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SERMON TITLE: **Jesus Sets You Free**
SCRIPTURE: **Acts 16:16-24**
DATE **August 28, 2022**

Online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

Do you remember Ouija boards? Amazon advertises, “Ouija boards unlock secrets from a mysterious and mystifying world. You have questions, and the spirit world has answers.”

What about “Magic 8 Balls Fortune Teller game from the 1960s? Every teenage girl from my era asked questions of the Magic 8 Ball, especially about boys!

Those games may seem harmless, but the subject matter is not harmless at all.

Now there are hundreds of video games whose subject matter is about fortune telling, psychic powers, witchcraft, casting spells, sorcery, and all things dark.

There are thirty-nine psychics or psychic businesses serving the 75116 Zip Code.

But did you notice that God takes a dim view of fortune telling, contacting the spirit world, sorcery, and the like. These are heathen practices. Ancient military leaders had diviners, but Israel had the true God. These practices have persisted for centuries but lead to terrible bondage, even death of children. Israel was influenced by their neighbors, just like we all are influenced by the culture around us.

Eugene Peterson puts it this way, “Don’t you dare sacrifice your son or daughter in the fire” (Deut 18:10 *The Message*). Child sacrifice resulted from these practices. But God’s message is this, “Be completely loyal to God, your God” (Deut 18:13).

Occult activities are rooted in the demonic world, a world of bondage.

God is into freedom.

- Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth *will set you FREE!*” (Jn 8:32).
- And, “The Spirit of the Lord has sent me to proclaim that *captives will be released*, that the blind will see, that *the oppressed will be set free*” (Lk 4:18).
- Paul writes, “For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is FREEDOM!*” (2 Cor. 3:17).

But people still have the occasion—the temptation—to delve into the occult. Let’s hear the story. READ Acts 16:16-24

Paul is in Philippi. God had specifically called him and his companions there. They were not planning to go there but remember, the Holy Spirit directed Paul there, and it opened the way for his message to this area saturated by heathen worship.

There were very few Jewish people in Philippi—not even enough to have a synagogue. With no synagogues, the culture would not have been influenced by the commandments of God.

How much of an influence is the Christian Church? Are we influencers—or the influenced?

Thus, these heathen practices were normalized there, and the result was bondage. This girl was enslaved and exploited.

God is into freedom.

Paul writes:

- “With eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in *glorious freedom from death and decay*” (Ro 8:20-21).
- “So we receive God’s promise of *freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ*” (Gal 3:22b).
- “For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins” (Col 1:13-14).

When there is a void of the Word, the void is filled by something.

This young slave girl was filled with a spirit of divination. just like the fortunetellers who advised ancient armies about success in battle. This is not a good thing.

She was in bondage to this demonic activity.

These oppressive spirits fight against God. Paul is going to a place of prayer. He’s probably going to meet with Lydia. They were establishing a church there. This enemy confronts the new believers and tries to prevent God’s work.

The Lord has an enemy and it is Satan.

Paul enters a spiritual battle.

It is very important for us to know that we will encounter these enemies to faith. They try to confound us, discourage us, and overcome us. So, let’s ask for the Lord’s help! That’s what people of faith have done for ages.

Take the Psalmist—he had CONFIDENCE in God:

By your mighty power Lord you rescue those who seek refuge from their enemies. . . . My God is a Rock, in whom I find protection! He is my shield. (Ps 17)

We know Paul is in a battle because Paul is not sorry for the girl who shouts at them for days, but “very much annoyed”—he was greatly disturbed because he knew it was the underworld who held her in bondage. So he turned around and confronted not the girl, but the devil who possessed her:

**IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST I ORDER YOU,
GET OUT OF HER!**

And the girl was freed that very hour.

Nothing is more joyful than seeing someone freed. Perhaps this is why the letter to the Philippians which Paul wrote is so filled with JOY. What is the “spirit of Duncanville?” Is it one of spreading joy?

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. . . . The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil 4:4-6).

Freedom is joyful! Victory is stunning!

Freedom occurs on many levels—personal, economic, governmental policies—but this world is in a battle between good and evil. When the Lord sets someone free, it initiates a counter attack!

The girl’s owners, upon seeing their profits fizzle right before their eyes, went after them with vengeance.

Paul later would describe it like this in 1 Thessalonians:

“You know how badly we had been treated at Philippi . . . and how much we suffered there. Yet our God gave us the courage to declare his Good News to you boldly, in spite of great opposition” (2:2-3).

Would you go to this extent to free someone, or take a stand for good? Would you fear for your own safety? Would you stand up in word or deed, trusting Jesus’ authority? Sometimes we free others simply by telling them about God and showing them how to turn to God. You can do this with your story, which might be how God has helped us overcome bondage. Are you relying on God yourself to help you overcome a stronghold in your life?

Well, the counter attack was that Paul and Silas were beaten, thrown into prison, and put into stocks.

They were down in the count, but by no means out!

They began praying and singing hymns to God. This is freedom! Martin Luther says the devil hates hymns more than anything, and singing them always defeats him. Luther routinely wrestled with the devil, and he wrote and sang hymns. Once he even threw an ink well at him when the devil woke him up at night!

Well, when you are down, no ill words! The Lord is your helper. Continue to sing; continue and call on God to help! Because for Paul and Silas, God showed out.

God shook that place with a powerful earthquake; breaking the prison doors and every prisoner’s chains! Even the jailer, his family, and likely many of those prisoners got saved.

God is into freedom.

Are you in bondage, either with a habit you would like to break or a difficult circumstance that is holding you down, or something that is producing fear and anxiety? Do you feel under attack? Do not fear. You have the best, most powerful “punch” in Jesus. Let’s go for the knock out.

AMEN