hold to do the work in His name? That is a great question to ponder and perhaps something that we could take courage in.

In doing this podcast I often get asked by folks that haven't listened to it, they ask me what it is about. My response has changed over the years. I used to say: It's a weekly short message on how people can understand the gospel better, or it's about how we can become better people and apply gospel principles in our daily life. Which are both true. However, this is not the true purpose. Now, when someone asks me what it is about I tell them: It's about Jesus Christ and how our lives can be blessed and joyful because we have a relationship with Him. Isn't that the message of the living gospel of Jesus Christ. I find it interesting when there is a group of people standing around chatting and someone says Jesus Christ. It is as if everyone stops to pay attention. Have you noticed that? It is an incredible phenomenon. Try it sometime. Good or bad, believer or indifferent, when we hear the name of Jesus we will always turn our attention to what is being said. There is great power in the name of the almighty creator.

Another one of my favorite stories in these chapters this week is in chapter sixteen. Paul had a vision that told him to go to Macedonia. And this incredible scene unfolds:

16 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by [soothsaying](#): [soothsaying is an old term for fortune telling]

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, [These](#) men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the [spirit](#), I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”(Acts 16:16-18)

This story raises many questions. The biggest question that comes to mind is: Why is Paul annoyed at this woman that is telling everyone that they are men of God? Demon possessed or

not, isn't what she is doing a good thing? Free advertising as it may seem. Well, when we look at the translation in Greek when she was declaring that "These men are servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation" the word "the" is also translated as "a way of Salvation". Not that they are teaching the way, the only way, but it could be interpreted as almost a mockery, a partial truth (which is what the devil likes to deal with) She is declaring that these men may have a way of salvation. And besides this point wouldn't you be annoyed as well. Let's say that you had an awesome store and this crazy person is standing outside and shouting at everyone that walks by "Hey, this store is amazing you should come in and shop here". Day in and day out. Eventually you would ask him or her to leave because they are scaring your customers. We should always avoid any help from the darkside even if on the surface it may seem like a good thing.

So, Paul endures her banter for a few days and then casts out this evil spirit that gave her power to pretend to tell the future, similar to fortune tellers today. And her masters are angry about this. They just lost their ability to make money from her demonic possession.

So they grab "Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers,
20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to **beat** *them*.

23 And when they had laid many **stripes** upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. (Acts 16:19-24)

As we will find out in the next few verses, what they did to Paul and Silas was completely illegal. In that day it was not legal to beat or imprison any Roman citizen. And both Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. But besides that, consider what is happening here.

These two apostles just did a miraculous thing. They freed this young woman from being possessed by a demon. What a marvelous thing for this girl. She is now free from this torture she was living with everyday. And in return for working this miracle they falsly judge them, rip off their clothes, and beat them. It says they laid many stripes upon them. This typically referred to a practice of whipping which would tear the flesh off the back. Just like what happened to Christ just before His crucifixion. After they are humiliated and beaten, they are put into the innermost prison and chained on their hands and feet. What an awful scene. I've had bad days like I'm sure you have. You know, those days when you kneel down beside your bed at night and pray thank you God that this day is over. It was horrible and nothing good came of it. I think Paul and

Silas may have felt this way multiplied by a hundred. But a great lesson can be learned from their reaction.

“at **midnight** Paul and Silas prayed, and **sang** praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the **doors** were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed.” (Acts 16:25-26)

The praying I get. I have done the same thing in times of distress and pain. But to sing? And not just singing. They sang songs of praise unto God. In the pitch black of the night, cold, naked, and beaten, they sang.

Brothers and sisters, that is true perspective. That's power and faith in the one true God. Perhaps we can take this lesson from Paul and Silas. When life gets hard, and we feel beaten and abandoned, try to do as they did. Instead of complaining to God and blaming Him for the situation that you are in or the pain you have to endure. Instead, pray that He will teach you to sing in the darkness.

In 1871 there was a man by the name of Horatio Spafford. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor. But in the great Chicago fire of that year he lost everything. It all burned and he was left with nothing. In an attempt to give some relief from the stress to his wife and daughters he put them on a ship to go to England, planning to join them soon after. While at sea their ship collided with another shipping vessel and within 20 minutes the boat which his wife and daughters were on sank and all 4 of his children drowned. Annie was 12 years old, Maggie was 7, Bessie was 4 and their baby Tanetta was only 18 months old. His wife who was unconscious was found drifting on a piece of the wreckage. She sent a telegram to her husband when she got to land. All it said was “saved, alone”. More than 200 people died in that tragic accident.

Horatio took the next ship to go be with his wife in England. When he boarded the ship he asked the captain if he would stop at the place where his daughters had drowned? The captain, aware of what happened, obliged. When they arrived at the wreckage, at the very point in the vast ocean where his whole world was lost. Looking over the edge of the ship, and adding his tears to the vast sea that took his children, he penned the lyrics to this famous hymn:

<https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/articles/it-is-well-with-my-soul.html>

“When peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come

Let this blest assurance control
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate
And hath shed His own blood for my soul

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul!

It is well, it is well with my soul

https://www.google.com/search?q=the+lyrics+to+it+is+well+with+my+soul&rlz=1C1VDKB_enUS988US988&oq=the+lyrics+to+it+is+well&aqs=chrome.0.0i512j69i57j0i22i30l8.4944j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

Horatio, Paul, Silas and others understood what is meant to sing, in those moments of sorrow and pain. To give praise to the almighty God who is doing a great work in our lives. They knew what it meant to trust that a loving Father has a plan for us. And though it may be hard to see all the workings and what He is doing to save us. In those moments when we feel that we are sitting in the dark may we have to faith and courage to sing:
It is well, it is well with my soul.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.