

Opening Up Satan's Playbook

Acts 16:16-24

Introduction:

1. The reality of a literal devil is confirmed for us in Scripture. Virtually every writer of the New Testament, as well as Jesus himself, mentions the Christian's enemy. Ephesians 6:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8
2. Satan is our enemy because it is true Christians that stand in his way. He desires total control of the earth, and we are stumbling blocks to him achieving this goal.
3. As the battle rages, Satan is determined to hinder God's work on the earth by attacking God's people and trying to nullify our influence.
4. Here in our text, Paul does hand-to-hand combat with Satan. As Paul is attempting to win souls and plant a church in Philippi, his work is disrupted by a demon-possessed slave girl. vs. 16
5. How do we stand against the wiles of the devil? It begins by understanding his tactics. In our message this morning, we will uncover three distinct methods that Satan uses to oppose God's people. We will catch a glimpse into Satan's playbook.

First, Satan attempted to block the prayers of God's people. vs. 16

1. Paul and his companions begin to be stalked by a young lady that had a "*spirit of divination*" and was involved in "*soothsaying*."
 - Divination is when people attempt to extract information or guidance from pagan gods or demons (witchcraft).
 - Soothsaying simply means that she would predict people's futures. She was a fortune teller and evidently made a lot of money doing this work for her masters.
2. But did you notice when this woman began to harass Paul and his company? It was when they went to prayer. These little prayer meetings by the riverside may not have gotten much attention from the residents of Philippi, but Satan sure noticed!
3. Satan hates it when believers pray. It is prayer that moves God's heart. It is prayer that confuses and confounds the devil. It is prayer that releases people from Satan's bondage. It is prayer that makes a difference in the lives of our family and friends. Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:3, 12
4. If Satan can hinder our attempts at prayer, he knows we are powerless against his tactics and schemes.
 - In 1 Thessalonians 3:5, 10, Paul knew these people were vulnerable to the temptations of Satan. So what did he do? He prayed fervently.
5. This explains why it is so difficult to maintain a consistent prayer life. This helps us to understand why our attempts at prayer are so often interrupted, or why we are so easily distracted or discouraged. Satan does not want you praying.

Second, Satan transformed himself into an angel of light. vs. 17-18

1. This demon-possessed girl began to hound Paul day after day. But notice what she was saying. vs. 17
2. What she was saying was true, yet Paul was grieved and cast the demon out of her. vs. 18
3. Why was Paul grieved if what she was saying was the truth? It's free advertisement, right?
 - Jesus never appreciated nor accepted the testimony of demons. Mark 1:34, 3:11-12; Luke 4:33-35
 - Jesus silenced evil spirits who bore him involuntary witness. He wanted no testimony from such a perverted and perjured source.
 - Testimony from such an evil source is an affront to the Lord.
 - It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to God's way of salvation, not demonic spirits.
4. Remember this: evil spirits will sometimes tell the truth, but it is only to set people up for a lie. They mix error with truth. This is how they ensnare people.
5. While this girl's actual words were true, the source was false, and Paul was not pleased or flattered to have this girl following them around giving demonic testimony to their work.
 - If Paul accepted this, it would appear as if he were in league with her and associated with her. This would end up discrediting Paul and his message.
6. Let this be a lesson to us. Satan will transform himself into an angel of light and sometimes speak the truth, but he always mixes truth with error. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
7. When Satan is trying to hook somebody, he always baits the hook with something that appears wonderful and good - maybe even godly. This is how he gets people to bite.

Third, Satan instigated persecution against God's people. vs. 19-24

1. If Satan cannot hinder our prayer lives or deceive us, his next tactic is to bring persecution against God's people. Here in our text we see this evidenced. vs. 19-24
 - Was Paul troubling the city? Was Paul breaking any civil laws? Did he deserve such shameful treatment?
2. These men were making big money by exploiting this slave girl and her demon-driven "gifts." They were involved in vile and wicked business, and Paul shut them down by casting out this demon. These men were outraged, and it all revolved around money.
3. Paul did what was right. But these men in Philippi were not concerned with what was right, but rather what was financially profitable. Such is the way of the world.
 - This explains why our society is so tolerant of the pornography business, alcohol, gambling, drugs, moral filth on movies and TV, and many other wicked practices.

4. When believers decide to live their lives by God's righteous principles, persecution can be expected. Neither the world nor Satan will appreciate it. John 15:18-19; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 2:20-21, 4:13-16
5. But the believer must stand firm in the face of persecution. Great will be your reward in heaven. James 1:12

In Conclusion:

1. I was reading a story that, back in 2002, the Miami Hurricanes had two of their football playbooks stolen from the office of one of their coaches, and the playbooks were posted online. This is not what you want if you're a football coach.
2. Praise God, the Bible openly reveals to us Satan's playbook and prepares us so that we are able to stand against the wiles of the devil. There is no need to get caught off guard. God has provided everything that we need in Christ. Ephesians 6:10-11