But God-4
“We’re Bound…But God delivers us”
Acts 16:25-34 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!
I want to take a moment and welcome our first-time guests and those who are watching with us online!

We’re in a series called “But God”...What we're realizing is that those are two very powerful words that we find in Scripture…

“But God” describes a turning point where God steps into a hopeless, impossible or difficult situation and changes the outcome!

Over the last couple of weeks we’ve had some “But God” encounters haven’t we?

We've talked about the importance of forgiveness and how…we've been hurt but God heals us…

We've talked about how we're prone to wander away from the Lord…It's in our sinful nature…we never drift closer to God…we drift away from Him…

So we looked at the story that Jesus tells about the lost Son…and we talked about the fact that we can wander…But God will welcome us home! All we've got to do is turn around…turn away from our sin and come back home!

This morning we're going to look at another "But God" moment that comes during one of those dark seasons in life…

Have you ever had a dark season? One of those seasons in your life where you feel like everything is closing in on you?

One of those seasons that feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders…

You can't explain it…but it's like you're weighted down with chains…and you feel like you're in a dark prison cell…

For some of you, it could be chains of anxiety or depression…You smile on the outside…pretend everything is okay, but you're really just going through the motions…on the inside you're struggling…

For others it could be chains of fear…You're worried about what will happen…Your thoughts bounce from family, to finances, to the future…

Maybe for you it's chains of addiction…chains of guilt and shame from the past…chains of grief…chains of loneliness

Whatever it is…It's got you feeling like you're stuck in a dark prison…You're in a hopeless situation…You need a But God moment!

And I pray that today is the day for your deliverance…But if you're in a dark season right now…you're in good company because

In our text this morning, we find the Apostle Paul and his friend Silas who are literally bound in chains and sitting in a dark prison…

How did they get there?
The Apostle Paul is on his second missionary journey…His companions are Silas, Dr. Luke who is the author of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, and a teenager named Timothy (who years later becomes the Pastor of the church in Ephesus) and Paul will write two very important letters to him 1 & 2 Timothy

So Paul is on a mission's trip…

He wants to take the Gospel into Asia but the Holy Spirit closes that door…

Instead, Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia (which is modern day Greece) and he's begging Paul to come and help them… Paul follows the leading of the Holy Spirit and comes to a Roman Colony named Philippi…

History tells us that Philippi was founded by King Philip of Macedon…who was the father of Alexander the Great…

Paul and his friends get into town…and they head down to the river to pray…there they meet some women who had gathered there…Paul starts preaching the Gospel and a fashionista named Lydia gets saved!

She invites the mission's team to her home and everyone in her home gets saved…Things are going good!

But then they hit some opposition…
A demon possessed slave girl keeps showing up at the prayer meeting…

Verse 18 tells us that Paul gets so annoyed by her distractions, disruptions…

…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.-Ac 16:18 (NIV)

Acts 16:19-24 (NIV)

What do you do when a dark season hits you out of nowhere?

What do you do when you're doing everything you can to trust God…but you find yourself beaten up and bound in a dark prison?

Church…here's what I want you to understand…

You may be in a dark season…but that doesn't mean you're in it alone! You may be bound by chains but your chains don't have the final word!

You may feel like you're in prison…but that doesn't mean that your story is over!

I don't know what kind of darkness you may be walking through today…I don't know what things you've been carrying around with you…But I'm here to tell you that you may be bound…But God can deliver you!

Pray

I want to show you three things that we can learn from Paul & Silas while they were going through their dark season…

We can **PRAY**

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying…-Ac 16:25a

In their dark season…Paul and Silas were praying…

When we're going through something we sometimes forget that we have the power of prayer…

We can talk to our heavenly Father about any situation…

PC & Alyse on the Plane

Prayer was literally their first response…

We've got to get into the habit of making prayer our go to reaction to whatever circumstance we're facing…

Most people panic first and pray later…We've got to fight that tendency and pray…

When we pray…We're declaring that God is in control…

When we pray…We're admitting that He is able to do that which we cannot do…

When we pray…We're inviting God into our circumstance…

Now we don't know exactly what Pau and Silas were praying because the text doesn't tell us…

But we have plenty of examples of people in different situations praying…

So if this was me I would probably pray for the people who hurt me…but not like Jesus…who said forgive them Lord…I would probably pray for like David…

6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths;-Ps 58:6 (ESV)

No seriously I can tell you that I would be praying and asking God for help…And It's okay to ask God for help…

If you need deliverance…
1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me; 2 deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men.
-Ps 59:1–2 (ESV)

If you're feeling forgotten or overwhelmed…
1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? -Ps 13:1–2 (ESV)

If you're feeling anxious and afraid…

3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. 4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? -Ps 56:3–4 (ESV)

We can go on and on and on…

The point is pray…talk to God about it…be as real with Him as you can! Ask Him for help, for healing, for deliverance!

You're going through it right now…we can pray

We can **PRAISE**

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. -Ac 16:25 (NIV)

This is so amazing to me…

Paul and Silas have been severely beaten for casting out a demon…Something that was illegal because even though they are Jewish, they are citizens of Rome…This was a violation of their civil rights…(37-39)

By the time they're thrown into the inner prison it's midnight which means it's probably so dark in there that you can't see anything…

So it's not just literally a dark place…
It's also a dark place emotionally…

Think about it…
They have no idea how this is going to go…
There could be a miraculous escape…
There could be an execution…

This is during the time when Christians are being persecuted for their faith…

In Acts 12 Peter was arrested, and miraculously Delivered by God…but in the same chapter the Apostle James was arrested and beheaded…

By the way…
Both men were delivered that day!
Peter was delivered back to his friends…
James was delivered into the hands of Jesus…

Paul and Silas have no idea if this is going to be a Peter style deliverance or a James style deliverance…so they're praying and they're singing…

The lesson is simple…
We need to learn how to sing in the darkness!
Your chains can't silence your praise!

You don't have to wait for a breakthrough to give God some praise…you can praise Him while you're waiting for your deliverance!

Praising God in the dark doesn't mean that you're denying your circumstances…it means that you're putting your trust in God as you go through them!

Praising God helps us take our eyes off of the problem and put them back on God! Our problem is big…but our God is bigger!

Praising God in the dark builds our faith…

"Trials are food for faith to feed on."
-*George Müller*

Praise invites God's presence and power into your situation…

When King Saul was tormented by an evil spirit…It was David's songs of praise that gave Saul relief…

…So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.-1 Sa 16:23 (ESV)

It was the atmosphere of praise that pushed back the spiritual darkness surrounding Saul

In 2 Chronicles 20…Israel was surrounded by the enemy…King Jehoshaphat came out to fight with his worship team leading the way singing…

"Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever."-2 Ch 20:21 (ESV)

And the Bible tells us that the moment that they began to sing…the enemy was confused and began fighting themselves…Israel won the battle without ever firing an arrow!

When you're going through your dark season praise the God of light! Who is able to push back the darkness in your life!

I came across the story of Ira Sankey this week…you probably never heard of him.

Ira Sankey was a soldier in the American Civil War…While alone on night duty, he started singing praises to the Lord…He sang all night until he was relieved…

Years later Ira became a famous gospel singer…And Evangelist D.L. Moody's worship leader…

While traveling on a ship across the Atlantic, Ira now very famous, was asked by a crowd of people to sing…

He began to sing a hymn for the crowd…

After he was done singing, a man approached Ira and asked him if he served in the war…Ira said “yes, I did.”

The man said, “I was on the opposite side of the war, and I remember hearing your voice one night…

See I was hiding in a bush near your camp. I was about to shoot you when you started to sing…

I thought, “Well, I like music, and this guy has a nice voice. I’ll sit here, let him sing the song…and then I will shoot him.

But when I heard what you were singing, it was the same hymn my mother used to sing to me…and the same hymn you sang tonight…

The man said, I tried to shoot you, but I couldn’t pull the trigger…I had become powerless”

Ira Sankey led that man to Jesus that night…That's the power of our praise!

May we be people who praise in the good times and the bad times…on the mountain tops and in the valleys…in the light and when it gets dark!

If you're going through it today…
We can pray
We can praise

We can **PREACH**
Ac 16:26–34 (NIV)

I love that their prayer and praise was a witness to those around them…When we're living our life walking with Jesus…we never know who is paying attention…

But when we're going through our dark season it can be very easy to make things all about us…

It would have been easy for Paul and Silas to just leave…who cares if the jailer kills himself after all he's part of the government that has mistreated them…

No…see that's what happens when we don't see people as fellow image bearers of God…Someone who Jesus died for…

And that's why Paul was there in the first place…to tell people about Jesus!

Just because it's dark doesn't mean you can't lead people to the light!

Just because you're in a dark season that doesn't mean you have to stop doing what God has called you to do!

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them-Eph 2:10 (ESV)

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
-1 Pe 4:10–11 (ESV)

Uncle Cha

Paul and Silas weren't going to let their situation keep them from their purpose…

As I look out into our family…I see so many of you who are either in a dark season or you're coming out of one…and I see you praying, praising and preaching through it!

Chains or no Chains…
And I want you to know that others see you!
And I believe that you will see people you know come to know Jesus because of your testimony!

As we close today we're reminded that although we may be going through it…we're not alone…

God is with us…

We're also reminded that it's not for nothing…
Even though God may not have caused it…He can use it for our good and His glory

We may be bound right now…but these chains won't last forever…He will deliver us Peter style or James style…either way we will be delivered!

Until then…we pray, we praise, we preach…

I want to spend some time praying for you today…

Maybe you're here and you need strength in this season…strength to pray, praise and preach…

Maybe you're here and you feel bound by something…We want to pray for your deliverance…in Jesus name

Maybe you're here and you're ready to surrender your life to Jesus…All you have to do is believe…

No matter what it is, let's spend some time at the altar today…

What's the Holy Spirit saying to you?
Altar Time