

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Disciples, on the GO!

(Studies of the book of Acts)

Gospel-Loving Opportunists

(Acts 15:36--16:40)

Study #20

Introduction: When opportunity knocks...

If you are sick - with a cold or worse - you know to not hang around others who are sick. If you are already sick, your immune system is compromised and you are more susceptible to some bug that could make you sicker.

That second bug probably wouldn't bug you if you weren't already sick. It has taken the opportunity of your weakened state to infect you. It is an *opportunistic* bug. Mean, nasty opportunistic bug.

If you're selling widgets that you know are defective, but withhold that information from a prospective buyer - because if he knew of the defects, he wouldn't buy - you are acting *opportunistically*.

Opportunists turn situations to their advantage, often at the expense of others.

If you know someone who is an opportunist, you may have a grudging respect for his ability to always land on his feet. But you probably don't appreciate that he succeeds by having the knack to take advantage of others.

But what if there was someone who had a knack for turning opportunities that came his way to someone else's advantage? What if there was the option of being a loving opportunist?

This morning we are going to see some Christians who were so taken by Jesus that they raced through open doors to *opportunistically* serve God and bless people. And these loving opportunists invite you and me to join them in God-honoring *opportunism*!

Review...

Last week, we watched as the first century church dealt with the thorny issue of Jewish/Gentile relations. Guided by love, they negotiated that minefield and preserved the unity of the church.

Paul and Barnabas carried the decision reached at the Jerusalem Council to Antioch, and the church there received the decision with great joy.

As they followed Jesus, the Gentiles in Antioch didn't have to adopt Jewish culture. They can stick with their own beautiful, Syrian culture. They - and we - are free under the Lordship of Jesus to bring to Him our culturally diverse obedience and worship.

And with the breath of fresh air from the Council, the church at Antioch continued, while Paul and Barnabas continued to serve there. However, after some time, Paul was ready to hit the road again.

Prelude: An Opportunistic God (15:36-41)

Road Trip! (v. 36)

[36] After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

They had made good friends in Galatia and wanted to teach them more about life in Jesus. So, a second journey made a lot of sense. However, a problem surfaced as they began to plan this second trip.

To TAKE or to NOT TAKE John Mark...

[37] Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

[38] But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Barnabas wanted to take his young cousin along. But, on the first trip, John Mark abandoned them, and Paul wasn't about to risk that happening again. The disagreement between the two intensified.

Separation (vv. 39b-41)

[39a] And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another...

The Dynamic Duo of the First Missionary Journey split over the issue of whether to continue working with John Mark.¹

If, up to this moment, you've had something of an idealized picture of early Christianity - here is a reality check.

Everything wasn't always sweetness and light among the first Christians. Paul and Barnabas, spiritual heavyweights, had a falling out over methodology and ended their partnership.²

But, as sad as that might make us (and as much as we might side with either Paul or Barnabas in this debate), God used this separation to prove Himself the Great Opportunist. The division of Paul and Barnabas resulted in the multiplication of ministry.

Multiplying by Dividing (vv. 39b-41)

The team of Barnabas and John Mark (v. 39b)

[39b]...and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

This trip was a recovery trip for John Mark. Barnabas wanted to see his nephew restored to serve the Lord - and, mission accomplished.

We know from later on in the New Testament that John Mark became an exceptionally valuable Christian worker.³

Meanwhile, Paul formed a team with another great brother.

The team of Paul and Silas (vv. 40-41)

[40] But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.⁴ [41] And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Silas had been one of the men who traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch with the decision of the Council. He was, like Paul, a good, solid, godly, Jewish man. He loves Jesus and is not Paul's partner.

So, one team exploded due to a disagreement and the result is two teams. Did God cause - or even want - Paul and Barnabas to split up? No. But...now there are two ministry teams, not one.

This is a perfect example of God taking a mess of apostolic proportions and turning it into a kingdom-sized win. That is the point of what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans.

[8:28] And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

He will use anything - obedience and faith, failure and mistakes, tragedies, even sin - and turn them to good.

¹ As far as we know, they never served Jesus together again.

² Paul later spoke warmly of Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6; Colossians 4:10). He also came to value John Mark, asking that John Mark visit him in his final imprisonment in Rome. (2 Timothy 4:11)

³ John Mark wrote the second Gospel and was mentioned by Paul himself in the last chapter of Paul's last letter (2 Timothy) as a man who was useful in ministry. However, after this incident, neither John Mark nor Barnabas are seen again in the book of Acts. As a matter of fact, not even Peter is mentioned after the Jerusalem Council! The remainder of the book of Acts centers on the activity of Paul.

⁴ It is significant that even though there had been a separation, the church still commissioned Paul and Silas, as it had Paul and Barnabas.

That's what our *opportunistic* God does. And now we see Christians who imitate God's opportunistic ways on the Second Missionary Journey.

Paul and Silas wanted to visit the Christians in Galatia. So, traveling due west from Antioch, they came to Derbe and then to Lystra (the city where Paul had been stoned!).

It was in Lystra that they met a young man named Timothy.

The Road that Leads to Philippi (16:1-10)

Adding Timothy (vv. 1-5)

Meet Timothy (vv. 1-2)

[1] Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer,⁵ but his father was a Greek, [2] and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

Paul was so impressed with Timothy that he wanted him to take the place of John Mark and join him and Silas on the rest of this journey.

However, before he could come along, first things first. Timothy needed to be circumcised...

Get Timothy circumcised?!?! (v. 3)

What?!

After all the fuss last Sunday about *not* requiring circumcision of non-Jews, why in the world would Paul require it of Timothy?

Great question. And here's why.

⁵ From Paul's later writings we learn that Timothy's mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois) were believers. (2 Timothy 1:5)

Timothy's father was not a Jew. But, because his mother was Jewish, Timothy would have been considered Jewish, too.⁶

He was an uncircumcised Jew and THAT would have kept any Jew from listening to anything Timothy might have to say about Jesus. An uncircumcised Jew would have zero credibility.

[3] Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of an effective ministry. It was a smart move. It was *opportunistic* for the sake of the Gospel.⁷ And this was first of many opportunistic moves he makes on this trip.

Paul, Silas and Timothy left Lystra together, at first mostly traveling through familiar territory.

Happily delivering GOOD NEWS! (vv. 4-5)

[4] Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. [5] So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

They were having a great time on this delightful, spread-the-good-news-of-the-Jerusalem-Council-tour. But, at some point, they asked themselves, "*Isn't there more we could do? Aren't there others in other places who haven't heard the Gospel? Why not go to them?*"

So, when they left Pisidian Antioch they turned north (the opposite direction they had gone before) to go to regions where people had never heard about Jesus.

⁶ "Jewishness" is traditionally believed to come through the woman.

⁷ Requiring circumcision of Timothy was a perfect application of the Jerusalem Council's decree. Christians are go out of their way to not do things that offend others. So, Timothy submitted to the Jewish rite to avoid being a stumbling block to others coming to Christ. Also consistent with the Jerusalem Council's decree was Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus, a full-blooded Gentile. See Galatians 2:3-5.

As they traveled, the Lord gave them direction. The first directions they got, while clear, were negative.

Called to Macedonia (vv. 6-10)

When God says, "No!" (vv. 6-7)

[6] They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region,⁸ having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; [7] and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus⁹ did not permit them;

They wanted to enter these regions with the Gospel, but they were not permitted to do so - and we're not told why.¹⁰

Certainly, God wanted the people in these regions to hear the Gospel - and they did hear later. But not now. Not on this trip.¹¹

Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy were learning one of faith's hardest lessons. They were learning to deal with God's "No" and with God's "Not yet."

Today, we may wonder about God's timing, and His answers - or seeming non-answers - to our prayers.

We have fervent, urgent, requests. Sometimes they involve desires to serve Him in this or that way. Sometimes they are perfectly legitimate desires for a job, for a life partner, for health.

Sometimes God says "Yes!" and that's delightful.

But, as author Gary Thomas has written, "...*faith isn't tested by how often God answers my prayers with a yes, but by my willingness to continue serving Him and thanking Him, even when I don't have a clue as to what He is doing.*"

Hearing "Not now" or "No" is tough. But waiting grows faith. By waiting, we learn that God is not on our schedule; we are on His. His "No" reminds us that He calls the shots. We submit to Him.

So, first the team received *negative* guidance. But then, in God's time, came the *positive* guidance.

When God says "Yes!" (vv. 8-10)

After traveling north and west for what looks to be something like four hundred miles, God gave Paul a vision.

[8] and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. [9] A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

And with that, they ***[10] immediately*** made plans to enter Macedonia.¹²

Gospel Impact in Philippi (16:11-40)

Philippian Firsts (vv. 11-18)

First convert in Philippi (vv. 11-15)

Arrival in Philippi by sea (vv. 11-12)

[11] So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace,¹³ and on the day following to Neapolis;

⁸ The reference to "*the regions of Phrygia and Galatia*" should probably be understood as referring to the Phrygian region of Galatia.

⁹ The reference to "*the Spirit of Jesus*" is likely a reference to the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ As is so often the case, we aren't told how the Holy Spirit communicated His "No." It may have been circumstances which the traveling group interpreted as God's direction. Or, it may have been a prophecy, a vision, or some other more overtly supernatural phenomenon.

¹¹ It was God's plan for people in both Ephesus and Bithynia to hear the Gospel at a later time (Acts 18:19-21; 24-19:41; 1 Peter 1:1)

¹² Beginning in verse 10, Luke writes in the first person plural - "*we*" - indicating that he was, by this time, a part of the team.

¹³ In Acts 20, it took five days to sail the other direction, because they were traveling against the wind.

[12] and from there to Philippi,¹⁴ which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

Once they arrived in Philippi,¹⁵ the team looked for a receptive audience.

Successful ministry in Philippi! (vv. 13-15)

As was their custom, they first scouted around to find the Philippian Jewish synagogue - and found that there wasn't one.

In ancient times, to form a synagogue, there had to be at least ten Jewish men. Evidently, there weren't ten [interested] Jewish men in Philippi.

So, the few Jews in the city congregated every Sabbath at a quiet spot beside the Gangites River that flowed through town.

[13] And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

To this small group, Paul presented the Gospel of Jesus. One of the women was paying extra close attention.

[14] A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics,¹⁶ a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart¹⁷ to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

¹⁴ In 168 BC Philippi became a Roman possession. After Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, near Philippi in 42 BC, the city was made into a Roman colony. This gave it special privileges - like fewer taxes - but more importantly it became something like a transplanted Rome. The primary purpose of colonies was military, for the Roman leaders felt it wise to have Roman citizens and sympathizers settled in strategic locations. So, Octavian (who became Caesar Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, in 27 BC) settled more colonists (primarily former soldiers) at Philippi after his defeat of Antony at Actium, on Greece's west coast, in 31 BC.

¹⁵ Philippi boasted a medical school, was a principal city for politics, culture, economics and trade, and was important as a Roman military post.

And just like that - there is now a Philippian Christian! Then, those in her household heard the message and believed. And, just like that, there is a community of faith in Philippi!

[15] And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Well, imagine how jazzed Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke were about what was happening.

Excitement was building. "Wow. One meeting and a whole household of believers! Wow. I wonder what God is going to do next?"

We don't have to wait long to find out...

First miracle in Philippi (vv. 16-18)

A tormented slave girl torments Paul (vv. 16-17)

[16] It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination¹⁸ met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

So, here's the evil of slavery coupled with the evil of demon-possession tied to the evil of economic exploitation. And the demon within this young woman knew all about Paul and his message.

[17] Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

¹⁶ In the ancient world, the color purple was highly valued and rare.

¹⁷ Notice how Luke stresses the work of God in salvation.

¹⁸ The English words "*a spirit of divination*" translate two Greek words "*a spirit*" and "*a python*." The concept relates to the Greek city of Delphi where the god Apollo was believed to be embodied in a python snake. The original priestess at Delphi was purported to be possessed by Apollo and thereby able to predict the future. Therefore, anyone possessed by the python spirit could foretell coming events. No doubt an actual demon gave such a person predictive powers.

Paul quickly wearied of this demon identifying him as a messenger from God.

Not that the demon was wrong. It was just that Paul didn't want his ministry validated by a demon. As the Bible says, he got annoyed.

God's power sets the girl free! (v. 18)

[18] She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit,¹⁹ "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

So, praise God! The slave-girl is set free from her demonic bondage by Jesus' power. This is great news.

But, as is so often the case, this noble action brought about unintended consequences.

Jailed - for Doing All the Right Things (vv. 19-24)

Paul and Silas arrested (vv. 19-21)

This girl's ability to tell people's fortunes had been the source of a lot of money for her masters. With the demon gone, so was her ability to tell fortunes - and the men who controlled ("owned") her were furious at their loss of income.

They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the chief magistrates of the city. The charge?

***[20b]... "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, [21] and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."*²⁰**

¹⁹ Paul spoke not to the girl, but to the demon itself.

²⁰ Of course, the civil leaders could not distinguish (what they would have seen as fine lines) between Judaism and Christianity. They saw the preaching of Paul and Silas as a flagrant infraction of imperial law.

Once they were identified as Jews - not that their Jewishness has anything to do with their "crime" - things went downhill, fast.²¹

Paul and Silas imprisoned (vv. 22-24)

[22] The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.²² [23] When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely...

Frequently, Roman jailers were retired Roman soldiers who understood duty. This jailer not only knew duty, he knew that NOT fulfilling his duty would mean a death sentence for him.

So, [24]...having received such a command, [he] threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The jailer wasn't trying to make their lives more miserable. He was just making sure that they couldn't escape.

Now, let's summarize the recent experiences of Paul and Silas. After having, by the power of God, exorcised a demon and freed a young girl from torment, they are:

- accused of wrong-doing and handed over to government officials;
- charged with crimes and found guilty of those crimes;
- publicly stripped and beaten with rods; and
- thrown into the deepest, darkest section of the Philippian jail with their feet in stocks!

²¹ The reason they take special pains to identify the missionaries as Jews is because of a spate of anti-Semitism that was spreading across the Roman Empire after the Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome (This action is referenced at Acts 18:2.). Jews were not well thought of at this time in Philippi, and the charge that they are Jews ensures that the Gospel-preaching, demon-casting-out Christians are treated harshly. This also helps explain why Timothy and Luke were not taken before the authorities. They were not full-blooded Jews. Luke was Gentile through and through and Timothy was half-Gentile.

²² This was one of three beatings Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:25. The "rods" was a bundle of rods lashed together and used as a whip on the prisoner.

This is what has happened to them after successful ministry, after serving God, after doing everything right.

If you were in Paul's stocks, what would be your reaction? What would you be thinking? Would you be tempted to cop an attitude? I suspect that would be my temptation.

Many people read Acts 16 and are impressed with the miracle of exorcism we have just seen - and it is impressive.

Others (spoiler alert) are impressed with the soon-to-come prison escape - and both are wonderful evidences of the power of God.

Equal to both of these, though, is the power of the Holy Spirit to turn a heart God-ward in some really sick circumstances. Here is opportunism at work, again.

Philippian Seconds (vv. 25-34)

2nd miracle - at midnight! (vv. 25-26)

The jailbird's song (v. 25)

[25] But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Paul and Silas took a beating and a night in jail in a strange city as an invitation to worship God.

Acts 16:25 is our memory verse for this month, a verse that shows two Christians worshiping while enduring great suffering.

I chose this verse, praying that God would open our eyes to the possibility of worship despite whatever hardship we might face.

They were beaten with rods - and life may be beating you down. They were behind prison bars, and there are lots of kinds of prisons. (God doesn't promise to keep His people out of prison.)

So, we watch as Paul and Silas *opportunistically* turn their prison into praise. And we hear God invite us to join them.

Suffering? He wants you to sing your heart out. There are others around you who are in their own prisons and He wants those other prisoners - your friends, your family - to hear you sing. God loves the beautiful song of the jailbird.²³

And then - who knows why; maybe it was because of their song - as they were singing, God did what only He could do. He moved.

He moved the jail.

Chains fall off! (v. 26)

[26a] and suddenly there came a great earthquake,²⁴ so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken...

We've been following the reports about this week's earthquake in Mexico that has killed hundreds of people. Earthquakes are terrifying things.

This one in the Philippian jail was probably scary, too. But this one was also liberating.

[26b]...and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

So, what would you do if you had been Paul?

I probably would have assumed that God was giving me the chance to escape. I would have applied this concept of acting "opportunistically" and walked out the front door.

That is definitely what the jailer thought his prisoners were going to do.²⁵

²³ Again, hear Gary Thomas: "I have found that the most potent weapon against complaining or even questioning is the gift of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving has become my doorway to a more mature surrender."

²⁴ This experience parallels Peter's. See Acts 5:18-20.

2nd conversion - a jailer (vv. 27-34)

A panicked jailer (vv. 27-28)

[27] When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

See, above and beyond everything else, a Roman jailer was responsible for the prisoners - not their safety, their safekeeping. And this jailer would a whole lot rather die by his own hand than by whatever the Romans had in mind.

But when Paul saw what the jailer was about to do, he called out to him to stop, **[28] “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!”**

Not one of the prisoners had acted opportunistically. They didn’t take advantage of loose chains and open doors. They all stayed put.²⁶ The jailer could hardly believe it.

A saved jailer (vv. 29-33)

[29] And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, [30] and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

So...

...maybe this jailer had heard the story of the slave girl;
...maybe he knew that Paul and Silas were in his jail because they had been teaching the way of salvation; and
...maybe he had been listening to them sing songs to their God all night.

If all that was true then it was reasonable for him to ask about his eternal soul, how to find forgiveness, how to become a part of the family of the one true God.

But this jailer was also a former Roman soldier, who up to this moment had believed in the gods and goddesses of Rome - or in nothing.

He is now one easily escaped prisoner away from a death sentence. So, he might be asking how to be saved/delivered from his prison predicament!²⁷

(If that is what he’s asking, what a wonderful irony that the jailer is asking the prisoners for a plan for deliverance!)

Whatever he may have intended by his question, Paul proved again to be the ultimate opportunist. He took it as a Gospel question.

“What must you do to be saved? [Acts 16:31]...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

And the jailer instantly “got it.”

Whatever he had been asking, Paul and Silas weren’t telling him how to get delivered from a jail problem.

After all, it was their belief in Jesus that had landed them in jail in the first place. Believing in Jesus obviously doesn’t guarantee freedom from jail. (It wouldn’t guarantee escape from a Roman execution, either.)

No, Paul and Silas were answering a God-sized question, not a Rome-sized question.

The night of the prison earthquake was the night when the Philippian jailer placed the treasure of his trust in Jesus.

There was no requirement that he clean up his life first, do any good works first, or get baptized first. He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

Those in his household also believed and were also saved.

²⁵ In Acts 12, the Lord opened the prison doors for Simon Peter and he left, at God’s prompting. The next day Herod had the guards executed. The Philippian jailer’s fears were completely justified.

²⁶ Had they been so impressed with the missionaries’ singing that they trusted Paul’s and Silas instincts to not escape?

²⁷ The word we translate “saved” (sozo) very often describes a deliverance from any danger, not just spiritual danger.

Then, Paul and Silas having led these folks on their first faith steps, led them to some faith “next steps.”

[32] And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. [33] And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.²⁸

In one night, the jailer and his family and house servants receive eternal life, are baptized, and get foundational teaching about life in Jesus.

A very grateful jailer fed Paul and Silas (v. 34) and then - and this is the only way I can put the story together - the jailer walked them back inside the prison before daybreak.

And the end of this story shows a final deliverance - a deliverance from Philippi.

Postlude: The Deliverance of Paul and Silas (vv. 35-40)

An Offer of (secret) Freedom (vv. 35-36)

[35] Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, “Release those men.” [36] And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace.”

By morning’s light everyone in Philippi had heard about the earthquake.

And, now, the city officials wanted the trouble-makers, the guys who had caused a social earthquake in Philippi, Paul and Silas, gone. And they wanted them gone silently. Out of the public eye.

Paul has a better idea...

²⁸ The baptism gave testimony to the fact that this jailer and his household had all placed their trust in Christ for salvation.

Freedom on Their Own Terms (vv. 37-40)

[37] But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.”

He pointed out that he and Silas were both Roman citizens who should have never been subjected to a public beating or been thrown in jail without a trial. So, the officials, fearing reprisals from Rome, treated them and probably all the new believers in Jesus with kid gloves.²⁹

Paul and Silas went over to visit with Lydia and the other new Christians in Philippi and then left, on their own time table.

Conclusion:

The story of the Gospel’s arrival in Philippi is a story of *opportunism*. Christian opportunists took advantage of every open door to press Jesus into their world.

- A meeting by a riverside was an opportunity to evangelize.
- A night in jail was an opportunity to sing hymns of praise to God.
- A jailer’s question was an opportunity to share Jesus.

Paul and Silas opportunistically turned every situation to God’s advantage and to blessing for others. Their story invites us to live just as opportunistically.

Let’s keep our eyes open to the potential each circumstance brings us to press Jesus into our world. When opportunity for the Gospel knocks, by all means - open the door!

²⁹ Paul wasn’t being vindictive. He was, I believe, trying to spare the believers in Philippi further hassle from the city’s officials.