

Cancelling Paul and Silas

‘A man had fifty-yard-line tickets for the Super Bowl. As he sits down, another man approaches and asks if anyone is sitting in the [open] seat next to him. “No”, he says, “the seat is empty”. “This is incredible”, says the man. “Who in their right mind would have a seat like this for the Super Bowl, the biggest sporting event in the world, and not use it?” He says, “Well, actually, the seat belongs to me. I was supposed to come with my wife, but she passed away. This is the first Super Bowl we haven’t been to together since we got married in [1977]”. “Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. That’s terrible. But couldn’t you find someone else—a friend or relative, or even a neighbor to take the seat?” The man shakes his head. “No, they’re all at the funeral”.’

Or, how about this one? “A reporter asked the young woman why she wanted to be a mortician. “Because”, she said, “I enjoy working with people”. Apparently, at least for her, it’s most enjoyable to work with people who won’t talk back to you! Actually, you could suggest absolutely anything, and that person would technically be agreeing with you since they wouldn’t be saying anything back to you at all. And isn’t that exactly what today’s cancel culture wants most? Say anything objectionable, or do anything questionable, and next thing you know, somebody is out to cancel

you. Silence you. Change your mind until you either agree with them, or at least never contradict them ever again.

Of course, cancel culture has been with humanity for as long as there've been humans. We've called it different things, but in today's world, it's truly gotten out of hand. But it only seems that way. Because America originally had a culture based on Judeo-Christian values and morals, those of us old enough, or at least raised in strongly Christian homes, knew to expect a certain level of civility and genuine tolerance for others. While everyone wouldn't necessarily accept other's viewpoints, they wouldn't try forcing others to abandon their preferences and accept theirs. We knew what it meant to live and let live. But that's all gone out the window. Now, we're seeing the human condition as it really is. The veneer of Christian civilization that existed before, expecting normal people would usually exhibit the fruit of Holy Spirit, namely "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control", as listed in Galatians 5:22-23, for a great many people is no more. And so we see people as they really are. Their ugly brokenness is more evident than ever before. Their need of the Savior, Lord Jesus, is more obvious and conspicuous than ever. Which should motivate us who already know the Lord's peace that passes understanding, to all the more radiate His peace, power and compassion to others as we are able.

Consider the example of the Apostles Paul and Silas. These two worked together on many mission fields for many years.

Here in Acts 16, they've been traveling for many weeks and finally stop for a few days in Philippi. Again going down to the place of prayer on the riverbank just outside the city, they just happen this day to run into a slave girl who told fortunes. She was apparently good enough at it to earn quite a tidy sum for her captors. The people who went to her could tell that she had supernatural powers, and thus, she was worth it to be paid well for her advice and prognostications. Well, the reason she was as good as she was in telling people's fortunes was because she really was supernaturally empowered—by a demon spirit that indwelt her. Demon spirits don't know everything. By no means. They are created spirit beings, but a long time ago, joined with satan and rebelled against God. Once beautiful and glorious every one, now they are twisted all out of shape by the fact they've separated themselves from the source of all life, light and good—God Who created them. Their original beauty and glory is now nothing but ugliness and grotesqueness. Now utterly repulsive monstrosities, woe to any human who has anything to do with them, least of all those who end up playing host body to them.

When the slave girl would see a client, the demon would send messages to any other fellow demons nearby, who would then relay those messages to still other demons, all seeking any and all available information about the client and the client's family and friends. As the information was quickly passed back to the demon in the girl, she could then tell the client many personal de-

tails that no one but the client would know. She could even, with the demon's help, suggest courses of action, predict probable future happenings and circumstances, all with a view to ensuring favorable outcomes that the client would pay for. In this way, the demon was assured of having continued and uninhibited use of the slave girl's body to live and get around in. Like a parasite and its host, it seemed to be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Just for the record, human beings, once empowered by the very Holy Spirit of the One Who created us, can, by virtue of the delegated authority granted to us by the blood of Christ Jesus the Savior and Lord of Lords, self expel any demons that might have attached themselves to us followers of Christ. For Christ has given us this authority. Did not the disciples gush to the Lord how "even the demons obey us" in Luke 10:17. However, it's often easier for other believers to exorcise, expel evil spirits from others. However, a person must want deliverance. If a person is such "friends" with an indwelling evil spirit, then that person's God-given freedom of choice will prevail. It's not unlike the adage about leading a horse to water, but not being able to make it drink.

In this case, this girl and her masters found it quite the money maker to follow Paul and company around to wherever they went, for they were always drawing crowds, crowds filled with potential new clients. Common people couldn't tell the difference between Holy Spirit and evil spirits, unless there was a direct comparison. It's the same today. For most people's experience

with the supernatural is with the evil variety. Just look at the crowds of rioters who burnt cars and buildings the last few years, and today's pro-death, abortion supporters so filled with spirits of rage and hate they literally can't think straight.

Acts 16:18 records that Paul got so "exasperated" by this girl's demon constantly, mockingly announcing to the crowds around that Paul and company were servants of God and messengers of salvation, that in a brief flash of anger, Paul just up and commanded the demon to get out and go. As Paul wielded Christ's blood authority, it was compelled to obey instantly. That the spirit was now gone was immediately apparent, and the girl's masters knew she could no longer make them any more money. They turned their fury on Paul and Silas, and initiated the process of "cancelling" them both. Leveling bogus allegations against them, they successfully got them both jailed. With prejudice! But God always has the last word, for Christ Jesus is the Supreme Judge. Prejudice or no prejudice, their jail sentences would not hold up. While the two worshipped and sang praises to the Lord Jesus in the middle of the night, as all the other prisoners listened in amazement, He sent an angel to give the jail a little shake. It shook, and not just Paul's and Silas', but the entire prison's inmates' chains and shackles fell off. Seeing everyone suddenly released from their bonds, the jailer set about to kill himself quickly, to save his Roman overlords the trouble of doing it more gruesomely themselves. Would that modern day jail wardens would

take this much responsibility for the security of their prisons. I bet we'd have far fewer escapees and inmate riots and misbehaviors!

You see, the blessing meant just for Paul and Silas spilled over and overflowed to all the prisoners around them. And what happened to the jailer? As none of them fled their cells, his life could be spared, and not just his physical life, but his eternal life was now guaranteed by his new-found faith in the merits of Christ Jesus' blood. Again the blessings of his faith overflowed, and his whole family and staff were so moved that they too believed, and the whole "kit and caboodle" were saved that day. Hallelujah!

After their wondrous feast at the warden's house, they returned to the jail. The next morning, the mayor's office and police commissioner sent orders for the two to be released. Paul then asserted his political rights as a Roman citizen. (Would that our own American citizenship still meant as much now as it used to!) As their rights had been violated, the mayor and others could not refuse to personally apologize to Paul and Silas, but begged them to leave Philippi and not come back! So the whole attempt to cancel Paul and Silas backfired. The believers were emboldened and strengthened, and the Philippian church grew all the more.

So folks, in our day, people, many motivated by demons themselves, will want to cancel us if they see that we're Christians who will stand up for truth and righteousness. Just know that, regardless of whatever they may try to do to us, they will never have the last word! Praise God!

