

Price2Pay

While spending time in Philippi, a leading city, economical hub and Roman colony in the province of Macedonia, Paul and Silas witnessed amazing conversions but were also heavily confronted with the reality of a ruthless battle. A battle we could term “money versus God” (*Acts 16:16f*). Why's that? What happened?

- For days they were followed by a slave girl (*V18a*). - That's nothing particular unusual. So where's the problem? Perhaps she just wanted to hear more of what they had to say and/or watch them minister out of curiosity?
- This slave girl kept on shouting, “*These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.*” (*V17*) - Well, granted, that sounds a bit unusual and her constant shouting might have been as vexing to our friends as the vuvuzelas are to others at the soccer world cup in South Africa. But then again, she was shouting the truth and what better free of charge advertising or marketing campaign could you ask for? Wouldn't we permit it? At least be tempted?
- The slave girl had a spirit of divination (*V16a*). - Oh, ok, that puts a different light to the whole incident, doesn't it? Because of this spirit she knew stuff others didn't. So Paul and his companions could have dealt with this swiftly and free this woman from demonic influence, couldn't they? Well, in fact, Paul did (*V18b*). So where was the problem?
- The problem was that as long as the spirit of divination was active in the slave girl, she brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling (*V16b*). And by commanding that spirit to leave the girl, Paul killed the source of income of her owners straight away. And as a Christian you just don't mess with business people, do you?

From *Acts 16* we could deduct that things, though challenging, were still sort of hunky-dory for Paul and Silas until they dared to interfere with economical issues. Likewise we may find today that as long as believers don't touch and interfere with the world's financial issues people are not too bothered by Christian activity. Remember *Matthew 6:24*, “*You cannot serve both God and money ...*”? So as soon as God's folk bring light into that darkness, all hell breaks loose.

It did for sure for Paul and Silas, because they were immediately seized by the slave girl's owners, dragged into the market place, accused of violating customs and laws, attacked by the crowds, ripped of their garments by the magistrates and ordered to be beaten with rods before thrown into prison, where their feet were fastened into stocks (*Acts 16:19-24*). Now that's a heavy price to pay for bringing light into darkness, freedom from occultism, change to exploitation and destructive dependance, isn't it?

Only because it was recorded do we know in retrospect that this (perhaps unexpected) onslaught brought even more glory to God as Paul and Silas got miraculously freed, yet didn't run away, the jailer and all his family got saved because of it and all the magistrates had to publicly apologize and free them to rectify grave injustice as much as possible (*V25-40*).

Paul and Silas didn't know all this when Paul dealt with this evil spirit and unrighteous source of income. They had to make a decision without knowing the immediate negative repercussions: light or darkness? Thankfully, they chose light, no matter the price.

As the Holy Spirit reveals relevant analogies to our circumstances, situation and challenges today, may the Lord strengthen our willingness and resolve to choose light over darkness without hesitation, too, even if there is a price to pay!