

Jason Smith – Purpose in the Pause Part 2 Unexpected Gate Changes

Acts 16:6–15 (ESV)

God changes our plans—not to frustrate us, but to position us for His greater purpose.

A closed door may simply mean that God has changed your gate.

Introduction: When the Gate Changes

If you have ever traveled through an airport, you probably know the feeling. You find your gate, get comfortable, and settle in—only to hear an announcement:

“Attention passengers: Your departure gate has changed.”

Suddenly, everything changes. You gather your belongings and hurry across the airport because the flight is still leaving, just not from the gate you expected.

Life can feel the same way. We make plans, establish goals, and become comfortable with a particular direction. Then, without warning, God changes the gate.

Our culture teaches us to map everything:

- Career plans
- Family timelines
- Financial goals
- Ministry opportunities
- Personal dreams

But what happens when God interrupts our carefully arranged itinerary?

In Acts 16, Paul had a good plan. He wanted to preach the gospel in Asia.

However, the Holy Spirit repeatedly prevented him from going where he intended. God was not canceling Paul’s calling; He was changing Paul’s destination.

Last week: Moses showed us how a delay can clarify our calling.

This week: Paul shows us how a delay can redirect our calling.

When God changes your gate, it does not mean He has canceled your journey. It means He knows something about your destination that you do not know.

1. Closed Doors Are Not Closed Futures

Text: Acts 16:6–7

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.”

Paul was not running from God. He was trying to serve God.

He preached the gospel, strengthened churches, and fulfilled his calling, yet the door closed. Then he tried another direction, and that door closed too.

Sometimes we assume that resistance means we have missed God. But in this passage, the resistance came from the Holy Spirit.

A. Good intentions do not replace God’s direction

Paul’s plan was good, but God’s plan was specific.

Not every good opportunity is a God opportunity. We must remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit even when our intentions are honorable.

B. God’s “no” is not always rejection

Sometimes God’s “no” means:

- Not here
- Not now
- Not this way
- I have something else prepared

God was not rejecting Paul. He was refining Paul’s assignment.

C. God is sovereign over closed doors

We celebrate when God opens a door, but sometimes the greatest evidence of His protection and direction is the door He refuses to open.

The job that fell through, the relationship that ended, or the opportunity that disappeared may not have been God abandoning you. It may have been God redirecting you.

A closed door does not mean your purpose has been canceled. It may mean God is protecting your purpose.

Stop interpreting every closed door as failure. Ask, “Lord, what are You protecting me from, and where are You directing me?”

God closed the doors to Asia and Bithynia, but He did not immediately reveal the next destination. Paul had to keep walking while he waited for direction.

2. Listen for the Reroute

Text: Acts 16:8–10

“So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

Paul received direction in the middle of uncertainty.

He could have become frustrated, complained about the closed doors, or forced his way into the places he had chosen. Instead, he remained spiritually attentive.

A. Do not allow frustration to drown out God’s voice

Delays often fill us with noise:

- Complaining
- Overthinking
- Fear
- Frantic planning
- Pressure to make something happen

But Paul remained available to hear from God.

When you cannot see God’s hand, stay close enough to hear His voice.

B. God often gives direction one step at a time

Paul did not receive the entire itinerary. He received a vision of a man saying, “Come over and help us.”

God did not explain every detail. He revealed the next step.

We often want the entire plan, but God asks us to trust Him with the next move.

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.” —Psalm 119:105

A lamp usually illuminates the next few steps—not the entire journey.

C. Spiritual direction requires obedient action

Verse 10 says, **“We got ready at once.”**

Paul did not ask for fourteen more signs. Once he and his companions concluded that God had spoken, they acted.

Faith does not always receive a complete itinerary. Sometimes faith simply says, “Yes, Lord,” and starts packing.

Delayed direction does not excuse delayed obedience once God has spoken.

Create enough quiet in your life to hear God. Then be prepared to respond when He gives direction.

Paul obeyed the reroute without knowing who was waiting for him. When he arrived in Macedonia, he discovered that his detour was connected to someone else’s destiny.

3. Your Detour Might Be Someone Else’s Rescue

Text: Acts 16:13–15

“On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia... The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.”

God's redirection was not only about Paul. It was about the people waiting in Macedonia.

Paul saw a man in the vision, but the first person Scripture records him reaching was a woman named Lydia. God gave Paul enough information to move, but He did not show Paul everything that would happen after he arrived.

A. God's reroutes are often relational

There was someone on the other side of Paul's obedience who needed the message he carried.

Your unexpected change may place you near:

- A coworker who needs encouragement
- A family member who needs reconciliation
- A stranger who needs prayer
- A hurting person who needs hope
- Someone who is ready to receive Jesus

B. Your inconvenience may become someone's divine appointment

Paul's disrupted plan became Lydia's moment of salvation.

What felt like an interruption to Paul was an answer to someone else's prayer.

Preaching statement: What feels like an inconvenience to you may be an intervention for someone else.

C. One act of obedience can affect generations

The Lord opened Lydia's heart. She and her household were baptized, and her home became a place of hospitality and ministry.

Paul's changed gate helped open the gospel to a new region.

Paul thought he was being prevented from going somewhere. In reality, he was being positioned to reach someone.

Instead of only asking, "Why is this happening to me?" begin asking, "Lord, who are You trying to reach through me?"

Your detour may not be about what God is doing to you—it may be about what God wants to do through you.

Conclusion: God Has the Full Flight Plan

Paul wanted to go to Asia, but God sent him toward Macedonia.

He wanted to move forward, but God told him to pause. When God finally revealed the new direction, Paul listened and obeyed. Because of that obedience, Lydia encountered Jesus and the gospel entered new territory.

Delays do not always make sense while we are experiencing them. But when we look back, we often recognize that God was arranging something bigger than our plans.

When your gate changes:

- Do not panic.
- Do not force a closed door.
- Do not allow frustration to silence God's voice.
- Stay prayerful.
- Stay attentive.
- Stay flexible.
- Obey the next instruction.

God is not confused. God is not late. God has not lost your location. If He changed your gate, it is because He is still leading you toward His purpose.

Call to Action

This week, live with open hands.

Ask God:

1. "Is there a door I am trying to force open?"
2. "Is there a direction You are asking me to release?"
3. "Who might be waiting on the other side of my obedience?"
4. "What is the next step You want me to take?"

The delay may not be punishment. The closed door may not be rejection. The unexpected change may be God rerouting you toward an assignment you never planned—but one that someone else desperately needs.

When God changes your gate, trust His heart, listen for His voice, and move when He says move.

- Those struggling to accept a closed door
- Those needing direction for their next step
- Those who recognize that God is changing their plans
- Those who need courage to obey an unfamiliar assignment
- Those who need to surrender control and trust God's leadership