

**Paul's Second Missionary Journey Pt. 3  
Victory through Trials and Tribulation  
Acts 16:16-18.**

Jesus said He would build His church on the confession of Peter and that the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. What was implied in that utterance was that the church would not be built in a sterile environment. The church is always built within plain sight of the gates of Hell.

The world stands suspended between the gates of hell and the church's work must be done there or it cannot be done at all. Never is this more evident than in what Paul and Silas encountered as they began their work in Philippi, for them the suburb of Rome the capital of the world and very doorstep to the gates.

1. **The Condition of the ancient world.** It was a religiously pluralistic world. The Hellenistic period has been called a "materialistic and fatalistic age" dominate characteristics of our day. Keller and others mark the similarities of the present times to the conditions of the ancient world.
  - a. **Belief in traditional Roman and Greek religion was in decline.** Increased mobility and relocations made individualistic approaches more attractive. Mystery religions promised insight for initiated individuals.
  - b. **Society was fragmenting, people hungered for connection.** Clubs and associations for a variety of purposes were on the rise. i.e., religious, philosophical, vocational, recreational, artistic.

- c. **Yet still the masses were increasingly empty and restless.** Matthew Arnold, "On that hard Pagan world disgust and secret loathing fell; deep weariness and sated lust made human life a hell."

2. The significance of Magic in the ancient world. The Greek term *magos*, from which we get 'magic' originally referred to a member of the priestly caste in Persia. It came to refer to possessors of supernatural knowledge and power. In the Hellenistic-Roman world 'magic' focused on the manipulation of the supernatural to enhance one's position or to harm one's enemies.
  - a. **It had little to do with virtue.** Magic promised control over the uncontrollable: expelling demons, healing diseases, attracting lovers, cursing political rivals, warding off storms, pirates at sea and even the reversal of infertility. They often offered to predict the future. Obviously it was potently alluring to the underclass.
  - b. **It stood in opposition to the gospel.** The OT prophets predicted of a day when Yahweh would demonstrate His supremacy over the satanic counterfeit deities. **Cf. Isa. 45:20-25.**
3. **The continued advance of the church. Vv. 16-17.** Christ continues to advance build His church by the Spirit working through the word. Three things are emphasized:

a. **The nature of the opposition.** The description of the woman marks the conflict as of satanic origination.

i. **It challenges the true God's place in the world.** He who has the power to announce the future controls it.

1. Humans would like to without God, striving for a sense of divinity. This is why God's people are forbidden this. **Cf. Deut. 18:9-15.**
2. Satan cannot but pretends to provide knowledge of the future. **Illustr. Balaam.**

God's ability to do so proves His control over history. **Cf. Isa. 42:8-9.**

b. **It usually combines human and divine elements.** It holds this in common with true religion only reversed and twisted. Note the twofold description of the woman as:

1. **Possessed.** **"Spirit of divination"** lit. python spirit. It refers to the snake of classical mythology which guarded the temple of Apollo.
2. **Exploited.** The oppression had its profitable side to it.

c. **It may pose as friendly to true religion.** The spirit through the woman speaks favorably of

the men and the work. The strategy was one of two:

- i. **To associate and sabotage.** If she got in she could twist or corrupt it from within.
- ii. **To discredit by association.** If others thought it was associated with existing religions that were known to be false and exploitative it would be viewed in like manner.

4. **The supremacy of Christ. V. 18.** The superiority of the gospel of Christ is seen:

a. **In the girl's announcement.** **"These men are servants...."** Demons similarly cried out when encountering Christ. It was a true testimony from an unclean source. The silencing of which, authenticates serves to further legitimate them. **Cf. 2Cor. 4:1-6.**

b. **The exorcism of the spirit.** The verb rendered **"annoyed"** deoponeomai could better be translated, 'grieved' or 'burdened.' The usual procedure was rituals, lengthy incantations, and manipulation of talismans or examination of omens. Here it is a simple command in **"the name of Jesus Christ!"** and the girl was delivered.

c. **The explanation of the power.** Paul spoke in the name and authority of the risen Christ. **Cf. Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:18-22; Col. 2:15; 1Cor. 15:20-28.**