

ACTS 16:12-18 - Looks Can Be Deceiving

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[0 : 0 0] Well, Lord, we thank you for your word. Thank you for this accurate account that Luke so meticulously recorded, verified, and wrote down for us, Lord. And Lord, we have the stamp of approval beyond that of the Holy Spirit, giving witness that this is the true words of God. And Lord, there's so much that happened in Paul's life. In two short verses, they lose from Troas, hit a bunch of these places, and end up in Philippi. Well, that's like, what, a week's travel? We don't know anything about that.

Whatever happened in that portion of his life was not what you wanted to put in Scripture, because it's not what you wanted to put before us, and it's not what the Holy Spirit wanted to use to speak life to us. So these words in this account is very specific, that this is what you wanted us to know 2,000 plus years later, after these events happened, that would inform our lives in such a way that we would grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus, and that we would have a greater understanding of your love for us, and a greater effectiveness for you in the gospel. So we pray that you would accomplish those things tonight, and just, Lord, we're excited about your word, we're excited about the times we live in. But Lord, I just think of the lines from that song we just sang, that we stood beneath the debt we could never afford. Lord, how much more exciting that our sins are forgiven, Lord. Lord, they were so great, and they still are, but your mercy is always more. Lord, we love you, we thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen. So tonight we're going to see a couple different things. We're going to see these two women. I almost was going to call my message a tale of two women, but I didn't.

Because you have Lydia, and then you have this demon-possessed girl. So instead I decided to call it Looks Can Be Deceiving. So looks can be very deceiving. Lydia is not the one you would quite expect when Paul's coming into Macedonia as being the person God was going to use to open the gospel to this region. And then this girl, who is what seems to be proclaiming truth, is not quite what she appears either. So looks can be quite deceiving.

If we back up a little into verse 11 there. So Paul had the dream. They were perceived that this was the Lord, and then they endeavored. They sought to find a way, assuredly gathering. They put those pieces together that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel.

[2 : 3 1] And then verse 11, therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracea, and the next day to Neapolis. Boom, boom, boom. So they've just come from Lystra, and it was this long meandering journey trying to get into these different places. And God said, no, no, no, no.

And now it just seems like there's no more roadblocks. That the Lord's timing, he knew when Paul was ready for Macedonia, and he knew when Macedonia was ready for Paul. And now it's just a straight course in verse 11. It's like, we get on that boat, next thing you knew we were there. There was no more roadblocks. The Lord surely was before us. And they come into Macedonia. Macedonia means extended land. It's all it means. It just means like a broad land. But it's making me think for Paul, who must have felt very constrained as he went through this region of Bithynia and Asia, and God wouldn't let him into these places. He must feel out now just like, oh, just like the doors have been thrown open. In Psalm 31, verse 8, it says, and has not shut, David is saying, and you have not shut me up into the hand of my enemy. You have set my feet in a large room. So as opposed to the constraint that the enemy would constrain him, instead God has opened up this large room for him. Psalm 18, verse 35 and 36, thou has also given me the shield of thy salvation. Thy right hand is holding me up. Thy gentleness has made me great. Thou has enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip. And I think with Paul at this point, he's just having that sense of like, God has opened the door now. God, and Paul we're going to see does what makes the most sense for the direction God is leading him. You know, he didn't overanalyze this and

over-spiritualize it. He didn't put roadblocks in front of himself. I'm prone to do that. The Lord's like, this is the direction you want to go. I'm like, yes. Let me throw as many roadblocks in front of it as I can. And if the Lord removes them all, it must be him, right? Well, that's just frustrating for yourself. And, you know, there's no reason, we said it before, there's no reason to seek what we already have, right? So there's no reason to seek for what God's already given us. So if we know he's calling us to move, we do that. Having said that, you know, David says, it's the Lord. It's on the Lord to do that. It's on the Lord to put us in the large room. The Lord has put us in a large room, hasn't he?

We are very blessed here. And it's on the Lord when he decides to move us. And as it says there, that when he does, our feet will not slip, right? So it's on him to do that. I can, again, get a little ahead of myself. And I don't know. I mean, I think it's, you see what the Lord's doing. You recognize what's coming and you want to be there before it's time to be there, right? So Paul, he heads into Philippi. It specifically tells us it's the chief city or the first city. Paul didn't just go to the quote-unquote first town he came to. He looked at his map and said, all right, where's the center of population? Where can I do, make the most of the opportunity God's giving me? Do the most damage, shall we say, for the time I'm given. And so this is kind of his MO. He goes into a populated center, brings the gospel, the church grows, and is kind of sent out from there. Makes sense for those who've never had the gospel preached to them. And this is what Paul is obviously doing. He shows up.

He's excited. I mean, imagine the Lord gives you a dream that you know, you've verified, you've perceived. You're like, this is the Lord. You step forward and where he's leading you and all roadblocks are removed. It's a straight course. You show up and you're like, where is this man? Where's the man of Macedonia? Where's the great need that was communicated to Paul? And it says here in verse 12, this is where we ended last time. And he was many days in that city, or he was in that city abiding certain days. Sorry.

We know that's no more, most likely than a week, because it then tells us, and on the Sabbath, he went out of the city. So it seems like he gets there. He probably thought, we're gonna hit the ground running. Day one, day two, starts asking around. Is there any synagogues? No, there's not even a Jewish presence here. There was traditionally, it's thought there had to be at least 10 families or 10 men to start a synagogue, and there's no synagogue here. So he then goes on the Sabbath. In verse 13, he goes to the river. The idea was, if you didn't have a synagogue, the Jews would go to a place where there's flowing water representing like new life and cleansing. So he must have heard about this, asking around that, oh, okay, you know, the few God-fearing people in this city, they're meeting at the river. But I thought it's interesting. You know, Paul, he didn't forsake the opportunity to have consistent and routine fellowship. He wasn't like, well, you know, that church just doesn't do it for me. It's not the perfect church. It's not the perfect setup. I mean, they don't even meet in a building, right? Been to one of those before, right? Or they don't even have their own building.

[7 : 32] They meet inside this like little dungeon inside of this big warehouse, and here we are. You can't even find it. You got to come in, right? I mean, he didn't make an excuse and say, well, maybe this isn't the place. You know, he's like, no, God brought me here. So he went to this place where he expected to find people praying. He went to the place where he expected the best and greatest reception for his message. He didn't just start preaching in the city, which I find interesting. You know, well, there's no synagogue. I'm just going to go and preach to whoever will hear. Matthew 7, 6 says, give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast you your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you. Paul knew who his audience was. He knew he was targeting, and that's who he was looking for. It was almost like the idea that he knew he needed to get heaven in, right? He needed someone who was going to receive the gospel that would then open that up in this area. Paul wasn't from this area. He didn't just kind of go randomly, begin to just cast his pearls.

Now, we're meant to cast seed, right? We're supposed to cast seed, and from the parable of the sower, some, you only kind of get a one-quarter return. That's good. The rest falls in various places where you don't produce fruit. But there's a balance between casting your seed and just flinging out that which is holy and giving it to those who are not going to respond, and the Holy Spirit will direct you in that. So Paul goes to the river here, and on the Sabbath day, he went out of the city by a river. This seems like his fallback plan. Like, well, okay. But instead of being discouraged, discouraged, you know, I think he's excited, okay? Instead of being discouraged, like, oh, where's

this man of Macedonia? Where's this great need? You know, boys? Silas? Luke? Timothy? Timothy, you feeling okay? Stomach hurt? Come on, get with it. You know, he's like, give me some input. What do you think? No. He's like, all right, we're going to go to the river. So here these four men go, right? Yeah, Paul, Luke, Silas, and Timothy. They're heading to the river, and they went out of the city by the river where prayer was wont to be made, where they knew it was common, a place to be made, and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Just a bunch of women at the riverside, and here's Paul. I like where it tells us specifically they sat down. Now, in that day, the teacher sat, and everybody else stood.

We kind of meet that halfway. We all just sit. So Paul sits down, but I also like it says he sit down. And it just shows he's giving time. You know, he finds these people worth talking to. And I think that Paul's humility here allowed him to reach others. I'm sorry, reach those that others would have considered second rate. You know, they're women. This isn't what we were looking for. Women didn't really rate in that time period. But Paul doesn't see that. This is Paul who eventually penned that in the kingdom, there's neither June or Greek, bond or free, male and female. That there's no value that's greater than one or the other. God has his order, but God's order does not determine value. It's not like, well, God values pastors. So much more. Not at all. Not at all. He says, you know, what do you tell the disciples? Wash feet. That's what your job is. Serve, serve, serve. So value is not determined by God's order. But I think it was the humility of Paul that allowed him to reach these people. James 4, verse 6 says, but he gives more grace. Wherefore, he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble. So as Paul is bringing himself in humility before these people, God's grace is able to be poured out. Pride is like a big stopper to God's grace. You never, never going to win someone for the kingdom with pride, right? It's just like we said, you're never going to, you're never going to prosper in the flesh, in the things of the spirit. Just, they don't go together. You can't in pride, woo someone into the kingdom, right? If you do, you may have just created a tear instead of a wheat, right? But humility opens the door for grace. Humility wins souls. And there was a certain woman there, verse 14. This is the first convert in Europe. Her name was Lydia. And she was a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, and she heard us. Lydia means travail. That's what her name means, travail. Thyatira means odor of affliction. So here's this woman, whose name means travail, from a place of the odor of affliction. Sounds like she had it pretty rough. So she was a seller in purple. That was the, the center for that was Thyatira. They would take these little mollusks and squeeze them and get the purple dye out of them. It was very lucrative. And so she is here in Philippi, whether on business or it isn't where she lives here. She has a house here. So perhaps she was the agent for this, this particular product there in Philippi. But she hears Paul and it says something interesting about her. It says, she worshiped God and she heard us whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. Well, that's interesting. What's that mean?

[13:12] It says she worshiped God. So she was, her name's Lydia and she's from Thyatira, which seems she's probably Greek or Roman or maybe of the Jewish dispersion. And, and maybe she's Jewish, maybe she's not. And maybe she's a proselyte, but either way, at this point, she's someone who, who has heard of God and she's worshiping with the knowledge that she has of him. But it says that she heard, and then God opened her heart and that she attended upon the things which were spoken of Paul. I don't want to go too far down this rabbit hole, but this is not confirmation of Reformation doctrine. This is not predestination here. This is not an instance of, instance of irresistible grace, which is one of the doctrines of Tulip. I don't know the rest of the five tenets of Calvinism, but one of them is irresistible grace. And that if you are predestined to be saved, nothing you can do to stop it. You're going to be saved once your time to be saved. If you're predestined to hell, nothing you can do about it. You're going to go. And you can almost look at this and go, well, it says that God opened her heart so that she attended unto those things. If God didn't open her heart, would she not have been able to believe? Is that how it works? Is God withholding from us the ability to do what he asks us to do?

Any theology that makes God unreasonable is not worth a single tulip petal. Any theology that makes God unreasonable, and that's the problem with Reformed theology.

It makes God more unreasonable than the creation he created. I would never hold you accountable for something that I asked you to do and then withheld you from having the ability to do that. I would never hold my kids accountable for doing something wrong when I forced them to do it.

And they said, ha ha, well, look what you did. Now you're held accountable. That's essentially what Calvinism does. It puts God in a place where he is unreasonable. And it's, you know, I think of in the last battle in C.S. Lewis's book in the Chronicles of Narnia, they think Aslan has come, but he hasn't. It's a phony. And he's doing all these things that are not in keeping with his character and nature. And the saying that they have is, well, he's not a tame lion. In other words, he might be doing something different. He can do whatever he wants. He said, well, you know, God could. Nobody can control God. He could do whatever he wants. No, he can't. He cannot because he's magnified his word above his name. So it's going to fit with his word. In any system that you have to have an outside source define God's word, throw it out. You should be able to go to God's word with the only thing you need to define it, which is the Holy Spirit, read his word and understand it. If you need an outside source to filter God's word, to tell you what it actually means. For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. Well, for God so loved the whole world of the elect, he gave his only begotten son for the elect, that whosoever of the elect would believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life. It's just kind of nonsensical.

[16:11] So not to go too far down that rabbit trail, but this is not an instance where Lydia was predestined to salvation. Her heart was open to the Lord only after what? I think this is very key.

She heard. Her heart was opened only after she heard the word. And then God opened her heart, but Lydia still had to choose. See, the gospel is the key to unlocking any heart, but whether that unlocked heart will take advantage of the freedom offered is another matter. And that was her choice.

And God leaves that choice with us. Yes, God opens our heart. Yes, God gives us the opportunity to believe, even the ability to believe, but he will not force us. Remember when we're in Genesis and we looked at how we are created in God's image. If God does force us, what does that do? It removes the image of God from man. We are created in the image of God. And so part of that is, is that moral choice. If you remove free will, remove choice from man, you remove what makes us in God's image.

That we can make life-defining choices. My cat does not make a life-defining choice. It makes choices, choices, but they are not moral choices. They're not life-determining choices.

And that is what sets us apart. And so the word of God, which is quick and powerful, we know, it opens her heart and then God, or she hears it and then God opens her heart. And how do you think he opened her heart? With the word, right? And she heard. Heard. Well, it means the faculty and ability to hear. Okay, well, we got that. Well, then it says, and she attended. So what's the difference?

[17:51] To attend is to bring near or bring the ship to land. We've looked at this word before. It's like, it's bringing, it's bringing that which has been distant in a way. It's bringing it near and bringing it to rest in harbor. And so she heard the word, but then she brought it near and she kind of brought it to harbor within her own heart at this point. And so Lydia attends some of the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us. That word constrained is very strong. It means to compel by force, right? She was very forceful in this saying, please come, please come. Paul, we see here him in his primary role as well.

If you look at the end of verse 14, it says under the things, she's attending under the things which are spoken of Paul. Well, didn't he give Timothy a chance to talk? What about Luke? I'm sure Silas had some good things to say. He was one of the guys who was back in Antioch who was teaching and filled with the spirit. Why Paul? This was Paul's primary role. God was building around Paul, a ministry support team, and not for the sake of Paul, but for the sake of the gospel, right? Each of these men would have their chance in their turn. But at this point in time, God had his man and he had a ministry support team. I like, and I've heard this term, I really like it, ministry support team. They're like, what's the ministry? Well, that's what God does. God is doing the ministry. It's not us. It's not me. It's the Lord. And so then God's going to build support for his ministry. However, he decides whether that's missions, whether that's a children's work, whether it's an orphanage or foster care, whatever, he's going to build that ministry. And then he's going to bring support for that ministry. Now a church, by nature of its calling and what the scripture says, you know, he's given a pastor teacher for edification of the body. If you're not being edified, go somewhere else. But that's, it's not then come and support that person. You know, we only support one another in so much as

what God is doing, right?

So I like that, the idea of a ministry support team. Instead of taking something so beautiful and organic like ministry and serving, and then trying to fit it into the corporate model of the Western, you know, whatever system to make everything legal and tidy. And yes, okay, if we have to do that, great. We can call it whatever, but we can choose to live according to what the scripture presents. So I just like this, that Paul's got his guys. Now they will each have an opportunity in their time. Timothy would eventually become a pastor and lead the church in Ephesus. Luke, like we said, he would be the most prolific writer of the New Testament. He'd eventually write more of the New Testament than any other person. And then Silas, tradition tells us he became the first bishop of Corinth.

So each of these men, God had a further calling on their life. So again, value in the kingdom is not based on what we would call maybe position, right? It's not quantity, it's quality.

[21 : 13] There's a lot of churches out there that are a lot bigger than ours. Do they have much quality? I don't know. And so Lydia gets saved. And then it says she was baptized in her whole household. I don't know if she was married. She has a household. So whether that meant like her household of her servants, or if it just doesn't mention her husband, or if she's just, you know, had inherited this business from her father or her husband had died. Either way, this affects her whole house. And this is pretty quick, pretty quick turnaround too. She seems to be greatly impacted. The transformation in her life is very evident. And so we should never underestimate the effect that one changed life can have on an entire household. Here is someone who's not just supporting the ministry, but like we see, she's constrained them to come to her house. That she is persistently supporting the ministry.

Praise God for those that support the ministry. Praise the Lord for those who persistently support the ministry, who doggedly chase after it, whether they want it or not, and are going to support. We go to the pastor's conference and you kind of sit there and slink down a little because everybody's like, oh, I wish, I wish God would give us a worship leader. I wish we had some good support people. We're doing all the work. Nobody supports us. And I kind of feel like, wow, you know, we, that's all we have here is like these, you know, mature, well-grounded. I mean, if I fell over, any of you guys could step up here and teach. It's such a blessing to see those that persistently choose to support the Lord and what he's doing. And so the Lord, he opened Lydia's heart, but she opened her life. She opened her life to Paul and to the ministry. And so Lydia, this woman in travail from a city of affliction had found a new life and new purpose in the service of the God who opens hearts. What a testimony. Things are going great for Paul right now. He's like, well, I didn't find the man in Macedonia, but this lady of Macedonia is fantastic. And him and his buddies, they've now got this house, this base to kind of work from. And it seems like though, he continues though to frequent this, this place of prayer, that this seems to be their meeting place. It doesn't seem like he's using Lydia's house as the central place because it tells us in verse 16, and it came to pass as he went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us. So Luke is still writing here, you know, in the first person, which brought her master much gain by soothsaying.

The same followed Paul and us. So Paul and the boys going to prayer and cried saying, these men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. 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. So we see there, it says, and she did this many days.

And as Paul is going to prayer, many days, this is happening. Where was he headed through? So there is the Roman market at that time. Might have looked something like this. And the ruins are still there.

[24 : 21] Look at those in a moment that kind of show that. So there's this corridor, and you'd have your stalls and wares, and Paul, Barnabas, Silas, not Barnabas, I'm sorry. Sorry, Barnabas. Paul, Luke, Timothy, and Silas are heading through here, heading to the river, heading to prayer. And as they go along through this area, this young girl is crying out these words to them. And there's the ruins today of what would have been the market. That's Philippi today. And so as Paul walks through this area day after day, heading to prayer, this woman, this girl actually is crying out. It's interesting, the enemy, he didn't like Paul's preaching, right? But he cannot abide prayer. It wasn't until Paul goes to prayer that the enemy sends his messenger. The most effective work we will ever

do for the kingdom will be unseen, because the work will be eternal, not temporal. Remember, the things which are seen are temporal. The things which are not seen are eternal. So Paul's headed to prayer. The enemy is like, sure, you want to move some pieces around in this world? Go ahead. Great. You want to move a church here?

You want to go and talk to someone over there? You know, you may make, okay, okay, don't pray. Don't pray. Because that's when the gates of hell are shaken. The enemy had taken into his captivity this damsel. It means a young girl. And it's just a sad picture, especially what's happened in Israel and the day and age we live in where many young damsels are taken by those who would be their masters and are using them to oppress them for gain. It's very sad.

The enemy has no respect for age, gender, family ties, reputation, decency, or morality. He does not respect any of that. He doesn't care. John 10.10 says, the thief comes not before to steal, to kill, and to destroy. Jesus says, contrary, I've come that you might have life, you might have it more abundantly. The enemy will steal your joy, kill your peace, and destroy your hope. That's what his desire is. If he does that, where do you end up? Well, it's a place we like to call despair, discouragement, depression, right? It's a place where you've closed off your heart to be able to hear the things of the Lord. And so he's taken this girl into his possession. And the word there for divination is literally she was possessed with the spirit of Python. It was one of their gods. The spirit of Python, of the serpent, is what she's possessed with. There would have been a few different temples in Philippi. There's also near there an oracle. So at that time, you know, they called these oracles where you could go and there'd be like somebody there, a prophetess or someone who was speaking forth prophecies and oracles. And so most likely this girl was of that, I don't know if you want to, what do you want to call it? Because she's possessed, but that school of the oracle. And so her masters have her there. They're using her for gain, for soothsaying, which is to prophesy. Again, that's the same word for oracle and much gain. Well, she begins to call out to Paul. Verse 17, the same followed

Paul and us and cried saying, these men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. Is that wrong? It's true, isn't it? They are the servants of the most high God, which show us the way of salvation. It's the correct message, but the incorrect messenger, right? This is a true message. The Lord does not need the enemy's help to promote his work, does he? God doesn't need the enemy's help. He doesn't need the enemy's solutions or methods.

[28 : 20] The emails I most get to the church email are ones, because there's a form that you've got, contact form you can fill out on the website. I get all these emails and it says contact form.

First, I got excited. Look at all these people, our contact, they want to know about the church, it's great. And then you read it. Hello, we see you have this contact form. Isn't it frustrating when someone comes to your website and you don't know who they were? Well, we have a feature that is anybody who comes to your website, we'll capture their name, their phone number, their email address, you know, it's like, oh my word, this is terrible. And they want to offer it to you, pastor. Sure. So, but the Lord doesn't need the enemy's methods, right? God will, God will put our feet in a secure, wide place. He will build his church. The Lord will add daily to the church such as should be saved. He doesn't need the enemy's help to promote his work. Now, the enemy may appear as an angel of light, right? But there'll always be a shadow. He will look like, this is good, but look for the shadow.

2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 14 and 15. And no marvel for Satan himself has transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is of no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. What does that tell us? Well, it means their works don't exactly line up with their appearance because their works are going to be judged. And that's what their end will be. So the message, the message was true.

[29 : 52] But the emphasis was not. Notice what the emphasis is not. What is missing here? The enemy will never emphasize Jesus. He will emphasize spiritual gifts, gifted men, servants of the Most High God, church buildings and ministries, but never Jesus. He'll never emphasize these men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

Focus on these men. Look at these great men. Ho, ho, ho, promotion. Don't you want to be promoted? You know, we quote it all the time when Jesus's brethren said to him, go up to the feast. If you want to be known, go up to the feast. And he's like, your time is always ready, but it's not yet my time.

They will not emphasize Jesus. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3. Wherefore, I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and that no man can say Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. So look for the shadow when it looks like an angel of light. When it looks like, is this the Lord? Well, if they're willing to say Jesus is Jesus, the Jesus we know from the Bible, not the Mormon Jesus, not the health and wealth Jesus, not the Jesus is your buddy, not the Jesus gets you. Thankfully, that campaign kind of fizzled out. But this Jesus, the humble Jesus who associated with sinners and took upon himself the form of a servant and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. And so Paul continues just to, it says, for many days, this girl is just calling out, like, these are servants of the most high God. These are servants. But Paul doesn't acknowledge her or anything. Paul was not going to be distracted from his work by the enemy's trickery. Not every spiritual battle is ours to fight. There are some spiritual battles that are just to be left and ignored. And Nehemiah, remember when Sanballat called out to him in chapter six, and he says, come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono.

That's a little hint there, isn't it? Come on, come to the plain of Ono. Oh, Satan's not that smart, guys. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them saying, I'm doing a great work so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease?

Well, I leave it and come down to you. What are the keys in there? I always will bring you down. The work ceases. And he has to leave what God is clearly calling him to do. So for Paul, he's like, whatever. I don't have time for this. There's a work happening. I'm not going to be distracted by this. Jesus said in Luke chapter nine, verse 62, no man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven. It says here that when Paul finally gets kind of fed up and grieved, and this he did many a day, but Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit. So he turns around. He has no reason to look at the face of the enemy. The enemy wants to distract him. He wants to turn him. That word grieved there means to manage with pains, accomplished with great labor. And so it had gotten to the point where this had become, this was causing Paul to go about God's work. It was causing it to be a pain, causing it to be labor. It began to wear upon him where he could no longer focus on the work God had for him with this going on. He's like, all right, it's time to engage. It's time to engage the enemy. Yes, let's go to war, right? And he said, I command thee to the spirit, not to her, no, to the spirit. I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. So Paul engaged the enemy. [33 : 40] What is some of the characteristics of this engaging of the enemy? Well, Paul engaged the enemy only when the work of God became hindered. So this was many days this was going on. He didn't see any reason he needed to stop and talk to this girl. It wasn't until he became grieved, until it became a labor, until it was painful for him to go about this, that, oh, there's that, that again, that attack from the enemy. And Lord, we need to deal with that only when the work of God became hindered, only for the purpose of deliverance, right? There wasn't any other reason here. He wasn't just talking to the enemy.

It was for the purpose of deliverance, only in the authority and name of Jesus. He didn't engage the enemy on any other grounds, except the name of Jesus. He did so without fear or doubt. He wasn't like, oh man, demon possessed girl. Wow. Yeah. It was just like, okay, let's just deal with this and move on. It's lunchtime. And without a show or display, I think that's a big one. He wasn't like, everybody, this girl is a demon. Come around and see. No, he just turned to her, to her. He didn't even look at the guys that were with her. And he speaks to the demon and he says, in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her. And he came out the same hour, the same hour. When dealing with spiritual deliverance, scripture never places the outcome in doubt. The process may vary, but the outcome is sure. And that's why I think we need to stand our ground. You know, I've never cast out a demon.

I wouldn't anyone. The Lord has not used me to cast out a demon, right? I don't know the process by which he would ever do that if he did. But I know the outcome, so I don't need to fear. I know the outcome is sure. If I was ever faced with a situation like that, that I have the authority of the name of Jesus for that outcome. Okay. Oh, we've been going a while. So we have these two women. Let's look at these two women. So here's my tale of two women. They're very similar, but they're not what they seem, right? Both very similar, but very different. They were both spiritually minded, weren't they? Both this girl and Lydia, they both are spiritually minded. And yet neither one of them knew the Lord at that point. Lydia worshiped God, but she had not yet come to the full meaning of

salvation. Both women were women of influence. Lydia was a well-to-do woman, woman of Thyatira with this business. And this girl was being used to give these prophecies. Both had powerful associates. Interestingly, they both followed Paul, didn't they? But for different reasons. They both spoke truth. They both had their lives changed through Paul's ministry, drastically changed. But only one was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, right? They're very similar, but only one responded in faith to the

Holy Spirit. Hopefully this other girl once delivered, you know, hopefully she's in the church in Philippi. When Paul writes the letter to the Philippians, hopefully she's sitting there and she's listening to that letter be read. And she's like, thank you, Lord. Thank you for delivering me. Thank you for the day you sent Paul to Macedonia. Matthew 7, verse 15 and 16 says, Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

[37 : 09] In other words, it's not going to be too hard to determine. It might take a little time. You might have to wait for the fruit to get ripe to see what it is. But you're going to know.

Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. When do sheep take off their clothing? You've got to shear them, right? That doesn't happen all the time. It's a specific time of year.

So again, it takes time. You've got to wait it out, but it'll always be shown, hey, I'm shearing a wolf. You know, right? You're not going to gather grapes of thorns. If you go looking for grapes and thorns, what's going to happen? Ow, this is not a grapevine. I'm just getting jabbed all over the place. And there's some people like that. You go to find fruit, you're like, oh my word, man, you may be a believer, but I'm going to go somewhere else, right? There's some sheep that are a lot like wolves too. You go to, oh, how are you? You know, you go to pet them, they bite you like my cat. There's some sheep like that. But it takes time.

My point is it takes time to see who these are. And even Paul, it took, it was many days before he he acted on this. He didn't just jump on this girl right away. Second Corinthians tells us in chapter 10, for though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. We don't war after the flesh. Paul recognized that instantly in this situation. We don't either. I don't think we're meeting too many demon-possessed people in this sense like he is. We might, you know, but not in a way that I know that I'm meeting them. But whoever we come in contact with, there's a spiritual battle that's happening. You know, there's a war that we can wage in prayer and saying, God, open the heart of this person. That they would respond and believe the word. Give me words to give them salt and light and that their heart be open to receive that. That is the battle. The enemy will distract us from that.

He'll put anything in our way to keep us from that battle in prayer. So as we end this section, we'll get into, we'll make a run at the end next time, which is just Paul and Silas getting dragged before the magistrates. There's a little bit there, and then we'll get into the Philippian jailer and his whole story. But in Ephesians chapter 6, Paul tells us, he says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles, or literally the methods of deceit, of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Paul enters into Macedonia. He enters into Philippi. He meets with Lydia. Amazing meeting, an amazing moment. What he thought was probably a failure or he missed something. There's nobody in this city. There's no synagogue. There's no Jews.

[40 : 12] He gets to the river and he speaks to these women. Only one is responding. And yet, when Paul writes the letter to the Philippian church, they are thriving. They're also one of the only churches that would support him. They would send people after him to find him, to bring him support.

And you see what he did for Lydia. You see what he did for this girl. And then what you see with the Philippian jailer, we'll see next time. And just like we were talking about, God builds a foundation. He knows the people and the pieces. Some of them you wouldn't think would fit, but God makes it work, just like he's doing here with us. But I would encourage you, you know, learn from this scripture.

Don't worry about the enemy. Not every spiritual battle is yours to fight. And it's not always our place to turn and face the enemy. Just leave it. He can't do anything. All he can do is like here.

And just kind of talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. Ignore him. And you go about what is most edifying and most, brings about the most fruit for the kingdom, which is to pray, which is the things that are not seen that are eternal. The Lord will let you know when it's time to turn and face the enemy. And when you do, you do that in the power and authority of Jesus.

[41 : 30] You deal with it, you move on, right? Paul didn't stand there glorying into spoils. Oh, look what I did. I'm amazing, right? Luke, are you writing this one down? No. It was just, hey, come on, guys. We got to go to prayer. That's done. That's dealt with.

And hopefully they said to the girl, hey, come with us. Now they're going to get interrupted by these guys. We're going to drag them before the magistrates. But let's keep a single-minded and single-focus on the work God has for us. And so, Lord, we do thank you for the work you've given us to do. Sometimes, Lord, it seems so uneventful. I mean, Paul seemed to be coming into the situation expecting, like, a crusade from that dream. And one woman is converted. And then we see him just day after day, it seems like, faithfully going to prayer.

It says as he went to prayer, and then many days this girl continued to follow them and speak to them. Just doing the simple, everyday, faithful things, Lord. But, Lord, what an example, Lord. Paul, he talked the talk and he walked the walk. But he continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and of prayer. Sometimes, Lord, the most seemingly simple and mundane things are where the greatest spiritual work is done, where the battle is, because that's where the enemy wants to get us turned away and distracted. If he can disrupt the everyday things, we're never going to be in a place, Lord, to be ready for the things that are outside of that.

We're just going to be all turned up and discombobulated. Lord, help us to do the everyday things in the power of your Spirit, in the authority of the name of Jesus, single-focused, single-minded, looking towards you, not facing the distractions of the enemy. Then, Lord, when we know that we are about your business, Lord, let us not heed or hear his voice or his trickery, but recognizing, God, that just because there are times what it seems like may be, it's truth. But wait a minute.

Is that taking my focus off Jesus? I was going to come and pray right now, and I just thought of this really important thing I should do. But wait, is that turning my emphasis off of you? It is.

[43 : 48] Then it's probably not you. So, Lord, I just thank you so much for your Word, which gives such insight and shines such a light into the most basic things of our lives. And, Lord, I thank you that the enemy is completely unmasked. We never have to wonder if it's him, Lord. Yes, the wolf may come in sheep's clothing, but it doesn't quite fit. And, Lord, the briar may try and produce grapes, but nobody's going to believe it. And so, Lord, I thank you for opening our eyes. And we love you and praise you. Thank you for this time together. In Jesus' name, amen.