Bold: Unleash Your Faith – Part 3

# It’s All Going to Work Out

# (Isaiah 41.10)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re continuing our message series “Bold: Unleash Your Faith” and today, I want to talk to you about a type of miracle that many of you have prayed for before. It’s that prayer, “God, if you’ll just get me through this, I’ll never do it again…” And so, whatever it is, “I’ll never speed again, I’ll never drink again, I’ll never lie again, I’ll never do this whatever again!” And so, it’s a prayer for protection, and I’m sure that many of you can testify that God has actually rescued you, that he’s heard your prayer and responded. And so today, I want to talk to you about the miraculous power of our God to protect us. You see, he’s revealed himself through the prophet Isaiah saying,

“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10, NASU).

And surely, he will, because our God is faithful, he’s our protector, and he’s our Savior, but that leaves us with a little bit of tension when things don’t go the way that we think they should. You see, no matter how old or young you are, no matter what type of crisis you may be facing today or have encountered yesterday, God’s promise of protection can cause a collision of faith. And so, my hope today is to increase your faith, giving you some comfort and confidence in our God who does great miracles. And that’s my prayer, that this message would do something deep in your soul, and that you would trust him like never before; that you would know that long before you faced that problem, that something unexpected, that difficulty, whatever it was, that you can take comfort in God knowing that he’s already working everything out according to his plan.

For example, long before Adam and Eve began sampling the forbidden fruit, God had already planned to send Jesus to take away the sins of the world. Long before that first raindrop fell that became torrents of rain flooding the earth, God had already planned for Noah, his family, and select pairs of animals to be loaded safely on the Ark. Long before the Israelites stood on the shore of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army bearing down upon them, God had already planned to part the Red Sea delivering them safely to the other side. And even before the storm began, before Jonah was thrown overboard, God already had a plan for a fish to come and take him safely to shore.

In other words, we serve a God who can miraculously protect us, and therefore we can trust that everything is going to work out according to his plan. He’s a God who can dispatch legions of angels from heaven with a command, he can shut the mouths of hungry lions, he can calm a raging storm, and so, long before you faced that problem, before the doctor gave you that diagnosis, before you lost your job or that whatever, God already had a plan. In fact, there’s an amazing story I want to share with you in Acts chapter 16. Luke is writing this, he’s with the apostle Paul, and he tells us in verse 16,

“Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl 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 troubled 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.”

“When the owners of the slave girl 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. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks” (Acts 16:16-24).

Now, talk about things going wrong! Paul and Silas were having a bad day. You know, they’re out serving Jesus, they’re doing what God had called them to do, when suddenly the crowd turned on them, the authorities beat them mercilessly and threw them in jail. And so, you’ve got to wonder what was going through Paul and Silas’ minds. It’s easy to imagine them thinking that maybe God had abandoned them, that he didn’t care what was happening to them, that he’d withdrawn his hand of protection from them, and they might’ve even become a little bitter because they’d been subjected to such abuse. And so, it’s easy to imagine, that number one, they might’ve been stripped of hope.

## 1. Stripped of Hope

Now, hopefully none of you have ever been stripped and beaten physically, but sometimes we forget that opposition and even suffering is part of the package when doing ministry. It seems as if in America, we’ve somehow gotten the impression that our ministry efforts should always be successful and that any opposition is a sign that God’s not behind what we’re doing. But here we see that Paul and Silas faced tremendous opposition and yet they were doing exactly what God had called them to do.

My fear is that some of you this morning may have been stripped of hope. You once believed that you could trust God, but then something happened and your hope was stripped away. Others of you, you may not have been flogged, but you were beaten with words of discouragement, you were stripped of your dignity, stripped of self-worth, and now you’re imprisoned by your shame. And maybe it was from other people, but maybe it’s the words you speak over yourself, and now you’re beaten down, you’re stripped of the joy and the faith that you once knew. And it’s painful, it’s lonely, and it’s discouraging, but it’s no reason to quit.

You see, the truth is that we all will face roadblocks and mountains in our lives, but that doesn’t mean that God is telling us to quit. It doesn’t even mean that he’s withdrawn his blessing or his hand of protection. It simply means that we’re at work in a fallen world, there may be resistance from our spiritual enemy, and sometimes the going will get tough. I mean, just picture Paul, he’s doing what God called him to do, he’s publicly, painfully, tortured and beaten; but God didn’t miraculously intervene protecting Paul from harm. He could’ve, but he didn’t.

Now, did Paul lose hope? Did he do what many of us do when we feel abandoned by God? You know, did Paul stop going to church? Did he stop praying and stop reading his Bible? No. I’ll tell you exactly what Paul did. About midnight, the Bible says, in verse 25,

“Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25).

In other words, here’s Paul and Silas, bruised and bloody, bound in chains in a Roman prison after being publicly beaten, but their demeanor was not one of failure, hostility, embarrassment, or even humiliation. Their demeanor was as worshipers, they were victors and conquerors, and so they were full of joy and praise. And it’s their response that’s a good example for us to follow when the enemy knocks us down or locks us up. You see, the world expects you to feel sorry for yourself, to give up and go home, to blame God, but you can follow their example. You can start praying and praising God like David when he was driven away from the King. In Psalm chapter 34 he said:

“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the Lord; The humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together. I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalms 34:1-4, NASU).

I want to challenge you today to try it. You know, at the very first sign of temptation, trouble, or any form of opposition, instead of whining, blaming, or quitting, try praying and singing praise to God; because that’s when the ground begins to shake. You may have fallen down, it may seem like everything is lost, but that’s not the end of the story, because verse 26 says,

“Suddenly…”

And what I love about our God is that he is the God of suddenly. Even when you don't see a way out, when you’ve been locked up, you’ve lost your hope, and you've been beaten and stripped of everything, suddenly, our God can show up. And so, number one you may have been stripped of hope, but number two, God can still show up.

## 2. God Can Still Show Up

You see, just a few hours ago, God didn't protect Paul and Silas, but God can still show up. And so, they’re chained in prison and their circumstance is ripe for a miracle as they begin to sing praise to God. Verse 26 continues,

“Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open and everybody's chains came loose” (Acts 16:26).

This was a miracle, as we defined it the other week, as a surprising and welcome event that’s not explainable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of God. And so, here we see God intervening, shaking the foundations of the jailhouse, opening doors, loosing chains and setting the prisoners free. They weren’t trapped or crushed underneath the building, but they were freed. Earlier that day God didn't do a miracle and yet now God does a miracle.

Last week we read that Jesus performed a miracle healing Malchus’ ear, but then he didn’t do a miracle rescuing himself even though he could’ve. And so, here we see a miracle, not the earthquake, but the ground shaking, prison doors flying open, and chains loosened. But I think the thing that really stands out is that Paul and Silas didn't wait to worship until after the miracle, they worshiped God before the miracle. In fact, I can’t help but think of Hebrews chapter 13 where the Bible says,

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15).

In other words, there may be times when we praise God because we feel like it, but there may be many more times when we don’t feel like it, where we don’t feel his presence, and yet the Bible says, let us continually offer him a sacrifice of praise. And so, right now you may not feel anything. Right now, you don’t feel the ground shaking. Right now, you don’t see the chains falling off. Right now, you don’t see the doors opening. But we’re going to worship God anyway, because we’re going to worship him for who he is. We’re going to worship God for what he hasn’t even done yet. We’re going to give him a sacrifice of praise, and that’s what some of you did today. You may not have felt much, you may not have seen much, but you didn’t praise him for what you saw or what you felt, you praised him for who he is.

And so, in verse 26, it’s midnight, Paul and Silas are praising God, when suddenly God shows up, the ground shakes, the prison doors fly open, and everybody’s chains come loose. Verse 27 says,

“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" (Acts 16:27).

You see, according to Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, the jailer was to receive the prisoner’s punishment. And so, the jailer figured this is it, my life is over, and he draws his sword, but in verse 28, 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?" (Acts 16:28-30).

The jailer’s amazed. He’s like this God that you’ve been singing to is obviously real, he’s powerful, and he’s merciful, because he showed up here tonight and he spared my life. And so, he’s overwhelmed by all this and he asked, “What must I do to be saved?” In other words, “How do I get on the receiving end of this powerful and yet merciful God?” In verse 31, they replied,

“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved — you and your household" (Acts 16:31).

Peter said it this way in Acts chapter 2, he said, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

And so, Paul and Silas, “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 family 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 family" (Acts 16:32-34).

And so, God didn’t protect them and then he did. God didn’t perform a miracle and then he did. And not only were Paul and Silas saved, but so was the jailer and his whole family. Now, let’s take a couple steps back and consider this for a moment; before Paul and Silas came into town, before they began preaching the gospel, before they were arrested, before they were beaten, before they were sent to prison, God already had a plan that included the jailer and his family. And so, Paul and Silas were praising God in spite of their circumstances, because they trusted God and knew he already had a plan. That’s why the apostle Paul said,

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world” (Ephesians 1:3-4).

You see, Paul knew that even before the creation of the world, that God already had a plan. That’s why he could praise him bruised, bloody, and in shackles, because even though God didn’t protect him from being abused, he knew that God had a plan. And so, number one, you may have been stripped of hope. Number two, but God can still show up. And then number three, it’s all according to God’s plan.

## 3. According to His Plan

Now, I don't know what you’re facing today or what you’ll experience tomorrow, but I do know that before you a face a single problem God already has a plan. And so, today we need to trust God, praising him, and recognizing that long before we got into that situation, whatever it was, long before we encountered that problem, that God already had a plan and his plan is so much better than ours. Now, I know this is deep, it’s hard to grasp the concept of God’s eternal purposes, but the Bible says his ways are higher than our ways, his thoughts are way beyond ours, and sometimes God’s plan is just so very different from what we would ever want in the moment. But it’s in that moment that we learn to fully trust him because we know that he’s a good God. And so, we need to trust him even when he doesn't do what we know he could or think he should, because he's God and we're worshiping him for who he is.

I personally take great comfort in the fact that it’s all going to work out. Even though there were many times when I don’t understand why, wouldn’t ever have wanted it to happen, and even questioned where God was in it; but I can say with certainty, that the Lord is our protector. And so, every day we need to pray for divine protection, taking comfort in the fact that even before you face a problem God already has a plan. And I can tell you this, even if God’s plan includes great difficulty, I’d rather suffer in the will of God than to live in comfort outside of it. That’s what the psalmist said in chapter 84,

“I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Psalms 84:10).

And so, I’d rather be in the middle of some stuff, learning to trust God when things don't go my way, than to be outside of his will. This is what we see in Paul’s life, because he spent many years in prison, and it was in those times when God didn’t protect him, when God didn’t send an angel to break him out that he said,

“I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God…” (Philippians 2:17, NLT).

You see, Paul had learned to trust God’s plan and therefore he could say, “I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). You see, he knew that we serve a God who is working out all things for the good of those who love him and who’ve been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). And so, he’s working in both the wins and the losses, he’s working in the breakups and the breakdowns, he’s working in the things that you wanted to happen as well as the things that you never ever wanted to happen. Our God makes everything work out according to his plan and that’s why we can praise him before the miracle happens, because we know that he’s always good and he’s already got a plan. As we close, the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter one, he said that God

“He chose us in advance and he makes everything work out according to his plan” (Ephesians 1:11, NLT).

And so, we can take comfort in knowing that it’s all going to work out. We don’t need to fear or be dismayed, we don’t need to panic, because God’s got a firm grip on us, he will strengthen us and help us.

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