

GNITN

#963

Breaking Python's Grip

A Controversial Concept

In some circles saying something is the spirit of this or the spirit of that they usually are trying to identify the root cause of actions that need to be addressed by a person or persons in the physical that have their origin in the spiritual realm. It's not a new thing really. From a Biblical perspective there are examples of demonic activity in people that had to deal with when recognized properly. As in all things we are to avoid extremes in any teaching or practice and to some the idea of naming spirits is an extreme in and of itself. In an [article](#) from [gotquestions.org](#) we read this:

It's unwise to assume the existence of a particular type of demon based on the pagan name for a mythological monster. Further, the Bible gives us no reason to believe we have a specific ability to rebuke or exorcise any demon—there are no instructions on exorcisms in the Bible. It could be that a demonic entity of some sort is directly involved in a person's spiritual or physical struggle. But the remedy is not to invent a mythology of demons, coin new terms, or turn God's Word into a source of speculation. The only meaningful answers to spiritual problems are prayer, discipleship, and submission to God (see James 4:7).

Obviously the [source](#) of that article takes a different tack on such ideas and his book on it can be found [online](#) as well. The point is that we do have to be careful how far we go with the teaching that demons can be dealt with very specifically and by naming the strategy they take. Some think that just by naming them we can better deal with them. And like this author, the whole process of exorcising them is suspect as well. But it think we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater either.

Just A Normal Day

As we were on our way to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination [claiming to foretell future events and to discover hidden knowledge], and she brought her owners much gain by her fortunetelling. 17 She kept following Paul and [the rest of] us, shouting loudly, These men are the servants of the Most High God! They announce to you the way of salvation! ([Acts 16:16-17](#), AMPC)

In this portion of the Bible we see a woman who was actually praising the Apostle Paul. Ordinarily that would be welcomed, but if we dig a little deeper we find that this woman was being used by Satan with a spirit of divination. The original word for *divination* is one that is connected to the word *Python* and we can see why in an [article](#) on that word:

The phrase "spirit of Python" often refers to a demonic influence associated with divination and false prophecy. The primary scriptural reference is found in Acts 16:16, where the Greek word typically translated as "divination" derives from "pythōn." In the Berean Standard Bible, the account reads in part: "One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl with a spirit of divination..." (Acts 16:16). The term "pythōn" in the ancient Hellenistic world was linked to the oracle of Delphi, where priestesses claimed to channel the Greek god

Apollo. Early Christians recognized such phenomena as deceptive spiritual powers incompatible with worship of the one true God.

So if you hear someone saying something about a spirit of Python now you know where it comes from. In this instance it was meant to associate two incompatible spirits to make people think that they were coming from God when in reality this woman wasn't working for the good guys at all. And Paul put up with it for a few days until he decided to end the charade:

And she did this for many days. Then Paul, being sorely annoyed and worn out, turned and said to the spirit within her, I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out that very moment. ([Acts 16:18](#), AMPC)

I don't know about you, but when some people say that there aren't any Biblical cases for deliverance from a demon, this is just one of many that refute that. Of course Jesus took on demons in a man from the Gadarenes in [Mark 5:1-20](#) and commanded they leave him so there is something to this. Jesus even asked that the demons name themselves. Casting out and naming the spirits are not unbiblical at all. And the particular spirit in the woman in Phillipi is also mentioned in the Old Testament, too. Throughout Scripture, divination is strictly forbidden ([Deuteronomy 18:10-12](#)) along with many other practices the children of Israel were to avoid.

The Spirit Of Python

So specifically how does the spirit of Python referred to in *Acts 16* work? While there are various views I go back to the [article](#) I referenced earlier to elaborate on this:

The spirit of Python is recognizable by its attempts to imitate or counteract genuine prophecy. Its essence is deception-offering partial truths or seductively predictive statements to gain power over individuals. The presence of this spirit can lead to an unhealthy reliance on fortune-tellers and soothsayers, steering people away from reliance on God.

This article then tells us that the spirit of Python is one of exploitation and false worship:

Just as the slave girl's masters exploited her for financial gain, demonic influences often exploit a person's prophetic "gift" for selfish or idolatrous purposes. Any counterfeit spiritual activity that promotes manipulation or personal exaltation rather than worship of God aligns with what Acts 16 highlights.

The visuals of this are just like how a python captures and kills its prey as we read in [this article](#): *They are ambush hunters that can locate warm-blooded animals by using heat-sensing "pits" or holes along their jaw. They wait until the animal comes close, then a python grabs the prey **with its sharp, backward-curving teeth, wraps coils of its body around the prey, and squeezes tight.** Pythons are constrictors. They bite their prey and quickly wrap their powerful coils around it, fatally cutting off the animal's vital blood flow, before consuming it whole at their leisure. The bigger the prey, the more energy a snake derives from a meal.*

How do we fight this soul-crushing spirit?

The Initial Attack

I like how an article by Jennifer Leclaire addresses this spirit:

One of the only named spirits in the Bible, the python spirit is a coiling spirit that works to squeeze out the breathe of life (the Holy Spirit) and cut off your lifeline to God (prayer).

To accomplish its deadly agenda, this spirit will remind you of wounds from your past, surround you with ungodly influences that tempt you to compromise the Word of God—or just barrage you with circumstances that knock the wind out of you.

Leclaire then helps us recognize such an attack:

Symptoms of a python attack may include weariness, a loss of passion to worship and pray, feeling pressured, overwhelmed, helpless and even hopeless. The severity of those symptoms depends on how long this enemy has been coiling itself around you and how much pressure it has applied.

Then she says that this nefarious demonic influence attacks:

Python can attack anyone. You don't have to be in sin to find python trying to slide under your door. Paul was a man of prayer. The Bible says he spoke in tongues more than anybody else in the Corinthian church ([1 Cor. 14:18](#))—and probably more than anybody else in the early church. Despite Paul's relationship with Christ and a strong prayer life, he still had to wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (see [Eph. 6:12](#)). Paul had to wrestle against python—and so may we. Let's look at Paul's encounter with the python spirit.

Leclaire then noted when the attack on him and his team got personal:

The python spirit had a stronghold in Philippi. When the man of prayer started heading for the house of prayer, this spirit launched its first attack against him—a distraction followed by a full-blown trial that aimed to take him out of his purpose. Python knows it has no authority in a city that prays in the presence of God, so it works to distract people from praying so they can't fulfill their purpose.

She then relates how you and I may feel when under this attack:

Python would rather watch you lick your wounds than pray to a healing God. Python would rather hear you complain or gossip than take your problems to a miracle-working God. Python would rather distract you with attacks, trials and persecutions than see you press into a gracious God for deliverance. Again, python's ultimate goal is to put you in bondage and thwart your purpose. You may be going through the motions but you feel dead on the inside because python has squeezed the life out of you.

Breaking Free

The squeezing grip is real. The feeling of helplessness is also tangible. But unlike others in nature who succumbed to the python's pressure, we can fight back:

When you rise up in your Christ-given authority against python, the battle ensues. Paul cast the demon out of the girl, which meant her master's could no longer profit from her false prophecies. "They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities" ([Acts 16:19](#)). From there, they were falsely accused, had their clothes torn off, were beaten with rods and thrown into prison with stocks on their feet.

As the Biblical narrative goes, things were pretty grim for Paul and Silas, but they found a way to see the light in the darkness:

Paul and Silas were in physical pain. They had been publicly humiliated. They were slandered and maligned. And they were in the grip of the python spirit. At this point, they had several options: They could lie there and lick their wounds. They could complain to one another about their situation. They could meditate on the persecution and decide to abandon their purpose in exchange for being set free. But they didn't do any of that. Thank God, they left us a model for how to break free from the python spirit.

“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed” ([Acts 16:25-26](#)). Prayer and praise are what python is trying to stop, but prayer and praise will set you free.

Paul Learned From The Python Experience

We tend to forget that Paul tells us what he learned from his time in Philippi when he penned the epistle to those people. The man who was beaten and imprisoned in their jail also tells us these things:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ([Phil 4:13, NKJV](#))

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God... ([Phil 4:6, NKJV](#))

being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; ([Phil 1:6, NKJV](#))

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ([Phil 4:19, NKJV](#))

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! ([Phil 4:4, NKJV](#))

Hanging from chains, drops of blood dripping from his open wounds and with no prospect or hope of being set free, he was singing songs of rejoicing. He knew his strength from that moment was in Christ and he was confident that God had more plans for him. And he knew that his needs including getting out of that prison were found in Jesus. When the death grip of the spirit of python is trying to choke the spiritual life from you understand Paul not only survived it but thrived in it. And you can, too.