

# The Holy Spirit: The Difference Maker

Series: Presence / April 26, 2026

Acts 16:16-18 (NLT) One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her master's by telling fortunes. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." <sup>18</sup> This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

**Introduction:** I remember the weight of stepping into the role of lead pastor at just 29 years old. On the outside, I was excited, but on the inside, I was anxious.

Everything was new. The responsibility felt heavy. And if I'm honest, there were moments I wondered, "*Am I really ready for this?*"

Over the years, many seasons have come and gone. Some have been especially difficult, times of loss, health challenges, and struggles in both family and church life.

The pressure, the emotion, the weight of those moments could have easily crushed me.

But in those seasons, the Lord would often remind me: "*I have appointed you for this, and My Spirit will stay with you through it.*"

Those words brought me back to this truth: what I was stepping into was never something I had to carry on my own because the Spirit was with me.

The difference isn't me; it's the Spirit in me.

And the same is true for all of us. Life may throw us curveballs, one great powerful moment can quickly turn into one of the most challenging seasons of our lives, but the Holy Spirit walks with us through it all.

And that's exactly what we see in Acts 16.

Paul and Silas weren't stepping into an easy situation, they were stepping into a real problem. Something complicated, something spiritual, something messy.

But they didn't face it in their own strength, they were led by the Spirit. From this story we learn that the first thing the Spirit gives us is:

## 1. **Power to Face Real Problems** (Acts 16:16-18)

Paul and his team were on their way to prayer when they encountered this girl. The Holy Spirit gave Paul discernment to see beyond appearances.

What she said sounded right but the source was wrong.

It's like getting a scam call. At first, it sounds legit "This is your bank." but something doesn't sit right. If you don't recognize it, you can get pulled in.

The Holy Spirit works like spiritual caller ID; He helps you recognize what's real and what's not.

This young girl was trapped, abused, and bound, but one Spirit-led moment changed everything. She was set free.

People today are still trapped, maybe not the same way, but in addiction, anxiety, pressure, pain, identity struggles.

The Spirit helps you see what others miss and do what others can't, help people find freedom in Christ.

Every act of obedience, every Spirit-led word, can lead to someone else's freedom.

**Remember:** The difference isn't you; it's the Spirit in you.

The story doesn't stop there. In fact, the moment Paul and Silas brought freedom to someone else, everything got harder. That's when the problem really started.

Acts 16:19 (NLT) Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace.

I think it's important for us to understand that following the Spirit doesn't always make life easier, but it does make us stronger in our faith.

So, not only does the Spirit give you power to face problems he also gives...

## 2. Peace When Life Gets Hard

Acts 16:22–25 (NLT) A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods.<sup>23</sup> They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape.<sup>24</sup> So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.<sup>25</sup> Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

After doing the right thing, Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown in prison. But at midnight, they are praying and singing.

Think about being stuck in traffic when you're already late. Most people are stressed, honking, frustrated.

But every now and then, you look over and someone's just sitting there calm maybe even smiling or singing along to music. Same situation different spirit.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. He doesn't always remove the pressure, but He changes what's happening inside you.

- When life feels unfair
- When stress hits your home, job, or relationships

The Spirit gives you joy that doesn't depend on your situation.

We don't have to fall apart when things get hard.

And here's what's powerful, when you live with that kind of peace, it doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone around you.

People are watching. They're listening. They're noticing.

**Remember:** The difference isn't you; it's the Spirit in you.

And that leads us to the third truth, the Holy Spirit...

### 3. Gives purpose to your life

Acts 16:26-34 (NLT) Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! <sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself.<sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

<sup>29</sup>The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Their worship leads to a miracle. The prison shakes. Chains fall off.

But the real moment comes when the jailer, who locked them up, is about to take his life.

Paul stops him. Shows compassion. Leads him to Jesus.

You never know who's watching you. It's like a parent who thinks their kids aren't paying attention but years later, the child repeats something they saw modeled.

Or a coworker who never says much but one day opens up because they've been watching how you handle stress, conflict, or hardship.

Your life might be someone else's only "Bible."

- Someone is watching how you respond to pressure
- Your reaction could be someone else's turning point

The Spirit turns your story into someone else's breakthrough. Our life isn't random; the Spirit uses it for to make an eternal difference in the lives of others.

And when you step back and look at all of this, power, peace, and purpose, you begin to see what really makes the difference.

**The difference is not you; it's the Spirit in you.**

What makes you different isn't your personality, It's the Spirit of God in you.

It's like carrying a light into a dark room, you don't have to announce it, people see it.

- When others panic—you have peace
- When others react—you respond with love
- When others feel stuck—you carry hope

And in a world like ours, that kind of life stands out. So don't hide it. Don't tone it down. Because when you're filled with the Spirit, that's what makes all the difference.