

Study of Philippians – Acts 16:16-24
Bellevue Church of Christ – Winter 2011 / 2012

III. The Conversions at Philippi (cont.) (11-34)

*Lit. "a Pythian Spirit" *i.e. Python / Apollo
 *Guarded the oracle at Delphi (killed by Apollo)
 Came to mean a demon-possessed person through whom the Pythia spoke

What did it mean to be spirit/demon possessed?

Could this girl actually tell the future? (II Thess 2:9)

Acts 16:13

Acts 16:10

¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, **we** were met by a slave girl who had a **spirit of divination** and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.

What was the strategy of the spirit/demon?

...Used by the Hebrews to Describe Yahweh - Num 24:16; Ps 78:35; Isa 14:14; Dan 3:26; 4:32; 5:18, 21

(Matt 8:28-34; Mark 1:21-28; 3:7-12; 5:1-20; Luke 4:31-37; 8:26-39)

¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

...And by the Greeks to Describe Zeus

Why did Paul stop her?

What would have been the danger of aligning himself with one possessed by a demon?

-Mark 16:17

¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

Who was Paul speaking to? Girl or Demon?

Why did Paul delay?
To allow the work to continue...after he drove out the spirit, he had to leave the city -Acts 16:39,40

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

A public place to create an uproar

(Military or Civil Rulers) (or both)- Praetors

²⁰ And when they had brought them to the **magistrates**, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city."

Luke 23:1-5

Acts 16:37-39

Introducing a new mode of worship and a new religion, which was unauthorized by the Roman laws

Clever accusation, but not their primary concern

²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."

II Cor 11:25

²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

Unlike Jewish law (40 lashes save one - II Cor 11:24), the Roman custom depended on the whims of the judge.

In a Roman prison there were usually three distinct parts:

- (1) the **communiora**, or where the prisoners had light and fresh air;*
- (2) the **interiora**, shut off by strong iron gates with bars and locks;*
- (3) the **tullianium**, or dungeon, the place of execution or for one condemned to die.*

²³ And when they had inflicted **many blows** upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.

²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the **inner prison** and fastened their feet in the stocks.

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Facts and History of Philippi

Philippi was ten miles northwest of Neapolis, on a plain bounded by Mount Pangaeus to the north and northeast, with the rivers Strymon and Nestos on either side. It lay astride the Via Egnatia and near the Gangites River, a tributary of the Strymon. It was located in ancient Macedonia, or modern day Greece.

The history of the site of Philippi begins in 360/359 B.C. when the colonists from Thasos founded the first city, called Krenides (“springs”). In 356 B.C. the city is endangered by the Thacians and it turns to king Philip II for support. Philip had already foreseen the economic and strategic importance of the city, so he conquered it, he fortified it and he renamed it after himself (Philippi).

Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) established a large Greek colony there in 356 B.C. He changed the name of the area from Krenides (“springs”) to Philippi. Philippi became part of the Roman Empire in 167 B.C., following the battle of Pydna. Shortly after 146 B.C. it was connected to other important Roman cities by the Via Egnatia.

During Roman times, the fame of Philippi stemmed from its having been the site of the decisive battle of the second civil war in 42 B.C., when Mark Anthony and Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) defeated Brutus and Cassius. After the war many Roman army veterans were settled at Philippi and the city was designated a Roman colony. Philippi’s importance during the NT period, therefore, resulted from its agriculture, its strategic commercial location on both sea and land routes, its still functioning gold mines, and its status as a Roman Colony.

Excavations

Archaeological work has revealed a large and well-preserved forum, a theater, the alleged jail of Paul and several Byzantine churches, including one of the earliest churches known in Greece. The number of churches in the city in the Byzantine period indicate Philippi's importance to Christians at this time. A series of earthquakes apparently destroyed many of the buildings and probably contributed to the city's decline.

Oracle at Delphi



Dating back to 1400 BC, the Oracle of Delphi was the most important shrine in all Greece, and in theory all Greeks respected its independence. Built around a sacred spring, Delphi was considered to be the omphalos - the center (literally navel) of the world.

People came from all over Greece and beyond to have their questions about the future answered by the Pythia, the priestess of Apollo. And her answers, usually cryptic, could determine the course of everything from when a farmer planted his seedlings, to when an empire declared war.

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Apollo killed Python but had to be punished for it, since she was a child of Gaia. The shrine dedicated to Apollo was originally dedicated to Gaia and then, possibly to Poseidon. The name Pythia remained as the title of the Delphic Oracle. As punishment for this murder Apollo was sent to serve in menial tasks for eight years. A festival, the Septeria, was performed annually portraying the slaying of the serpent, the flight, the atonement and the return of the God. The Pythian Games took place every four years to commemorate his victory.

The Pythia (Gr. Πύθια) was the priestess presiding over the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, located on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. The Pythia was widely credited with giving prophecies inspired by Apollo, giving her a prominence unusual for a woman in male-dominated ancient Greece. The Delphic oracle was established in the 8th century BCE. Its last recorded response was given in 393 CE, when the emperor Theodosius I ordered pagan temples to cease operation. During this period the Delphic Oracle was the most prestigious and authoritative oracle in the Greek world.

The oracle is one of the best-documented religious institutions of the classical Greek world. Writers who mention the oracle include Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Pindar, Xenophon, Diodorus, Strabo, Pausanias, Plutarch, Livy, Justin, Ovid, Lucan and Julian.

The name of the Pythia derived from Pytho, which in myth was the original name of Delphi. The Greeks derived this place-name from the verb pythein (πύθειν, "to rot"), used of the decomposition of the body of the monstrous serpent Python after she was slain by Apollo.

It is often said that the Pythia delivered oracles in a frenzied state induced by vapors rising from the ground, and that she spoke gibberish which priests reshaped into the enigmatic prophecies preserved in Greek literature. This picture has been challenged by scholars such as Joseph Fontenrose and Lisa Maurizio, who show that the ancient sources uniformly represent the Pythia speaking intelligibly, and giving prophecies in her own voice. Recent geological investigations have shown the possibility that ethylene gas caused the Pythia's state of inspiration.

The Demon and Paul

The course pursued by Paul was the same with that of Jesus, who invariably stopped the mouths of demons when they attempted to testify to his claims. The propriety of this course will be apparent upon observing: *First*, That to have permitted demons to testify for the truth would have convinced the people that there was an alliance between them and the preachers. *Second*, This supposed alliance would have caused all the good repute of Jesus and the apostles to reflect upon the demons, and all the evil repute of demons to reflect upon them. It was an ingenious effort of the devil to ally himself with Jesus Christ, in order the more effectually to defeat his purposes. If Christ and the apostles had given countenance to demons while telling the truth, they could have used their endorsement to gain credence when telling a lie; and thus, believers would have been left to the mercy of seducing spirits, fulfilling, with the apparent sanction of Christ, the prophesy of Paul that, "In the latter times men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in disguise, having the conscience seared with a hot iron." [382] To guard against this result, it was necessary to exorcise all demons who ventured to speak in favor of the truth.—Acts of the Apostles

These men are the servants, etc.—It is astonishing how such a testimony could be given in such a case; every syllable of it true, and at the same time full, clear, and distinct. But mark the deep design and artifice of this evil spirit:

1. He well knew that the Jewish law abhorred all magic, incantations, magical rites, and dealings with familiar spirits; he therefore bears what was in itself a true testimony to the apostles, that by it he may destroy their credit, and ruin their usefulness. The Jews, by this testimony, would be led at once to believe that the apostles were in compact with these demons, and that the miracles they wrought were done by the agency of these wicked spirits, and that the whole was the effect of magic; and this, of course, would harden their hearts against the preaching of the Gospel.
2. The GENTILES, finding that their own demon bore testimony to the apostles, would naturally consider that the whole was one system; that they had nothing to learn, nothing to correct; and thus the preaching of the apostles must be useless to them. In such a predicament is this, nothing could have saved the credit of

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the apostles but their dispossessing this woman of her familiar spirit, and that in the most incontestable manner; for what could have saved the credit of Moses and Aaron, when the magicians of Egypt turned their rods into serpents, had not Aaron's rod devoured theirs? And what could have saved the credit of these apostles but the casting out of this spirit of divination, with which, otherwise, both Jews and Gentiles would have believed them in compact?

—Adam Clarke's Commentary

Verse 17. *The same followed Paul*, etc. Why she did this, or under what pretence, the sacred writer has not informed us. Various conjectures have been formed of the reason why this was done. It may have been,

(1.) that as she prophesied for gain, she supposed that Paul and Silas would reward her if she publicly proclaimed that they were the servants of God. Or,

(2.) because she was conscious that an evil spirit possessed her, and that she feared that Paul and Silas would expel that spirit; and that, by proclaiming them to be the servants of God, she hoped to conciliate their favour. Or,

(3.) more probably, it was because she saw evident tokens of their being sent from God, and that their doctrine would prevail; and by proclaiming this she hoped to acquire more authority, and a higher reputation for being herself inspired. Comp. [Mark 5:7](#).

(*) "most high God" [Genesis 14:18-22](#)

(*) "way of salvation" [Acts 18:26](#), [Hebrews 10:20](#)

—Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

Place of Prayer

Acts 16:13 (ESV)

¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

“We” Passages in Acts

Acts 16:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Powers of Demons

2 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,

Demons Recognize Jesus

Matthew 8:28-34 (ESV)

²⁸ And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" ³⁰ Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." ³² And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. ³³ The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

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Mark 1:21-28 (ESV)

²¹ And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." ²⁸ And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Mark 3:7-12 (ESV)

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea ⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. ⁹ And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, ¹⁰ for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. ¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Mark 5:1-20 (ESV)

¹ They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸ For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea. ¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Luke 4:31-37 (ESV)

³¹ And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, ³² and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. ³³ And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ³⁴ "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are— the Holy One of God." ³⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. ³⁶ And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" ³⁷ And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

Luke 8:26-39 (ESV)

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down

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before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Most High God

Numbers 24:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered:

Psalms 78:35 (ESV)

³⁵ They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer.

Isaiah 14:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Daniel 3:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

Daniel 4:32 (ESV)

³² and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will."

Daniel 5:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty.

Daniel 5:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. ²¹ He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

Apostles with Power over Demons

Mark 16:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

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Leaving Philippi

Acts 16:39-40 (ESV)

³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Disturbing the City

Luke 23:1-5 (ESV)

¹ Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." ³ And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." ⁵ But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

Roman Citizen

Acts 16:37-39 (ESV)

³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

Beaten with Rods / Lashes

2 Corinthians 11:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;