

**What's on Your Playlist?**  
~ Acts 16:16-38

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Good Morning!

**ME:**

- When I graduated I wanted to be an actor.
- Unfortunately after my first year, I felt like God didn't want me to be an actor.
- I pivoted to education degree because I heard the Spirit
- But then he began to pivot my heart to youth ministry
- God used a very indirect path to get me here.

**WE:**

- As we try to follow Jesus, we pray that God lights our path.
- So often He just lights up our feet for our next step.
- We often talk about testing His will for us by how easy the journey is:
  - the plans just fell into place
  - everything just came together well
- But it's not always like that.
- Other times it feels like there is no light at all.
- And we know from experience, sometimes things go way worse than we expected.
- We set our sights on what we think God wants for us, we strive to do what is the right thing, and we still end up in a mess. Doors close, we get criticized, the world deals us a bad hand, and we feel like a truck ran us over.
- We cry out, asking God to show us the way - we're willing to go a different direction, but this circumstance is so bad that we must be on the wrong path.
- And God doesn't move us.

- Well Acts 16, we see how mature disciples respond when things don't go well.
- We will see that when we have the right goal, no interruption can derail our purpose.

**GOD:**

**ACTS Chapter 16:6-10**

[6] And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. [7] And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. [8] So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. [9] And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." [10] And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.,

- Small note of interest here - notice in verse 10, when the pronouns shift to start saying "we"?
- This is because this is where Luke joins them (Luke is the author of Acts remember). He goes with them to Philippi and after the events there, rejoin the in the later chapters 20 onward. Kinda cool.
- One thing Luke does throughout the book is that he just casually references things we are like - wait! Tell me more!!
- Like multiple times, he'll just casually reference that an angel came and interacted with them - like no big deal.
- He does that here too.
  - verse 6 says they were **forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak in Aisa
  - verse 7 says the **Spirit of Jesus** wouldn't allow them to enter Bitheenya
  - then verse 10 says after the vision, they concluded it was God calling them.
- I don't know about you, but I would love to learn more about these situations!

- What happened exactly? Forbidden to speak? The spirit of Jesus would not allow them? What does that look like? Did they get to the border and something happened? Was just a nudge on their conscience? Did God use certain circumstances to close doors on them?
- And then the vision, well that seems really clear, and yet the language makes it seem like they had to put the pieces together to conclude. "yeah I guess we can all agree, that miracle was God leading us"
- We can't know unfortunately.
- But they head in to their new destination: Macedonia. The place where God has sent them to.
- But things go a bit off track for them.
- You see, they get to a city call Philippi. Things start off well:
  - They meet Lydia and she gets saved
- But then, they encounter a slave girl. She is young and has a spirit of divination and is fortune-telling. She is making her masters a bunch of money. Let's read Acts 16:16-48:

[16] As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. [17] She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." [18] And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. [19] But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. [20] And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. [21] They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." [22] The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. [23] And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. [24] Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks."

- So this young girl with this spirit in her is actually calling out exactly who they are and why they are there. Paul casts out the demon from this slave girl - and they get beaten and thrown in jail for doing the right thing!
- The whole situation is obstacle after obstacle for them in trying to reach their destination.
- Something good does come from it. Let's keep reading - and pay attention to how they respond to their circumstance:

"[25] About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

- (Now that's a response! Find themselves in jail for doing the right thing, and they start up their favorite worship playlist to give God the glory!)

[26] and 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 bonds were unfastened.

[27] When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. [28] But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." [29] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. [30] Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" [31] And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." [32] And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. [33] And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. [34] Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. [35] But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." [36] And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." [37] But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out."

[38] The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. [39] So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. [40] So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed."

- Incredible. While I think a lot of us would find it easy to wonder "did I do something wrong? Did I have something to learn? Did I miss what God was telling me?" **We were supposed to get to Macedonia**
- But the reality is that the interruption WAS the mission
- In prison they had a captive audience for their singing and praying
- Earthquake. Doors open. Chains fall.
- The other prisoners were so captivated that they also didn't run out as soon as they were able.
- Jailer wakes. Sees doors open. Assumes escape. About to kill himself.
- · Paul shouts: "We're all here!"
- · Jailer: "What must I do to be saved?"
- · That night. Him and whole family. Believed and were Baptized. Filled with joy.
- Roman jailer was NOT on Paul's schedule.
- But he WAS on God's heart.
- Closed doors in Asia? Needed to get Paul here.
- Arrest? Beating? Earthquake? All part of the path.
- What looked like a detour was actually the main road he needed to be on.

## YOU:

- So let's take a step back and consider where God has you right now.
- Where do you think you are heading? What are you aiming for?
- Any interruptions in your path?

- Interruptions can be frustrating. And not every interruption has such dramatic outcomes that we can see.
- But here we see exactly how mature disciples deal with frustrating and even painful interruptions:
  - First is that you can often identify interruptions by your own body cues.
  - When we have a goal and we are trying to achieve it, obstacles cause anger
  - Because the obstacle is stopping us from the thing we are perceiving to be of utmost importance.
  - When we make repeated attempts to overcome obstacles, we get frustrated.
  - If we make repeated attempts and cannot overcome the obstacles, we start to lose hope.
  - When we are hopeless for too long, we experience despair.
  - This cycle repeats itself over and over with all the goals we set for ourselves.
  - We get little moments of encouragement when we overcome challenges, but sometimes the obstacles are too many

Let's contrast that with the story:

- Paul & Silas, after having multiple doors closed, receive a target destination, then on the way, they are trying to do ministry, and get unjustly beaten and thrown into prison – another MAJOR interruption in reaching their goal of going to Macedonia – and what do they do?
- They glorify God. Praying, singing, worshipping. – while in chains!
- Then after release, Paul faces the injustice with confidence
- We notice that Paul seems to have a different goal than we assumed at the start...
- If it was simply to get to Macedonia. He would have accepted the pardon and got outta there asap.

- Instead he stands his ground and insists on justice.
- But Paul also didn't have an ax to grind here about the injustice of it all. It's never mentioned again.
- So what IS Paul's actual goal?
- It's to bring Glory to God.
- This needs to be our goal as well.
  
- When Paul, Silas, & Timothy are striving to bring glory to God, and the Holy Spirit redirects them, is that an obstacle? Are they getting angry?
- When they are trying to head to where the Lord has directed them and they get arrested, is that an obstacle to bringing God glory? No!
- -in fact, it's an OPPORTUNITY to glorify God.
- That's exactly what they do!
- So for the Mature disciple in Christ, we must strive to make our main goal and purpose: Bringing Glory to God.
- When we make that our aim, there is literally nothing that can get in the way of you living that purpose.
- This is what you were made for: To bring God glory in everything you do.
  
- So when your day is interrupted?
  - Don't react.
  - Take a breath
  - Pray. Ask God: What are you up to? Who are you reaching? What are you teaching me?
  - How can I bring you glory in this situation?

- **Ultimately, we stop fighting the detours, because we realize they are exactly the opportunities God is allowing us to bring Him glory through!**

#### **WE:**

- **So when you find yourself in the Chains of a situation,**
- **Don't go to your default routine of anger, frustration, disappointment and complaining.**
- Instead, turn on your worship playlist and praise Him!
- And you never know... He might be leading you somewhere you never expected!

#### **Gospel Call:**

The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" That's the most important question you can ever ask.

- We have all sinned and lived for ourselves instead of for God's glory.
- Our sin separates us from a holy and perfect God.
- Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment our sin deserved.
- He rose from the dead, proving He has power to forgive and give new life.
- If you repent and believe in Jesus today, He will forgive you, save you, and make you His.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

That promise is still true..

- What looked like the worst interruption in history was actually God's rescue plan.
- Today, you can say: "Jesus, I trust You. Lead my life for Your glory."

## **Let's pray.**

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Father,

Thank You that You are always at work, even when we don't understand the path.

We confess that we often cling tightly to our own plans. We get frustrated when things don't unfold the way we expected. We question You when the path gets hard. But today we surrender again.

Align our hearts with Your glory.

Teach us to worship before we understand.

Teach us to be a people who worship at midnight.

Teach us to see interruptions as opportunities.

Teach us to make Your glory our greatest goal.

When the obstacles come, and injustice occurs, steady us and strengthen us. Remind us that you are still leading.

May our lives, our words, and even our detours simply be opportunities to bring You honor.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

## **Benediction**

1 Corinthians 10:31:

"So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."