

This morning's passage is about two very different spiritual women. However, before we can discuss them I need to ask a question. By a show of hands how many of y'all have ever heard someone say they are spiritual, but not religious? **(pause for reply)** According to the Pew Research Center there was a rise from 19% - 27% of people who claim to be spiritual but not religious, while 6% of people claim to be religious but not spiritual. My sisters and brothers I think this is a problem. I think John Wesley would say it is a problem as well. In 1786 John Wesley looked back over his life and the revival God had equipped John Wesley to start, and Brother Wesley wrote these words in his, "Thoughts on Methodism."

"I am not afraid the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or in America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast to the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out" John Wesley, *Thoughts on Methodism* 1786.

It is not enough to have the right doctrines, or theology memorized. We must have the same Spirit by which our Methodist forbearers first set out; and that Spirit is God's grace given by the Holy Spirit. So for all those people claiming to be spiritual we have to ask, which spirit are they following?

There is an ancient tradition those goes way back before, "O' Brother Where Art Thou," of people going down to the river to pray. That's what Paul, Silas, Timothy and probably Luke were doing. They were going down to the river in the hopes of finding people worshipping God. There they hoped they might share the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul and company did this for several days and each day a slave girl would come around and shout, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). This girl had a spirit of divination. It was not the Holy Spirit. Through this girl the spirit of divination was putting the focus on Paul in order to take away from the Gospel. Paul cannot save people any more than I can. Paul knew what was happening and it annoyed Paul. Paul lived his life so the focus of his life and work was fully on God. That's why Paul was annoyed when this girl put the focus on Paul. Finally, in the name of Jesus Christ Paul cast out this spirit of divination. The spirit was not the Holy Spirit. The spirit in this girl was something else, and it showed by the message it delivered.

When Paul and his friends made it to the river they met a woman who worshipped God. The passage does not say she was a Jewish woman, or a woman who practiced the Jewish religion. She was a woman who worshipped God. The Holy Spirit opened up this woman's heart to the message Paul shared with her. She repented, believed and was baptized. The Holy Spirit opened this woman's heart with hospitality for Paul and his companions. This woman became more of a servant, and allowed the focus of her life to shift more fully to God. Her name was Lydia.

My sisters and brothers, by our Baptism we are equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to do God's will. If we want to do God's will then it should be known far and wide which Spirit we serve. Our master is God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit imparts God's grace, and grace equips us to love and to serve other people. God's grace equips us to give all of the honor, glory and praise to God. Grace makes us more hospitable, kinder and more loving to everyone. Church, there are too many people in this town who do not think that's who we are. My friends, how do you think we should show the our families, our neighbors, and the people of this town the power of what it means to be a God honoring, spiritual people?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.