

## 1. The Gospel Impacts Those in Slavery Which a Culture May Not Want to be Freed:

- a. Those enslaved to spiritual powers which the culture deems beneficial
  - i. She had a “python spirit”
    1. Pythos takes its name from the mythological snake which the Greek god Apollo supposedly killed in the location of Delphi
    2. Pythia and the Oracle of Delphi
      - a. The Temple of Apollo, located in Delphi, had a High Priestess known as the “Oracle of Delphi”, who was also known as the “Pythia”
      - b. She would give divine guidance for people who came to the Temple to inquire of the god
    3. Therefore, this girl is said to have a spirit which is like that
      - a. People would come to the local temple of Apollo
      - b. They would ask her questions on what to do next
      - c. She would go into a trance and give them ‘guidance’
      - d. Because such “oracles” were not really future-tellers, but decision-makers, particularly for military purposes – it makes sense that the Philippians would patronize such a temple with an oracle
  - ii. The spirit made her “manic”
    1. Loud screaming, following “closely”
      - a. There is no reasoned argument about the gospel, no discussion, no seeking to be free
      - b. Just an announcement yelled as they walked
    2. Interestingly, what is associated with “hearing from the gods” was not merely that words were spoken, but the *manner* in which they were given
      - a. That is, through speaking in strange tones, or “manic” behavior, which indicated that another entity was speaking through the person
        - i. Plutarch calls these type “ventriloquists” because someone else was speaking through them
        - ii. This made this girl more like a puppet than a person
      - b. The word here, translated “fortune-telling”, is a form of the word “mantis”, which means ‘diviner or seer’
        - i. We derive the word “mantic” from it because of the association of odd behavior and speech associated with this form of divination
  - iii. Thus, this spirit really made her *act oddly, but the culture desired her ‘gifting’ more than her ‘freedom’*
    1. Her ability to help them make decisions (so they thought) was more *valuable* to their comfort and ease than her freedom and her flourishing
  - iv. The point is that she was both associated with Apollo worship, was seen one who speaks for Apollo, and that she recognized these men were servants of the Highest God
- b. Those enslaved to powerful people whom the culture deems beneficial
  - i. She had a plurality of masters
    1. Indicating that she probably was an oracle at Philippi, like the oracle of Delphi, who was *controlled by priests*
    2. Every woman who became an oracle like this gave up their family in order to serve and became enslaved to the Temple and to Apollo
  - ii. These masters used her “for great profit”
    1. She was a slave, not a free young woman
      - a. Either these owners found her already bound and took advantage of her
      - b. Or, they ‘made’ her by selecting a young girl and ‘calling Apollo to speak through her’

- c. Either way, they are abusing this young girl by using her for their own advantage
    - 2. Her profit was not her own, but her masters'
  - c. There are those who are enslaved to various masters, whose slavery the culture deemed to be 'good'
    - i. Romans 1:28-32 – 'give hearty approval' to that which destroys life
      - 1. There are those enslaved to the appearance of beauty, spinning into food addictions/slavery;
        - a. Do we approve of such idolatry of physical beauty?
      - 2. There are girls in China abused in the sex trade, enslaved for the sexual pleasure of others
        - a. Do we approve of such idolatry with pornography?
      - 3. What are we 'giving approval to' which is an enslavement to such things?
        - a. Do we justify envy, deceit, strife, maliciousness, gossip?!!
        - b. These things are the marks of hearts enslaved, not free.
    - ii. Do we gain something off of these things? Do we support them because they bring us ease, comfort, power, or wealth?
      - 1. We may not go to a Temple to hear an oracle, but do we buy the gossip rags or wave off maliciousness as a political whim?
      - 2. Do we encourage slander with hungry ears or, may God have mercy upon us, participate in the slaughter of millions of unborn children in the name of freedom, when it is slavery!
        - a. We are more Philippian than we think, O Church!
2. The Gospel Message is of the King Who Can Free Those in Slavery:
  - a. The authority of God
    - i. The girl recognized and shouted out, "oracled", that "the Highest God" was the one whom these men worked for
    - ii. There is a recognition of the supremacy and authority of God by all spirits in the Bible
      - 1. Luke 4:34, 41
      - 2. Luke 8:28
        - a. Luke uses an infinitive of purpose in describing why the girl "encountered" the apostles on their way to the place of prayer
        - b. In other words, she intended to encounter them – it was not a chance run-in
        - c. The NT often describes spirits, or demons, as having knowledge of who Jesus is, and then exclaiming it for unknown reasons
        - d. There seems to be an interest in the spiritual realm of what God is doing in the moment
    - 3. This tells that the most abnormal moments or encounters with others are always spiritual issues
      - a. You never met a mere mortal – eternity is always near
      - b. It may also be a moment where God desires you to speak boldly of the authority of Jesus Christ
  - iii. The title "Most High God" or "Highest God" is usually used to refer to the authority, power, dominion, and Creative Strength of God
    - 1. Yet, it does leave room to include God in a pantheon of other deities
      - a. The phrase "the way of salvation" is indefinite, meaning that it could be translated, 'a way of salvation', again indicating power, but not sole power to save
    - 2. It is also true that the girl did not mention Jesus at all!
      - a. This may have been what Paul became frustrated with: no gospel.

- b. The ministry of His servants
  - i. First, there is an emphasis on “These men” – like she’s pointing at them, making it very clear to whom she refers
  - ii. Second, the slave refers to “these men” as slaves, as well
    - 1. “servants of the Most High God”
    - 2. Thus, what is really being compared is the master/slave relationship: the girl and the apostles are both slaves
  - iii. Their service was in a heralding capacity – they were proclaiming
    - 1. The Oracle-giver of Philippi was announcing the Oracle-givers of the Most High God!
    - 2. Their proclamation was powerful, so the spirit comes out at the command of Paul, not with physical force, but sheer word
  - iv. This is not to show their power, but the “Most High God’s” and the subordinate strength of the spirit
- c. The authority of the Christ
  - i. “in the name of Jesus the Christ”
    - 1. It is the Christhood of Jesus which exemplifies His authority – Jesus, the Christ, has the authority to free the sons and daughters of Adam
    - 2. Paul gets more specific than “the Most High God” and places this God squarely in the historical resurrected man: Jesus of Nazareth, the Anointed One
  - ii. I think that Paul was tired of the absence of Jesus Christ from her ‘oracle’
    - 1. So, he powerfully finished the oracle for her
  - iii. God possesses the power to free those from spiritual oppression and from substance abuse
    - 1. Paul appears to have become “worn out” by this girl’s behavior and screaming
      - a. The word “annoyed” comes from a compound word mean “worn out through”, i.e. exhausted
      - b. The manic yelling simply wore him down
        - i. What this tells us is that there is an end to patience, and a time for action
          - 1. Even the apostles are worn down by incessant yelling
          - 2. Mothers, take heart!
      - c. He also “turned toward her”
        - i. He didn’t run away, but faced her
        - ii. He didn’t strike her or coerce her or harm her
        - iii. He simply commanded the spirit to get out of her
          - 1. Mothers, I’m sure you’ve tried!
  - iv. Note that even though the spirit is speaking truth, it is doing so in a manner that is odious to the apostles
    - 1. Even demons can speak half the truth, but in manners which are more consistent with pagan worship, and are odious to God
    - 2. Yelling the truth, manic manifestations ‘of the spirit’, etc.
  - v. He can clarify a mind in a moment
- d. Why didn’t Paul throw the spirit out immediately?
  - i. Ultimately, I don’t know the final reason
    - 1. Luke doesn’t seem to pull punches, again indicating his veracity
    - 2. There is no build-up at all, like the Oracle of Delphi needed, in order to ‘divine’ – no ritual, no sacrifice, no fee
  - ii. It does show us that the apostles did not expect to heal every disease in a town they visited, nor to cast out every demon, but rather to proclaim the gospel of the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus

3. The Gospel of the Authoritative Christ is a Threat to the World's Powers
  - a. The spiritual powers obey
    - i. When Paul commanded it to come out, with the authority of Jesus, it simply “went out from her”
    - ii. Every spirit submits to the commands of Christ Jesus and his appointed ones
    - iii. Nothing more is known about the girl
      1. I would like to believe that a “useless” slave, most likely turned out by the Temple masters now, would be received by the new church
      2. Yet, the story is not about the girl, but about the apostles and the gospel which they preach
  - b. The natural powers obey
    - i. Any physical manifestation, manic behavior, ceased, too
    - ii. She also, then, lost the ability to deceive people through such manic oracle-giving
    - iii. Note that what was lost is something which “was seen” by her masters
      1. It wasn't heard, but seen
      2. This indicates that what she was freed from was not the ability to pronounce decisions for people, but the physical manifestations which people associated with hearing from the gods
  - c. The powerful people rebel
    - i. Here is the point of the story!
      1. When the gospel impacts a culture, many will rebel against it violently
    - ii. Motivation is money
      1. Luke is clear: their hope was in their profits, and now they were gone
        - a. In fact, Luke uses the same phrase “come out” to refer to their profits as he did to the spirit exiting the girl
        - b. As the spirit left, so did their money
      2. The intrusion of freedom-giving words into their economy, their guild, their society was unacceptable
        - a. They didn't really care about the girl, or about peace in the city
        - b. Though they claim to care about a just society, they used unjust means and methods to accuse the apostles
    - iii. Motivation is power
      1. They wanted control, and these apostles were powerful!
      2. Notice how they locked up their feet?
        - a. They didn't want them influencing their city
4. Powerful People Opposed to the Gospel Will Use Coercion Against God's Servants
  - a. They seized them
    - i. The violence began quickly when their money and power was threatened
    - ii. They felt justified in roughing them up
  - b. They dragged them before the authorities
    - i. The violence escalates: they dragged them into the “agora” – the marketplace
      1. Right into the crowd
      2. They are looking to incite a large crowd as a means of sheer force
        - a. They are not looking for justice, but power
    - ii. Why weren't Timothy and Luke included?
      1. They were Greek (Tim was half)
      2. Paul and Silas were Jews
        - a. This shows that the justification for roughing them up was their Jewishness – not Roman citizens (so they thought)
  - c. They accused them of “bringing out turmoil” in the city

- i. False accusation – what was the act?
    - 1. The act of speaking was considered to be something which turned their entire city upside down!
      - a. “They will ruin our country!”
      - b. “People like this are the problem with society!”
  - ii. Basically, they claimed that these Jews were destroying the peace of the city, upsetting people with their microaggressions that made them uncomfortable
  - iii. That’s basically what they were accusing them of – look at the basis of their concern: “they are proclaiming”
    - 1. That’s SPEECH, not action. It’s IDEAS, not violence.
    - 2. Not only that, but their speech cleared the mind of a tortured young girl
  - iv. Yet, nobody looked for the truth here – they simply accepted the accusations *because Paul and Silas were Jews*
    - 1. Their prejudice against “those type of people”, Jews, blinded them to seek out the truth of the matter
    - 2. The implication is that all Jews cause dissension and confusion
      - a. This is racial stereo-typing in its purest form
      - b. It is race-baiting, seeking to get one’s own way by appealing to prejudices and racism already present in a society
        - i. The issue between them wasn’t race at all, but money
        - ii. How apropos to much of political and social discussion...whether you’re black or white, it usually comes down to green
    - 3. They did not get a fair trial, nor even a trial, just mob violence because of what they said
- d. Here’s the basic problem with the gospel in the eyes of the world: it is not proper.
- i. “proclaim customs which is not proper for us to acknowledge or do”
    - 1. This is not a reasoned judgment, but a value judgement
    - 2. In other words, it’s not rejected because it’s untrue, but rather because it is not “proper”
      - a. That is, not deemed to be good.
      - b. “men, by their unrighteous suppress the truth...for though they knew God, they did not honor God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”
  - ii. Is this not why most people reject the gospel today? Its values don’t line up with theirs?
    - 1. Is this not why you rejected the gospel for so long? You did not see its goodness, its beauty, its life-giving power?
    - 2. Thus, the world will try and silence its announcement by trying to make it appear *ungood*.
      - a. “If your God is so great and good, then why is your heaven so small?”
  - iii. The irony of such a defense is not in the making of it, but in the basis of it:
    - 1. What is the basis?
      - a. The Philippians appealed to their Romanness, “being Romans”
      - b. The world appeals to itself, too
        - i. What makes something “good” or “right”?
        - ii. “it’s self-evident”
        - iii. “it’s humane”
        - iv. “it just is”
      - c. These statements mean nothing if there is no external God who judges goodness
        - i. You might as well say, “Because we’re animals” or “because we’re stardust” or “because we’re bags of impersonal molecules and chemicals”

- ii. Anything other than an eternal objective standard which is distinct and separate from humanity, personal and moral, i.e. God, is simply mob rule
    - 2. There is no propriety without a Proprietor – there is simply the biggest gun, the largest crowd, the fastest and most powerful fist
  - e. The world responds to the gospel’s “impropriety” by appealing to the mob, inciting the crowds, and silencing it by force
    - i. “These Christians are not citizens in my America”
    - ii. When one doesn’t trust in the sovereignty of God, the one feels that we must take control of ideas, coerce the silencing of other ideas which we deem to be “dangerous” which may convict us or point out our wrongness
      - 1. Do you ever do that?
        - a. “Just shut up!”
        - b. “You don’t know anything!”
      - 2. O, Christian, don’t be foolish and faithless!
        - a. We need not fear dialogue, or ideas, to the point where we ever threaten with violence.
          - i. The Church was wicked to have ever done so
        - b. Even in silencing false teachers in the church, there is not to be violence, but reasonable distinctions proclaimed between the lie and the truth and the warning not to follow such men and women
          - i. We must say “no” to positions or recognition of their authority in the church, but never beat or imprison false teachers
          - ii. Reject them, says Paul, as true believers, announce their doom, but a conscience is never born from the strike of a fist, but from the sovereign opening of a heart by God alone
- f. The world will seek to shame servants of the Most High God
  - i. Stripped them of their clothes (exposed)
    - 1. Took away their covering, their protection, and exposed them to all
    - 2. Made them vulnerable
  - ii. Beat them publically
    - 1. This was a judgment against them to shame them, to silence them, to warn others

#### Gospel Point: Substitution

The story begins with a girl abused and enslaved encountering preachers of the Most High God walking free. The story ends with the slave girl walking free and the servants of the Most High God abused and enslaved. They took her place, as Jesus did theirs. The power to endure such hostility is in our apprehension of the gospel of “Christ died for me, and the life that I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20), entrusting ourselves to the one who sees and will judge rightly. Our defense is not in our fists or in our holsters, but in our God and our resurrection.

Christians are to physically submit when the governing powers judge against us for our preaching. The apostles do not fight back physically against the magistrates, and are not given the option of defending themselves verbally, yet.

How can they do this?

They know the One who endured such hostility from sinners, and that though he was killed, yet he lives. Their hope is the One who conquered death and whose suffering produced an eternal weight of glory.

So, in the end, they are unjustly beaten and jailed...and singing.