

# THE BOOK OF ACTS

## ACTS 16:16-25 | LESSON SUMMARY

### The Python

**ACTS 16:16**, "As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling." (ESV)

- This girl isn't performing parlor tricks; this girl was demonically possessed and had been purchased for the explicit purpose of profiting from her oppression
- Not only is this girl possessed, but she is owned as a slave—her status in the ancient world would have been the absolute lowest.
  - She was specifically possessed by a "python" spirit
  - Python = mythological snake worshipped at Delphi
  - She would have spoken involuntarily, probably referred to as a "ventriloquist"

**ACTS 16:17**, "She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." (ESV)

- Her demon advertising Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke
  - This "annoys" Paul
  - "Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour." (Acts 16:18, ESV)



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- Paul recognizes the spiritual battle beyond the physical “annoyance”
  - “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12; NIV)
  - This enrages her owners

**ACTS 16:19**, “But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.” (ESV)

- It’s the financial loss that truly outrages
  - They may have already disapproved of the group and their message, but not until they interfere with their “hope of gain” do her owners drag them into the marketplace, or “agora”
- The only charges they can bring are vague

### These Men are Jews

**ACTS 16:20**, “And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.” (ESV)



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- Notice that they are first said to be “Jews”
  - Antisemitism existed in the ancient world; different laws applied to foreigners
  - The assumption is that Paul and Silas are not Roman citizens

**ACTS 16:22**, “The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.” (ESV)

- The crowd becomes a mob
  - Paul and Silas are stripped and beaten
- Jewish legal tradition guarded how many lashes a person could receive in a beating—the Romans did not.
  - Paul and Silas placed in stocks
  - The worst measures of confinement are taken as they are not believed to be Roman citizens—this form of punishment was not legal for Roman citizens
- Paul and Silas are beaten and bloody; chained in a filthy, urine-soaked holding cell.
  - In the most unclean state and most pagan environment, the two begin to worship
    - Philippians 4:8
    - Psalm 42

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** Zondervan, Holman Bible Atlas, Acts: Archeological Study Bible, John B. Miller, Convinced That God Had Called Us, C. Hemer, The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History

