

# The Church in Battle

ACTS 16:11-34; 19:8-20

*In God's topsy-turvy approach to power, he takes weak, scarred, scared, struggling, failing and ineffective people and accomplishes his mighty work with such miserably inadequate tools.*

—RICHARD GIRARD, *My Weakness: His Strength*

It can be exhilarating to see demons submit to Christ's authority. The experience can leave us with a heady mixture of power and the feeling that God is using us in a significant way. There is a subtle temptation in such exhilaration, however. Too much focus on our authority and power in Christ can lead us toward a "power trip" that can be deadly. Great care must be taken to ensure that our delight in the exercise of spiritual authority does not replace our delight in Christ as our Savior.

All of us would agree that balance in spiritual warfare is critical. At the same time, few of us can ever admit that we may be out of balance and in need of correction. How can we ensure the maintenance of balance in this area? Observing how the apostle Paul dealt with these issues can help us toward that end.

1. Why do you think it is so easy to lose balance and go to extremes in spiritual warfare?

**READ ACTS 16:11-34.**

2. Paul encountered several people in Philippi. Briefly describe how the gospel affected each of the following:

Lydia (verses 11-15)

the slave girl (verses 16-18)

the slave girl's owners (verses 19-21)

the city magistrates (verses 22-24)

the jailer (verses 29-34)

3. How is evangelism—sharing the good news of Christ with others—one of our most aggressive acts of spiritual warfare?

4. How did Paul respond to the demonized girl (verses 17-18)?

5. The demonized girl was set free, but her owners were unhappy. What do you see of Satan's counter-attacks in this incident?

6. How did Paul and Silas respond to Satan's attack?

7. Do you think their imprisonment and persecution meant spiritual defeat? Why or why not?

**READ ACTS 19:8-12.**

8. What roles did teaching and miracles play in Paul's ministry and in spiritual warfare at Ephesus?
9. Do you think the way God worked in this instance (verses 11-12) can be used as a ministry method today? Explain your answer.

What might be the dangers of basing ministry on accounts such as this one?

**READ ACTS 19:13-20.**

10. Why did the exorcists fail in their experimental use of Jesus' name?
  
- ✍ 11. The Christians responded to this event by destroying their magical paraphernalia. Why is this kind of response a significant part of spiritual warfare?
  
12. In both of these accounts, what was the ultimate result of Spirit-led spiritual warfare?
  
13. What can we learn from these passages about keeping a balance between good and bad uses of authority and power?