

Acts 16:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

These men are the servants of the most high God (Greek: δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου, douloi tou theou tou hypsistou)—the demon-possessed slave girl spoke theological truth while serving evil purposes. Hypsistos ('Most High') was used by pagans for Zeus but also by Jews for Yahweh, creating strategic ambiguity. Though her proclamation was accurate, Paul silenced her because:

1. the gospel needs no demonic endorsement
2. her testimony would confuse Christ with pagan spiritualism
3. the Spirit's witness doesn't come through unclean spirits.

The way of salvation (ὁδὸν σωτηρίας, hodon sōtērias)—remarkably precise language from a demonic source.

Yet truth spoken for the wrong reasons or from the wrong source undermines the gospel. Like demons confessing Jesus as 'Holy One of God' (Mark 1:24), accurate doctrine without the Spirit's anointing can be spiritually counterproductive. Paul's refusal of her 'help' demonstrates that God's work must be done God's way.

Historical Context

This occurred in Philippi (c. AD 50), a Roman colony where fortune-telling and occult practices were common and profitable. The girl's owners exploited her

condition for financial gain through divination (Greek: *pythōna*, 'python spirit'—named after the serpent guarding Delphi's oracle). Paul's exorcism would cost them significant income, explaining their violent reaction in verses 19-24.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why would Paul reject accurate testimony about the gospel from a demonic source? What does this teach about spiritual discernment?
2. How do modern churches sometimes accept 'help' from sources that compromise the gospel's purity, even when the message seems true?

Interlinear Text

Οὗτοι	κατακολουθήσασα	τῷ	Παύλῳ	καὶ	ἡμῖν,	ἔκραζεν
The same	followed		Paul	and	unto us	and cried
G3778	G2628	G3588	G3972	G2532	G2254	G2896
λέγουσα	Οὗτοι	οἱ	ἄνθρωποι	δοῦλοι	τοῦ	θεοῦ
saying	The same	G3588	men	the servants	G3588	God
G3004	G3778		G444	G1401		G3588
ὑψίστου	εἰσίν	οἵτινες	καταγγέλλουσιν	ἡμῖν,	όδὸν	
of the most high	are	which	shew	unto us	the way	
G5310	G1526	G3748	G2605	G2254	G3598	
σωτηρίας						
of salvation						
G4991						

Additional Cross-References

John 14:6 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

1 Peter 2:16 (References God): As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Mark 5:7 (References God): And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Daniel 6:20 (References God): And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Daniel 3:28 (References God): Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Daniel 3:26 (References God): Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

Psalms 57:2 (References God): I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

Jonah 1:9 (References God): And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

Luke 4:41 (References God): And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Luke 4:34 (References God): Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

