

Opportunities In Unforeseen Circumstances

Message 03 of the series, "Sent"

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

I. Sent people intentionally bring light to a dark world.

"Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.' She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her." Acts: 16:16-18 (NLT)

Life Application: We don't fear evil, we overcome it!

"The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world." 1 John 4:4(NLT)

"Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good." Romans 12:21 (NLT)

"Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people." Philippians 2:15 (NLT)

Note: Light always overcomes darkness.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it." John 1:5 (NLT)

II. Sent people face persecution.

"When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, 'These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.' The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks." Acts 16:19-24 (NLT)

Life Application: "Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it." Philippians 1:28-29 NLT

III. Sent people overcome difficult times by keeping their eyes on Jesus.

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose." Acts 16:25-26 (NLT)

"Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith." Philippians 3:1 (NLT)

Life Application: "Keep your eyes on *Jesus*, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's *there*, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. *That* will shoot adrenaline into your souls!" Hebrews 12:2-3 (The Message)

IV. Sent people see ministry opportunities in the midst of every circumstance.

“The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then 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—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” Acts 27-34 (NLT)

“Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.” Ephesians 5:16 (NLT)

Life Application: “Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:9 (NLT)

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CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the most shocking thing that has happened to you in your career, and how did you respond in the moment?
2. Read 1 John 4:4. Why is important to know that the Holy Spirit who lives in you is greater?
3. Read Matthew 5:14-16 and John 8:12. Since we know we are shining the light of Jesus with our lives, what are some intentional ways that we can take the light of the Gospel into dark areas?
4. If you knew a friend was thinking of volunteering every afternoon at the housing projects to mentor young teenagers; but the decision would hurt their career, how would you counsel them?
5. Read Acts 16:16-34. When an unexpected and very hurtful situation occurred in your life, how did you respond? What would it take for someone to respond like Paul and Silas?
6. Read Ephesians 5:15-20 and Philippians 2:13-18. In your opinion, why do you think Paul is correlating how we live with making the most of every opportunity?
7. Read Philippians 4:4-9. Based on this passage, what are some ways that help us experience the peace of God?
8. How can you thrive right now in the midst of a difficulty and begin to see ministry opportunities around you?