

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

Evangelist W. Paul Redmond Sr.

Volume 10, Issue 10

March 2014

What Are You Complaining About? (Part 9)

Exodus 16:7-12; Philippians 2:14

Having looked at the lives of Joseph and Stephen, we will now turn to **The Life of Paul** as an example of why we should never complain. There are many episodes in Paul's life that we could consider. In fact, a whole message just on Paul's missionary journeys and the many things that he encountered could show us that we should never complain. But we will focus on Paul's encounter with the people of Philippi in Acts 16.

As we come to Acts 16, Paul is on his second missionary journey. He and Barnabas had separated over the issue of taking John Mark with them on this second journey. Barnabas insisted on giving Mark a second chance, but Paul refused since Mark had left them on the first journey. Since they could not agree, they went separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas to travel with him.

The first part of chapter 16 introduces us to Timothy. Paul perhaps had led him to salvation on the first journey through Derbe and Lystra, but the Bible does not give any details about an earlier meeting. Timothy has a good testimony among the believers, and Paul is impressed enough with Timothy to add him to the team as they head to other cities. Paul would later leave Timothy in Ephesus to pastor the church there and would write two letters to instruct Timothy about matters in the church.

In verses 6-11, we are told that Paul desired to go to Bithynia, but the Holy Ghost did not allow them to go. Paul then receives a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "*Come over into Macedonia, and help us.*" Paul and the others head immediately to Macedonia going

-2-

through Samothracia and Neapolis before arriving in Philippi.

After being in Philippi for a few days, they go to the river side and preach to those that had assembled there. Among the women who were there was Lydia, identified as being from Thyatira and a seller of purple. She was already a worshiper of God, taken by many to mean that she was a Gentile converted to Judaism. She listens to Paul's message of Jesus, the Son of God, dying on the cross for our sins, has her heart opened by the Lord, and receives Christ as her Savior. She is thus the first convert in Europe. Others in her household were saved, and after they all were baptized, she invites Paul and his fellow companions to stay at her house. This is just the beginning of what God will do in Philippi.

Paul remains in Philippi for at least a few days. On the way to prayer, a demon-possessed girl begins to follow Paul and the others and say, "*These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation*" (16:17). It is amazing to me that the demons know the truth about Jesus Christ and those that work for Him. When Christ was on earth, the demons acknowledged who Jesus was in Mark 1:24, 5:6, and other places. Here in this passage and in Acts 19:15, the demons know that Paul is a servant of Christ. But in this passage, because of Paul's reaction, the tone must have been one of mockery. The girl was saying the truth, but in a sarcastic and even hateful way. It reminds me of what people were saying about Jesus as He was hanging on the cross. Some of the statements that they made were true, but no doubt, they were mocking Jesus. The devil is doing the same here through this girl, perhaps trying to discourage Paul and his co-laborers, and also trying to limit the impact they would have on others. But the devil's attempts will fail.

After a few days, Paul had enough and turned around and said, "*I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her*" (16:18). The verse concludes with the joyful thought—"*And he came out the same hour.*" What a blessed day that was in that girl's life! How long she had been in that condition, the Bible does not say. But

now she is free from the devil's control. The same thing can happen today. We do not have the power that Paul had to directly demand demons to come out, for that power ceased with the completion of the Word of God as I Corinthians 13:8-10 says. I will not elaborate in this message more than this, but the "sign" gifts ceased with the death of the apostles and the completion of the Word of God. No one today has the power to heal, speak in tongues, or cast out demons. Those who say they do are not operating in the power of God, but in the power of a false god—the devil. We cannot work in the exact same way that Paul did in casting the devil out, but we can work in the exact same way that Paul did in preaching the Gospel. As we faithfully preach the Gospel, the Holy Ghost will convict sinners and the sinners will either accept Christ or reject Him. Those who receive Christ as their Savior will be changed just like Lydia and just like this demon-possessed girl. The Holy Ghost will compel the demon to leave, if necessary. What happened to that girl can happen today through the working and power of the Holy Ghost in the lives of individuals. Some wonder why God would have changed from granting the apostles miraculous power to not giving it to us. God did so because He wanted to do it that way. Not everyone in the Bible did miracles. No one did them until Moses and then no one else until Elijah and Elisha. Following Elisha, there are no men performing miracles until Jesus arrives in the New Testament. There were great men in the remainder of the Old Testament such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and a host of others, but none of them did miracles as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha did. God did some mighty works, but not through men as He did with Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. We need to stop worrying and complaining about what we cannot do and start doing more of what we are to do—PREACH THE GOSPEL! That is what we are commanded to do, but what we do the least. It is the preaching of the Gospel that God has ordained to save sinners (I Corinthians 1:21), and it is the preaching of the Gospel that Jesus commanded us to do (Mark 16:15). May we spend our time doing what we are supposed to be doing.

As with Joseph and Stephen, Paul's deed led to The Misunder-

standing. You would think that everyone would have been happy that the girl is no longer under the control of a devil. But they are not. Some men had been using her to make money. The "*spirit of divination*" mentioned in verse 17 seems to imply that she was a fortune teller of some kind. Perhaps this is how these men were using her. The demon in this girl was somehow satisfying the desires of those who wanted to know the future. This demon could not really tell the future, for only God is omniscient and knows "*the end from the beginning*" (Isaiah 46:10). But somehow, as I said, the people were deceived into accepting what she said.

The girl immediately changed because verse 19 says, "*Her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone.*" The demon was gone because Paul had the power to cast him out. But I believe the same kind of power will change lives today. I do not believe in a Gospel that does not transform the sinner. I believe that what changed this girl, what changed the maniac of Gadara, and what has changed millions of people throughout history is still available today. That is the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When it is preached, lives will be changed. And others will be able to see the change. It will not just be an internal change. The inside will affect the outside.

The masters of the girl misunderstood *The Actions* of Paul. In verse 20, they say, "*These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.*" The men will continue their accusation in verse 21, but we will focus on the words "*exceedingly trouble*" for just a minute. The word trouble carries the idea of to agitate or throw into confusion. These men accused Paul and Silas of doing exactly the opposite of what they were doing. They were not causing a disruption or disturbing the peace. In reality, they were providing peace. The change in the girl was the best thing that ever happened to her. She was in absolute turmoil and was disturbed in many ways. Now she has peace with God and the peace of God that passes all understanding. She is far better off, but all these men could see was their monetary loss.

We may not face it as directly as Paul and Silas did, but similar things may happen today. Some may be upset when a drunkard or drug abuser is saved and no longer drinks or uses drugs. The money that others made from them will no longer come their way. They may even try to say that just a little drink or a little use will not hurt. But it was that drink and those drugs that ruined that person's life. Complete abstinence is the Biblical and right way to go.

Paul did the right thing and was misunderstood for doing it. He should have helped that girl by casting the demon out and did so. The only help for sinners today is the preaching of the Gospel. Many will say that it is old-fashioned and does not work any more. But God's method of changing hearts has not changed. There has been no advanced revelation of a new way, and there never will be a new way to "help" sinners. Many may misunderstand what we are doing. That is all right. Paul was misunderstood. It is a good crowd to be in. May we be like Paul.