

Perfecting in the Word Ministry

"The Message to the Enslaved & Imprisoned!"

Acts 16:16-18,25-33

Eighteenth Annual Spring Conference

Charismatic Churches of God in Christ International

Spring Conference 2015 ~ Evangelical Night

Wednesday, April 22, 2015



Text:

Acts 16:16-18 ~ The Message to the Mentally Enslaved – Deliverance!

- ¹⁶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:
- ¹⁷ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.
- ¹⁸ And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Acts 16:25-33 ~ The Message to the Imprisoned Sinners – Salvation!

- ²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.
- ²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.
- ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
- ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
- ²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
- ³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
- ³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
- ³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
- ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

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Preliminary Remarks:

Church, the Lord is calling us, this evening, to a greater role of evangelism; through the faithful works of apostolic missionary, as true examples of unfailing loyalty, sacrifice and perseverance for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

The "**Apostle's Vision to the Churches**" embodies the Holy-Ghost inspired second missionary journey of Apostle Paul to the region of Greece; where he received "*The Macedonian Call*" to deliver his evangelistic message of miracle deliverance to the mentally enslaved, and message of salvation [or conversion] to the mentally and physically enslaved soul of the sinner.

As we explore the scriptures this evening, we will discover that there is an economic cost as well as personal consequences associated with your decision to follow God's divine path and vision of evangelism; but the spiritual rewards outweigh the physical and personal sacrifices and persecutions which we must endure for the cause of Christ!

Saints and church believers, whether we are physically enslaved by our past circumstances [based on the consequences of our errant judgments], or enslaved in the recesses of our mentality [as a result of allowing hindering spirits to engulf our very thoughts of reasoning], the outcome is inevitably the same: the control and/or captivity of someone by keeping the person in a bad or difficult situation where the person is not free! Ultimately, the supreme captor and prisoner of our minds [or mental psyche] is "sin" – which is a weight that so easily captures us! [Hebrews 12:1 ~paraphrase]

But I have a message of hope [tonight] to all who are enslaved – "**The Message to the Enslaved & Imprisoned!**" ~ Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. **So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed!**" [John 8:31,32,34-36]

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Background: [Romans 7:4-25 ~ NIV ~ Paul's letter to the church at Rome]

Struggling With Sin ~ "So, my brothers [and sisters], you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.' But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin."

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I. The Message to the Mentally Enslaved [Acts 16:16-18]

While in Macedonia, the scriptures record that while Paul and Silas were going to a place of prayer, they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. The scriptures also inform us that she earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This same girl followed Paul and his band of missionaries, shouting: **“These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved!”** She continued shouting this message for many days, until finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit: **“In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!”** And the scriptures record that immediately the spirit left her. But there is so much more encapsulated between the lines of this story...

A. The Enslaved Mind of the Soothsayer

i. The Marketable Gift of Fortune Telling

- a. The slave girl's owners [masters] earned a great fortune off her spirit of divination [fortune-telling].
- b. A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men. [Proverbs 18:16]
- c. Be careful how you use [or exercise] your God-given talents and gifts!
- d. God's spiritual gifts should not be exploited by man for self-aggrandizement [The act or practice of enhancing or exaggerating one's own importance, power, or reputation; The act or action of making oneself seem more important. An act of pride or boasting.]
- e. Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. [Proverbs 16:18] ~ Satan's sin! "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." [Isaiah 14:12-15; v14]

ii. The Profitability of the Gift of Prophecy [Micah 3:11; Jeremiah 2:8]

- a. Prophecy: A divinely inspired – of God – utterance that edifies, exhorts and comforts. [It can declare what will happen in the future but does not necessarily have to be predictive in nature in order to be a prophecy.]
- b. The leaders judge for a bribe.
- c. The priests teach for a price; commercializing their services, therefore becoming pawns of the rich rather than servants of the Word of God.
- d. The prophets tell fortunes for money.
- e. The prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.
- f. Paul instructs that church officials must not be “greedy of filthy lucre” [a lover of money]. [1Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7,11]
- g. Paul instructs that the manifestation of the Spirit [spiritual gifts] is given to every man to “profit” withal [for the common good]. [1Corinthians 12:1-7; v7]
- h. Peter also instructs that pastors must not be “greedy of filthy lucre” [a lover of money] when overseeing God's flock. [1Peter 5:2]

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- iii. **The Spirit of Divination** [Deuteronomy 18:10-12]
- a. Divination: the practice of telling of the future or a prophecy; the act or practice of trying to foretell the future or explore the unknown by occult means; a prophecy [root word "divine" - meaning "like God" or a god].
 - b. God is against the false practices of: divination [fortune telling, foreseeing, foretelling, a soothsayer, "prophesy for hire"], sorcery, interpreters of omens [augur or clairvoyant], engagers of witchcraft [witch], spell casters [charmer, enchanter], mediums [consulter with familiar spirits], spiritists [psychics], or necromancers [one who consults the dead]. These are considered detestable or an abomination unto the Lord.
- iv. **Demon Possession** [Acts 16:17-18; Acts 19:13-16]
- a. The slave girl was emotionally and mentally deranged from the enslavement of a demonic spirit.
 - (1) The message of the gospel [or good news] of Jesus Christ should declare His healing powers of freedom from all kinds of oppression, including the demonic forces at work in the human body – redeeming the physically bound from exploitation, emotional instability, mental derangement, depression, and all other forms of enslavement!
 - b. The demonic spirit cried out from the slave girl, as if taunting God's servants.
 - c. Evil spirits [and those who are demon-possessed] love to cry out with outbursts of confession, bringing [or drawing] attention to themselves – mocking and challenging the authority of the Kingdom of God!
 - (1) In the synagogue [in the town of Capernaum], there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil [or unclean] spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come do destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God! [Luke 4:33,34]
 - (2) In the region of Gadarenes, Jesus was met by a demon-possessed man that lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" His name was "Legion," because many demons had gone into him. [Luke 8:27,28,30]
 - (3) The spirit of homosexuality loves to expose itself [or cry out], as well as expose others like himself. This a social act called "outing" – the act or practice of revealing the homosexuality of a person [or disclosing someone's sexuality without their consent]. Outing is the act of disclosing or exposing a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender [LGBT] person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent; the public disclosure that someone who is assumed to be heterosexual is actually gay, lesbian, or bisexual. This is a conscious effort by the demon-possessed person to identify the like-minded spirit of another person ~ the so-called "coming out of the closet" effect! Outing gives rise to issues of privacy, choice, hypocrisy, and harm in addition to sparking debate on what constitutes common good in efforts to combat homophobia and heterosexism.

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A publicized outing targets prominent figures in a society, for example well-known politicians, accomplished athletes or popular artists. Opponents to LGBT rights movements as well as activists within LGBT communities have used this type of “outing” as a controversial political campaign or tactic. In an attempt to pre-empt being “outed,” an LGBT public figure may decide to “come out” publicly first, although controlling the conditions under which one’s LGBT identity is revealed is only one of numerous motives for “coming out.”

(4) Sin is contagious!

- a. It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. [1Corinthians 5:1-8; v6]
- b. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. [Galatians 5:7-9]
- d. Paul recognized and cast out the demonic spirit within the slave girl [under the authority of the name of Jesus Christ]; thus freeing her [healing her] from her derangement ~ redeeming her personality!
- e. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. [Luke 10:17-20]
- f. Unauthorized attempts to exorcize the demon-possessed [evil spirit] can result in a subsequent attack upon the false prophet ~ as with the Seven sons of Sceva – so-called “professional peripatetic exorcists,” or “traveling” exorcists]. [Acts 19:13-16]
- g. Evil spirits are transferable. If you are not covered under the blood of Jesus, they can and will embody you! [e.g., Gadarenes demoniac, Seven sons of Sceva]

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- (1) When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. [Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26]
- (2) Unclean spirits don't like cleanliness! Unclean spirits, by definition, are dirty; therefore, they love dirty situations, environments, and unkempt people and places!

II. The Message to the Imprisoned [Acts 16:25-33]

After the miraculous deliverance of the slave girl in Macedonia, the scriptures record that while Paul and Silas were seized and dragged into the marketplace by the slave owners to face the authorities, after the owners realized that their hope of making money was gone. Paul and Silas were brought before the magistrates, where they were charged as Jews for "causing excessive trouble in the city of Macedonia; and for teaching customs which were unlawful for Romans to either observe or practice." As you have read, the crowd was incited by this mayhem, and joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. Ultimately, the magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, severely beaten, thrown into prison, put on high security lock-down, and placed in shackles and stocks. We all have heard and read the story about the manifested delivering power of God at midnight [in the form of an earthquake]; while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God in the midst of their imprisonment and persecution. We have listened to the preached word and shouted the house down, when we acquaint ourselves to the message of opened prison doors, loosed bodily chains, and deliverance at the hands of our captors. But I want to challenge you further tonight, and underscore a greater message to the enslaved and imprisoned...

A. The Enslaved Soul of the Sinner

i. The Cost of Evangelism

- a. Doing God's work has a profound affect on man's economy; which can result in the loss of revenue for the enslavers [slave owners], and imprisonment for the true prophet of God. [Acts 16:19]
 - (1) When the demons within the Gadarenes demoniac were cast out, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down a steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Farmers lost their livestock and income from the resulting death of their pigs – angering them! The people of the town asked Jesus to leave; not only because of fear, but because of Jesus' affect on their economy! [Luke 8:32-37]
- b. There is a blessing when you endure persecution for the sake of Christ!
- c. The Beatitudes of persecution:
 - (1) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [Matthew 5:10]
 - (2) Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [Matthew 5:11]
 - (3) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. [Matthew 5:12]

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ii. **A Time for Rejoicing**

- a. Suffering is a badge of honor!
- b. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus! [Acts 5:41]
- c. The apostle's answer when confronted by persecutors of the faith: "We must obey God rather than men!" [Acts 5:29]
- d. Suffering for Being a Christian:
 - (1) Paul Boasts About His Sufferings: Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. [2Corinthians 11:23-30]
 - (2) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. [1Peter 4:12-16]
 - (3) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing ... Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. [James 1:2-4,12]
 - (4) For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. [Romans 8:18]

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- iii. **Singing Praises during your time of Imprisonment** [Acts 16:25]
- a. The power of praise.
 - b. Praise and worship brings us into the presence of God. When we praise God in the mist of seemingly negative situations we are affirming our faith in Him. This pleases God and helps our faith. Thanking God in the good times also keeps our eyes focused on the source of our strength.
 - c. Praise and thanksgiving are powerful weapons to the believer. They destroy the hold of Satan and unbelief over our life. Praise and thanksgiving in effect disarm the two most deadly weapons to our Christian walk: namely, unbelief and satanic attacks. These two things can manifest in many different ways.
 - d. No wonder why the scriptures call praise a two edged sword.
 - (1) For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD. [Psalm 149: 4-9]
 - e. Earnest praises will cause God to shake the very foundation of your situation; even your imprisonment at the hands of your enemies!
 - f. Deliverance is in your praise! [Acts 16:26,27]
 - (1) God is about to shake some things up, releasing you from your imprisoned situation!
 - (2) God is about to cause a magnitude II earthquake to occur; which will shake and tear down the very foundation that the enemy has raised against you!
 - (3) The chains of slavery and bondage will be broken!
 - (4) Enslavement in the temporal realm, as well as the spiritual realm will be broken!
 - g. Salvation is in your praise! [Acts 16:30-33]
 - (1) Because of your testimony, salvation will come to the sinner; causing him to ask: "What must I do to be saved! [Acts 16:30]
 - (2) The power of your overcoming testimony will cause the sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! [Acts 16:31]
 - (3) The power of your overcoming testimony will shake up the very foundation of the sinner's household, causing whole families to be saved and baptized! [Acts 16:33]
 - (4) The Word of your Testimoy ~ And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. [Revelation 12:10,11]

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iv. **The Prison Message** [Acts 16:25]

- a. The message of the gospel [or good news] of Jesus Christ should declare His healing powers of salvation to the lost through evangelism; even at the cost of suffering persecution – redeeming the physically bound from the emotional enslavement caused by their yielding to the pitfalls and consequences of their unlawful misdeeds.
- b. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.
[1Timothy 1:8-10]
- c. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Romans 6:23]
- d. The mentally-enslaved damsel was correct in her symbolic representation of salvation, when she cried out: “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation!”
- e. True evangelism produces results!
(1) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.
[Acts 8:5-7]
- f. Evangelism requires a boldness of one’s conviction to proclaim to a dying world that there is hope, through salvation, that the gospel of Jesus Christ in which we preach is powerful enough to convert the sinner’s unrighteous paths of condemnation [which leads to an eternity of damnation in hell] to the righteous path [which leads to an eternal life, free of condemnation and full of grace and heavenly peace with God, atoned by the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary’s cross].

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Conclusion:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. [Romans 8:1-11]

