

Acts 096
Satanic Response
Acts 16:16-18
February 25, 2026
Dr. Andy Woods

Let us go ahead and open our Bibles to Acts 16:16. I was going to call this teaching, "The Empire Strikes Back," but I thought that would be plagiarism, so I have some boring title: "Satan's Response." That was the title, or something like that. You will have to look at the website to get the title, but we are in Acts 16:16.

Of course, by now you know the three divisions of the Book of Acts. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem [Acts 1-7], and in all Judea and Samaria [Acts 8-12], and then to the remote parts of the earth [Acts 13-28]." That is where we are, in that third section.



Structure (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)
- **Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13–28)**
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13–14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - **2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 –18:22)**
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18–28:31)



We have had the first missionary journey by Paul and Barnabas into southern Galatia, where a whole bunch of Gentiles got saved. Imagine that. Then they have a big meeting about it in Acts 15. "What do we do with these people? Do they have to go under the Law of Moses to be part of the church?" The answer is no.

That paves the way into his second missionary journey, which starts at the end of Acts 15 and goes midway through Acts 18. In the first missionary journey, he only went into southern Galatia. All the journeys start from Antioch in the north. In the second missionary journey, he makes it into modern-day Europe, into Macedonia.

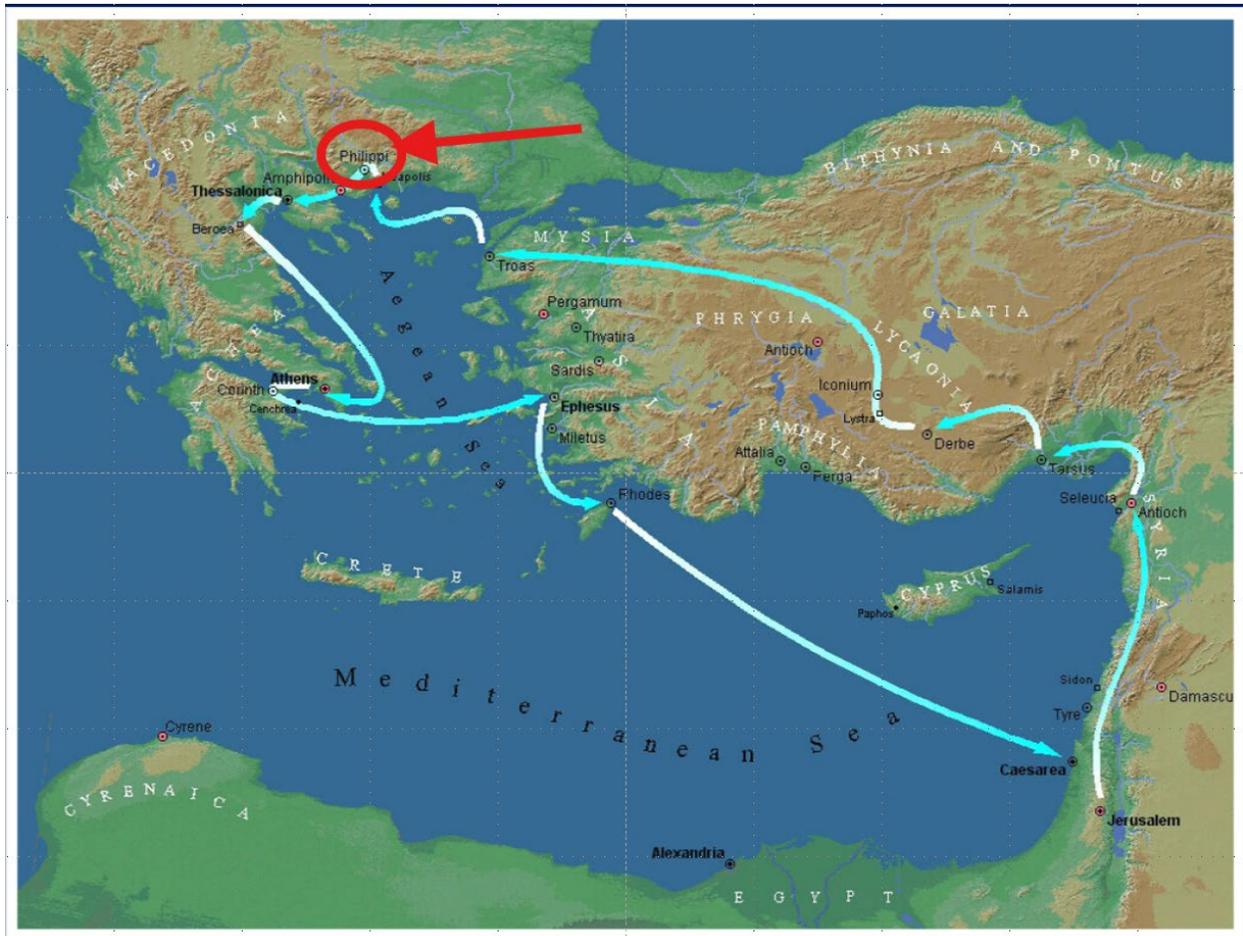
It started with a good old-fashioned fight. Christians are known to fight with each other, unfortunately. There is a split between Paul and Barnabas concerning whether they are going to take Mark on the second missionary journey. Paul says, "We are not taking

Mark," and Barnabas says, "Yes, we are." So the two split. Barnabas and Mark go to the island of Cyprus, and they drop off the radar screen in terms of who Luke is following.

Paul and Silas make the journey through southern Galatia, retracing some of their steps into missionary journey number two. They pass through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 16:1-5). That is where Timothy joins the party, and Timothy is circumcised. We talked about that. Then the Holy Spirit says, "Do not go to Bithynia. Do not go to Asia." Paul receives a vision of what is called the Macedonian man. It is at that point that the Apostle Paul does not go up north and does not go into Asia, but at Troas, when he receives this vision, he keeps moving into Macedonia.

The Holy Spirit knew that the gospel would eventually hit Asia (Acts 19:10). The Holy Spirit knew that the gospel had already made its way up north into Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). So keep moving, and going to new territory. He leaves Troas and he makes his way into Macedonia in response to this vision of the Macedonian man.

The first place he stops is at Philippi. Where is Philippi? Philippi is right here:



That was the population center. Paul on all of these missionary journeys goes to where the people are. That is what missionaries do.

It is at that point (Acts 16:11-40), that you get your first major "we" section in the Book of Acts. Here Luke, as he is writing the Book of Acts, stops saying, "They did this," and "They did that." All of a sudden he starts saying, "We did this" and "We did that." That goes from Acts 16:11-40. There are going to be a few more "we" sections later on in the Book of Acts, but that is where Luke joins the party.

At this point you have four major missionaries: Paul, Silas, Timothy, and now Luke joins the group. This is a description of their missionary activity in a place called Philippi (Acts 16:11-40). We started that section last time and we saw the conversion of a woman named Lydia. That was Paul's first convert in Europe. Now Lydia is brought to Christ (Acts 16:11-15).

This is why I called this "The Empire Strikes Back," because the devil, whenever you make progress, does not like it, and he stirs up trouble. Have you noticed that? If you doubt the existence of Satan, just try to do something for the Lord and you will see demonic satanic opposition, if not from Satan himself, then at least his demons opposing you.

Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

- I. Schism between Paul and Barnabas (15:36-41)
- II. Syria and Cilicia Ministry (16:1-5)
- III. Macedonian Call (16:6-10)
- IV. Philippian Ministry (16:11-40)
 - A. Lydia's conversion (11-15)
 - B. Demonized slave girl (16-18)
 1. Introductory encounter (16)
 2. Demonic recognition (17)
 3. Apostolic casting out (18)
 - C. Paul and Silas' imprisonment (19-34)
 - D. Departure from Philippi (35-40)

This is where Paul and the group in Philippi run into this demonized slave girl. That whole encounter is described in Acts 16:16-18. You have an introductory encounter (Acts 16:16); the demon inside this slave girl recognizes who Paul and Silas are (Acts 16:17); and then Paul casts the demon out of this little girl, this slave girl (Acts 16:18).

Once that happens, the gravy train stops rolling in, because this demon inside this girl was allowing her to predict the future. With the demon gone, the money stopped coming in. That did not make the owners very happy. He just took away the power of the psychic hotline and the palm reader, so they stir up trouble against Paul.

That is what gets him thrown into jail in Philippi, which is part of the design of God, because there he is going to lead someone else to Christ. He has already led Lydia to Christ. He is going to lead someone to Christ—the Philippian jailer—through much adversity. That will be described in Acts 16:19-34.

Notice, first of all, this introductory encounter:

"It happened as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling" (Acts 16:16).

The first thing you notice here is: *"It happened as we were going to the place of prayer."* What place of prayer was that? That was the place of prayer described in Acts 16:13 along the river in Philippi. You need ten godly men for a synagogue. Paul always went to the synagogue first, and apparently they had not reached the number yet to start a synagogue. According to Jewish custom, they said, "If we do not have a synagogue, then we are going to pray by the water."

That is why Paul went to the river. He always went to the Jews first with the gospel, and he knew that is where the Jews would be when they had no synagogue. We saw all of that last time around Acts 16:13.

"And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled" (Acts 16:13).

Why are they assembling there as Jewish women? Because they do not have a synagogue. That is where they met. Paul typically goes to the synagogue first, but in Philippi there is no synagogue because they did not have ten godly men to start a synagogue.

He finds this Jewish gathering by the river, and that is how Lydia, who is a proselyte. She may have been Jewish herself. We are not given enough information. She was a God-fearer, a god-seeker. If a Gentile wanted to walk with God in Old Testament times, then they converted to Judaism. That is probably who Lydia was. Paul finds her, and we saw last time how he led her to Christ. That is why Paul is going back to this river.

"It happened as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us" (Acts 16:16).

There are a lot of people that will tell you that slavery started in the United States. Obviously, if you read the Bible, that cannot be true because slavery is all over the Bible. You will remember that Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt.

Here is a picture of somebody that I am glad did not become our vice president. (I am sorry to interject my own bias there.) This is Democrat Senator Tim Kaine, who claimed that the United States created slavery and did not inherit slavery from anybody. You look at a statement like that and you wonder if the guy has ever cracked open his Bible or if he believes the Bible is historically true.

Slavery was all over the world a good 1,000 or 1,500 years or more before America ever came into existence.

We are not in the Old Testament here; we are in the New Testament. Slavery is a sad biblical reality that the United States of America did not create, but absorbed and inherited. What is neat about America is that we actually did something to get rid of it through the Civil War and the various amendments to our Constitution—the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution.

"It happened as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us" (Acts 16:16).

What is this spirit of divination? It is the word "spirit," but actually when you look up the word "divination" in the Greek it is the word (and this blew me away because I did not know this), "python [πύθων]," where you get the word "snake." It is an actual demonic being inside of a little girl, giving her supernatural power. Obviously the power she has inside of her is not as great as God's because God is the Creator, but it is a very real demonic power.

It is interesting, as you are reading through this chapter, you see the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 16:6-7:

"They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" (Acts 16:6-7).

The Holy Spirit is very active in this chapter. Just like the Holy Spirit is active in this chapter, the demonic realm is active in this chapter. Whenever the Holy Spirit starts to do a work, the demonic realm will come alongside and try to sort of imitate, mimic, or duplicate it, and in some cases harass those that are seeking to follow the work of the Holy Spirit.

That is the spirit of divination—a translation from "python [πύθων]"—inside of this girl. "Python" works because the devil is a snake, right? It is the serpent.

"And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (Revelation 12:9).

"And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:2).

One of Hal Lindsey's books that is very good, is called "Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth." The Bible presents the reality of Satan and the fallen demonic world in this chapter, just like it presents the reality of the Holy Spirit.

God said to the serpent in Genesis 3:15:

*"And will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15).*

Satan was put on notice that there is One who is coming (he knew this because God told him this in Eden) from the seed of the woman who is going to take the head of the serpent or Satan, and crush it. Satan does not like that prophecy. He works in history to either prevent the birth of Christ (which he was unsuccessful in doing), or to stop the activities of Christ's servants, ministers, or missionaries. Apparently, that is what he is doing here with the demonized slave-girl.

Fortunately, there is some good news in the whole thing. Romans 16:20 says:

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20).

Why under your feet? Because that is where a serpent or a python is. We are on the winning side of history.

When you look at all this imagery, it fits very well with the rest of the Bible that the spirit of divination is a translation from the Greek word "python [πύθων]," meaning, "a snake."

Something was inside of her, from the realm of the devil and the realm of the demonic or the fallen angelic realm, and she was making money for her owners. It says that she *"met us, [and she] was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling"* (Acts 16:16).

Some translations with these kinds of words will say something like "She was making her owners no little profit." That is a figure of speech known as a litotes. A litotes is an understatement, or a negative statement, to express an affirmation. This is the opposite of a hyperbole. Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration to communicate a point. When we say, "He is not a bad preacher," what we mean is that he is a very good preacher. The understatement is made for emphasis.

When Paul wrote, "I am a Jew, a citizen of no insignificant city" (Acts 21:39), he meant that Tarsus was in fact a rather significant city. A litotes is at times a belittling statement, as in Numbers 13:33: *"and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."* Luke, whose writings we are examining as we study the Book of Acts, used a number of litotes.

"He spoke of 'no small disturbance among the soldiers' (Acts 12:18), 'no little business' (19:24), and 'no small storm' (27:20). When Luke wrote that Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch 'a long time' (14:28), the Greek has a litotes. It is literally, 'they stayed there not a little time.' Paul belittled himself with a litotes in 1 Corinthians 15:9, 'For I am the least of the apostles.' This statement of genuine humility was written to highlight God's grace in his life as an undeserving sinner."¹

I got this definition from Dr. Roy Zuck who was my Sunday school teacher when I lived in the Dallas area. He wrote a book that I will recommend to you called, "Basic Bible Interpretation." It is a hermeneutics book that is easy to understand. He goes through these various figures of speech, and one of the figures of speech he mentions is a litotes.

The ultimate figure of speech book is this one by Bollinger. He wrote this in the early 1900s, and it is still a classic. It is about 1,000 pages long. If you can get your hands on this, it is a classic and it gives you every possible figure of speech in the Bible—hyperbole, simile, metaphor, litotes, and into a bunch of figures of speech you probably did not even know existed. It is a classic work. It is not light reading, but if you can get your hands on this book by Bollinger, it is called "Figures of Speech in the Bible." It really is a classic.

We interpret the Bible literally. That is called plain interpretation or denotative interpretation. Our opponents use this against us all of the time. They will say, "You guys interpret the Bible literally. I guess you mean that the mountains clap, right? The mountains clap their hands. When the eyes of the Lord roam to and fro throughout the earth, I guess you believe God wears eyeglasses."

The truth of the matter is, these are just common figures of speech. Mountains clapping is a personification. The "eyes of the Lord" is an anthropomorphism, where you ascribe to God human attributes so that we can relate more to what He is saying as mere human beings.

Yes, we take the Bible at face value whenever we can, but there are obvious places in the Bible where figurative speech is used that is called connotative speech. All language

¹ Dr. Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, p. 156-57.

functions this way. Every time you talk, you are either using a denotative statement or a connotative statement—a plain statement or a figurative statement.

My wife says, "How did you sleep last night?" "Great! I slept until 8:30 and I slept like a log." I just switched from a plain statement (8:30) to a more of a connotative statement when I said "slept like a log." That is a figure of speech.

I bring this up because the Bible and language itself will do this all of the time. Some have argued, based on some of the English translations, that a litotes could be in play here. I will bring some of these to your attention as we go through the Book of Acts.

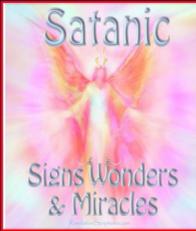
At any rate, the point that Luke is making (in my own words) is that she was making her owner's buku bucks—big money. Her owners were laughing all the way to the bank, because she apparently had this ability to predict the future. I do not think she is omniscient like God is, but she had some kind of power. Satan has an awful lot of power. He does not have as much power as God, but he is very powerful.

In the Book of Exodus, Pharaoh's magicians in Exodus 7-8 were able to imitate many of the miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron up to a point. Once the gnats were created from the dirt and you moved from non-life to life, Pharaoh's magicians said, "This is the power of God. Only God can do that." They could not stop Moses' miracles, but when Moses and Aaron turned the Nile to blood, Pharaoh's magicians imitated that. When Moses and Aaron multiplied frogs all over Egypt, Pharaoh's magicians were able to imitate that one.

Never underestimate the power of the dark side. It is very real power. It can give you all kinds of experiences. Just like the Holy Spirit is directing these missionaries. Here comes Satan inside of this girl, allowing her to make certain predictions.

This chart is probably one of the most important charts I have ever put together, because it shows you every example I could find in the Bible where a miracle happens and God has nothing to do with it.

Satanic/Demonic Miracles

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Exod. 7-8 | | 7. Acts 8:9; 16:16 |
| 2. Deut. 13:1-3 |  | 8. Gal. 1:6-9 |
| 3. Job 1:12-19; 2:7-8 | | 9. 2 Thess. 2:9 |
| 4. 1 Sam. 28? | | 10. 2 Cor. 11:14 |
| 5. Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24 | | 11. Rev. 13:3, 13, 15;
16:13-14 |
| 6. Luke 4:5 | | |

If God is not performing any of these miracles that are described here, then where do these miracles come from? They are obviously coming from the dark side. Satan masquerades as an angel of light, and he imitates God up to a point.

This is a big deal, because a lot of people think something is true because they have had an experience. If I have had an experience, it must be true. Joseph Smith had an experience. He saw an angel named Moroni that gave him the golden tablets that became the doctrines of Mormonism. I do not have any doubt in my mind that Joseph Smith had a real experience, because Satan can give experiences as well.

Another man in history that had an experience was Muhammad, who had an experience from the angel, "Jibril." What they are saying is that Gabriel gave to Muhammad the doctrines of Islam. I know there is a lot of debate about the historicity of Muhammad and all of these kinds of things, but let us assume that everything happened the way that they said. There is no doubt in my mind that it could have been a very real experience, because Satan and the realm of the demons give experiences too.

This is why Paul will say things like:

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a [different] gospel...let him be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8).

In other words, it does not matter if you had a vision; it does not matter if an angel materialized at your bedside tonight. That could be a completely real experience, but if that angel gives to you doctrines that contradict this book, then you do not accept what that alleged angel told you, because the devil masquerades as an angel of light.

Satan can give all kinds of counterfeit signs and wonders. The Christian worldview is such that we do not accept things as true only because people have had an experience. We accept things as true if they line up with Scripture, because the devil can give you all kinds of experiences.

When I have dealt with Christians who have claimed to have visions and dreams coming from God, one of the mistakes I have made in my ministry is trying to talk them out of their experience, which is a waste of time. They could have very well had an experience. God could give an experience, or the devil could give an experience. I do not try to talk people out of their experience anymore. I ask them, "Have you fulfilled your obligation to test the spirits?"

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

If Joseph Smith was a born-again Christian (which I do not think he was), and if he had respect for the Bible (which I do not think he did), he could have tested that spirit from Moroni, and Mormonism, with its evil doctrines that we know of today, may have never come into existence and dominated our world.

If Muhammad was a born-again Christian (which obviously he was not), and if he believed that the Bible is God's Word (which he obviously did not believe), if he had tested what Gabriel told him, then Islam, which is enslaving much of planet Earth even as we speak, may not have ever come into existence.

These guys thought something was of God because they had an experience. Experiences do not determine truth. That is a very important principle to understand as you grow in Christ. Experience never determines truth. The Scripture determines what is true because the devil gives all kinds of experiences.

Here, this slave girl had these powers. She could make predictions because the demon or the "python [πύθων]" inside of her was giving her this power. What is going to happen is that his demon is going to be exorcized out of this girl, and it is going to make the owners very upset.

This is something that Dr. Toussaint brought up in class. He wrote a commentary on the Book of Acts in "The Bible Knowledge Commentary." He said that the troublemakers all the way through the Book of Acts are the unbelieving Jews. They are really the villains. I say that sparingly because there is so much anti-Semitism out there and Jew hatred.

The Book of Acts, for the most part, does not make first century Jews look very good. They persecute Paul everywhere he goes. The Gentiles, by contrast, really never bother Paul unless his ministry affected their pocketbook. Once it affected their pocketbook, they got upset. So once this power of fortune-telling is taken out of this girl and the money stops coming in, that is when Paul gets thrown in prison.

The exact same thing is going to happen in Acts 19 in Ephesus where Paul will have so many converts that it will drive the idol makers out of business. If you love Jesus now, who wants these silly idols? That is what gets Paul in trouble with the Gentiles in

Ephesus. The Jews are mad at Paul no matter where he goes; the Gentiles really do not care what Paul does, but when it affects their bottom line, then they get upset.

This is another way that Luke is systematically showing the guilt of first-century Israel in all of this. It is not that individual Jews do not get saved, because they do; but as a whole, the nation of Israel in unbelief is moving off into discipline. That will be meted out by the Romans in AD 70.

You go down to Acts 16:17 and the demon inside of this slave girl recognizes who these guys are. I call this demonic recognition.

"Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation'" (Acts 16:17).

It is interesting that the demons recognize God's servants. They know who God's servants are. This demon inside of her is able to recognize who Paul and Silas happened to represent—God Himself. The same thing is going to happen in Paul's ministry in Ephesus, on the third missionary journey with the seven sons of Sceva who get cornered in a house. They decide, "Paul cast out demons. That looks fun. We will try to cast out a demon." They corner this demonically possessed person in the house, and what does the demon say to the seven sons of Sceva?

"And the evil spirit answered and said to them, 'I recognize Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?'" (Acts 19:15).

"You do not have any right to bother me." The demon possessed person rose up and gave the seven sons of Sceva such a beating that they ran out of the house bloody and naked (Acts 19:16).

You will notice that the demon recognized Jesus. When Jesus was here in His first coming, the demons all knew who He was. They would say things like:

"'What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'" (Matthew 8:29).

Demons recognize Jesus, and they recognize Paul. The demon in Acts 19:15 says, "I know Paul." This demon inside the slave girl knew exactly who Paul, Silas, Timothy, and most likely Luke were—the four missionaries. Demons have intellect. They are not omniscient like God is, but they know things.

You will notice also that demons can recognize the plan of salvation, because it says here:

"Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, 'These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation'" (Acts 16:17).

Demons know the plan of salvation. The Book of James, chapter two, verse 19 says,

"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19).

If the demons believe, why aren't they saved? Because the plan of salvation is not open to the demons; the plan of salvation is only open to human beings. Jesus came as a human being, not a fallen angel, to reach humanity. If you look at the theology of the demons here, I give them an A plus. They have really good theology. They are monotheists (Most high God); they know about the way of salvation, not a way of salvation. That is pretty good soteriology.

The demons recognize exactly who Jesus was when He was here the first time. They had a very high Christology. They had a pretty good eschatology: "Are you coming to torture us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29). They knew something about the End Times judgments that were to come. Demons know a lot more than we give them credit for.

Here is one of the great things to understand about the devil: he can tell the truth. The devil knows the truth, but he will mix truth and error. Truth is moved a millimeter away from what the truth actually is. To your average person who really does not know much about the Bible, it sounds true and it sounds spiritual. They fall for a deception.

Satan does not show up with this visual that we have in our minds from the Middle Ages, with a red cape, a pitchfork, and horns on his head, saying, "Hi, I am the accuser of the brethren. I am here to wreck your life." That is not how Satan operates. Satan comes as an angel of light. He mixes truth and error in such a way that you cannot recognize a lie for what it is, because it looks so accurate, it looks so spiritual.

The truth of the matter is, Satan will infiltrate the truth, corrupt the truth, a millimeter so that the truth looks true, but it is no longer true. He will give you a good plan of salvation, and he will talk about faith, but he will throw in a work or two. It is no longer faith alone, but it is faith plus some kind of work you have to do.

I cannot tell you how many people around the world fall for that, because how could it be wrong? It looks so spiritual. But at the end of the day, Satan's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Jesus said this of Satan in John 8:44. Speaking to the Pharisees He said:

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he

speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Even though he knows the truth, his ultimate goal is deception, because at the end of the day, he is a liar. That is the meaning there of Acts 16:17:

"These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).

It is a true statement, but if we had more information, it would be some kind of mixture of truth plus error to deceive the masses.

Paul puts up with it for a while, because this girl with the "python [πύθων]," or demon, inside of her kept saying this over and over again. Paul put up with it for a while. Then he said, "Enough is enough," and he cast the demon out of the girl. We see this apostolic casting out there in Acts 16:18:

She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out at that very moment" (Acts 16:18).

Many days passed, and Paul kept putting up with this girl with the demon inside of her saying something true about him and his colleagues over and over again. But then it says that Paul got annoyed. When you study this in the Greek, it means that he became troubled—he got worked up, displeased, annoyed.

What bothered Paul about this, even though what this demon was saying was true? It may have something to do with the fact that Paul did not want a testimony about his ministry to come from a demon. He wanted his ministry to stand on its own with God's approval. You do not need Satan's approval. Maybe that is the reason he got upset and annoyed.

I think it also has something to do with distractions. Satan is really good at distractions. We see this in the Parable of the Sower, as Jesus describes the spiritual conditions that will prevail in between the First Coming and the Second Coming. One of the parables He told is the Parable of the Sower—that one about the farmer planting seed. The seed falls on different batches of soil based on how the human heart is prepared, and it has different results based on how the heart has been prepared in advance.

"And as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up" (Matthew 13:4).

Unfortunately, this is one of those parables where, later on in the chapter, Jesus gives us a great interpretation.

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road" (Matthew 13:19).

Some seed falls on soil that the birds came and ate. The disciples wanted to know what that meant, and Jesus said, "It will be like this: the gospel is going to be preached throughout this entire advent age, and there are going to be different types of receptivity depending on how the soil (which represents the human heart in the parable) has been prepared. Some seed will not germinate. It was hitting beside the road, and the birds came and took it away before it could sprout up.

Jesus says that the sowing of the seed is the preaching of the Word of God and the birds come and eat it up. A lot of times in the Bible, you will notice that birds are not portrayed in a positive way. I do not know if that is true in every case, but I can think of several cases where the birds represent something dark—Babylon in the End Times is going to become the habitation for every hateful bird (Revelation 18:2).

The bird snatching up the seed is the work of Satan to distract the mind of the hearer, to get them thinking about anything else besides the Word of God. If the Word of God goes into their heart and the Word of God starts to bear fruit, then you will not only have a convert, but you will have a disciple. Since God uses His Word to produce these results in people, Satan distracts the mind so that it is distracted from hearing the actual truth of God's Word.

All you have to do is try to become a preacher, and you will watch Satan do this every Sunday morning. It is unbelievable how good he is at it. Any distraction that he can take people's mind away from the word he will use.

I used to sit in church. The weekend before, I had watched a movie that lasted for two hours. I had perfect concentration throughout the movie, and understood everything in the movie with unbroken concentration. But here I am in church, and the preacher is preaching, and my mind is wandering onto everything and anything other than what the preacher is talking about. It gets me thinking about my growling stomach, where I am going to eat lunch afterwards, who I am going to talk to, that I have to talk to So-and-so before we leave the building. I am thinking about all of these kinds of things.

As I am thinking about all of these kinds of things, I am not focused on what the preacher is saying. What is happening is that Satan is using all of these distractions because he knows the influence that particular sermon could have on me. He wants me thinking about anything and everything other than the Word of God, because if I was focused on the Word of God, like I was focused on the movie the night before, the seed would go into good soil and it would bring forth a crop. Satan does not want that crop in my life. He does not want me to walk in discipleship. He wants me to walk in human wisdom, so he distracts my mind.

Having little children and people think we are so mean because we do it this way, that we dismiss the little ones to their program. I have watched Satan use crying children constantly in churches I have been in. It becomes such a distraction that people are really no longer focused on or listening to the Word of God. That is why we do it; it is not because we are anti-children. We have an awesome children's program here.

We are trying to remove as many potential distractions as we can, because we are in the business of teaching the Bible, and we do not want people's minds focused on, "Oh, look at that cute little baby over there," and those kinds of things. We want them focused not even on the preacher, but on the Word of God, because that is where change comes from.

I have been in churches where there is much crying from children and little kids that I cannot even remember what the sermon was about. You cannot have a perfect environment with no distractions, but you can certainly do practical things in a church to minimize distraction.

In fact, when my wife, my daughter and myself drive in from our house nearby into this church every Sunday morning, we always pray the same thing. We just say, "Lord, we just pray that You will be assembling Your church in-house and online (because we have a lot of online viewers)." We pray for clarity of thought as I am trying to teach, clarity of expression. Then we pray, "Lord, we pray for an undistracted environment as much as it is possible."

We are not in the Millennial Kingdom yet. Satan is not bound yet. So as much as possible, we pray that the Lord would please minimize the distractions so that His word can go out in an unhindered, unencumbered way. We know that God wants people to hear the Word of God and to start to apply it, and then they will bear fruit.

Here is this demon following Paul around, and shouting this stuff out all of the time. No doubt it was a distraction from what Paul was trying to say. He did not want the testimony from a demon about his ministry. God can give him that testimony. He probably put up with it for a while, but it got to the point where it was a distraction. The demon inside this girl became the focus, rather than what Paul was trying to say.

So what does Paul do?

"She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!'" (Acts 16:18).

This is very interesting because Paul did not address the girl. He did not address the owner. He addressed the demon that was inside this girl.

You will see Jesus doing the exact same thing with Peter. Remember, Peter took Jesus aside and started to rebuke Him in Caesarea Philippi, because Jesus started talking about dying on the cross. Peter said, "This will never happen to you. This is not a good career move at this point for a Messiah. You are not supposed to die on a cross. You are supposed to rule in a kingdom" (Matthew 16:21-23).

Of course, at that moment, Satan was using Peter's mouth to distract Jesus from His mission. He came into the world to die on the cross, and Satan was trying to use Jesus' pal to talk Him out of it. Keep your eyes on that one too, because when the devil wants to use people in your life, typically he will use the people that are closest to you because those are the people you listen to.

I was in this church and I said to somebody who has long since gone, "Should I teach the Book of Revelation next?" No sooner did it come out of my mouth than this staff person said, no. Should I teach the Book of Revelation? No. Well, I ended up teaching the Book of Revelation. It was a blessing to people, and it was a blessing to me.

What was going on with this staff member? I do not want to be overly dramatic, but in the moment of a lack of awareness, this person, generally a good person, their mouth was being used as a pulpit or a platform for Satan. You have to watch people that you love and people that are closest to you, because Satan will actually use their mouths to distract you from what you are supposed to do.

To put the shoe on the other foot, we do not want to be used as a platform for Satan ourselves, do we? That is why we are constantly told to be quick to listen and slow to speak. As my mom used to tell me, "God gave you two ears and one mouth. Use them in proportion."

Since Satan works in this way, we have to be careful. We have to guard ourselves against rash, impulsive statements that we make in the moment, because Satan could actually be using that to destroy someone else. Some of that stuff has happened from friends in my own life, and very regrettably, as I look back, I have been used by Satan in the lives of other people.

This is what Jesus is dealing with with Peter.

"Then He [Jesus] warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day" (Matthew 16:20-21).

Now remember earlier in the story in Matthew 16, Peter's mouth had been used by God: "Who do men say that I am?" "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-16). This is revealed to you, Peter, not by flesh and blood, but My Father who is

in heaven (Matthew 16:17). He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:19). Talk about a spiritual high. Then the next time Peter opens his mouth, he is used as a tool of Satan.

Satan works in us and through us. He cannot possess us, but he can certainly influence us as Christians. After moments of victory, your mouth could be used in a great way to edify and bless somebody. The next split second, it can be used as an instrument of Satan to distract, to tear down, to keep people away from their mission.

I just recorded Revelation 12 today, in four 24-minute segments for KKHT Radio. It was the same talk I gave at the prophecy conference. I used Martin Luther as an example. Talk about a guy who was used of God—Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer. And talk about a guy who was used as the devil. It was the same guy. He wrote that tract that spans about 80 pages called "The Jews and Their Lies," which is an anti-Semitic rant that none other than Adolf Hitler took and used as a blueprint for the Holocaust.

It is a frightening thing that one second you can be used of God, and the next second you can be used of Satan. That is what is happening with Peter:

"Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan!'" (Matthew 16:22-23).

Jesus, being the Son of God, has the discernment to know what was motivating Peter. The problem was not Peter. The problem was that Peter was a vessel for Satan. So He addresses Satan who was influencing Peter's lips:

"You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (Matthew 16:23).

He does address Peter, but he addresses the root of what Peter is saying, which is the devil. In essence, this is the same thing that is happening here in Acts 16. When Paul addresses this demonized slave girl, he is not really addressing the girl or the owner, but he is addressing the spirit inside of her.

"[he] turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ—'" (Acts 16:18).

You do not fight Satan through your own power. That is what the seven sons of Sceva tried to do. It did not work out well for them. We stand in God's power and in His armor.

"I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' And it came out of her that very moment" (Acts 16:18).

There is an immediate result. Why is there an immediate result? Because Paul is an apostle. God built the church on the apostles.

"[The church] having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Part of being an apostle was the signs associated with apostleship. Jesus, I believe, spoke of these to the apostles in Mark 16:17:

"These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).

I know the question you are asking. Should we go around casting demons out? What is interesting is that, although the apostles did this, when you get to the Epistles—the letters the apostles wrote, which are the instructions for the church—there are no instructions for us, or even commands, related to going around and casting demons out of people. What we are told to do is to be in a defensive posture:

"Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

How do we give place to the devil? We go back to the sin nature. The moment you go back to the sin nature, you give Satan the capacity to not possess you, but to influence your life.

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:27).

If you are going to let the sun go down on your anger, and you are going to stay bitter and unforgiving, then Satan comes right into your life by way of influence. He will use your mouth in ways that are destructive. Your mouth, half an hour before in worship could have been praising the Lord, but if you are a bitter person, an angry person, and an unforgiving person—you do not forgive others as Christ has forgiven you and you are bottling up all of this hostility inside of you—then I am telling you, it is going to spill out. Typically it spills out on innocent people. It spills out on your spouse, on your kids, and suddenly a lot of angry statements that are hurtful can come out of our mouths.

If you want to minimize the role of Satan in your life, the best thing you can do is to not cater to the sin nature in any way. Satan, just like with Luther, will use Christians to advance his purposes just like he did with Peter. The only instructions that we are given in the Epistles related to Satan is:

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity (Ephesians 4:26-27).

"Put on the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11).

So that thing about the casting out of a demon, that is not something that I go around doing. I do not have any instructions on how to do that. The Epistles do not give me any instructions on it. This is an account of what the apostles did.

The apostles were unique because they were the foundations of the church, and they were performing signs and wonders at the foundation of the Church Age that have not been regular occurrences for the last 2,000 years. If casting out demons was that big of a deal and if we are supposed to be focused on that and preoccupied with that, you would see something in the Epistles that would teach you how to do that, which we do not have.

This is how Paul gets thrown in jail. The gravy train is gone, and the Gentiles do not like it, so he gets thrown in jail. But it is the design of God, because in jail Paul is going to meet the Philippian jailer, which will lead to another major conversion there in Philippi.