Philippi
Message 10 in the series, "Faith under Fire"

"We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. 'If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my home.' And she urged us until we agreed."
Acts 16:11–15 (NLT)

1. **The Lord was already <u>preparing</u> Lydia's heart before Paul shared the gospel with her.**

   "For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up." John 6:44 (NLT)

   "You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest." John 4:35 (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 masters by telling fortunes. 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.' 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. Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. 'The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!' they shouted to the city officials. 'They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice.' A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks." Acts 16:16–24 (NLT)

2. **You can be completely inside God's will — doing the right things for the right reasons — and still find yourself in a very <u>difficult</u> place.**

   "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:8–9 (NLT)

   "As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's cross to the other side of the lake.' So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind... But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water." Mark 4:35–37 (NLT)

"Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 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! 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. But Paul shouted to him, 'Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!'" Acts 16:25–28 (NLT)

3. **Even though Paul and Silas had been mistreated, misunderstood, and humiliated — they chose to turn their eyes on <u>Jesus</u> and praise Him.**

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up."

Hebrews 12:1–3 (NLT)

Note: When we worship Jesus in the middle of our storms, it changes our hearts — and many times it changes our <u>circumstances</u>.

"After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang: 'Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!' At the moment they began to sing and praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves." 2 Chronicles 20:21–22 (NLT)

"The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.' And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God." Acts 16:29–34 (NLT)

4. **What looked like a setback for Paul became a setup for the kingdom to expand. God has a way of turning our worst moments into some of our greatest <u>opportunities</u>.**

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." Genesis 50:20 (NLT)

"A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria... But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went."

Acts 8:1–4 (NLT)

"To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyful blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair…" Isaiah 61:3 (NLT)

"The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, 'Let those men go!' So the jailer told Paul, 'The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace.' But Paul replied, 'They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!' When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town." Acts 16:35–40 (NLT)

5. **In the midst of being beaten, imprisoned, and exhausted from a sleepless night — they still found the strength to <u>encourage</u> others.**

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ." 2 Corinthians 1:4–5 (NLT)

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