**Unleashed - wk 8 - The New Normal**

**Acts is Jesus: The Sequel - It is Luke Volume 2**

**A narrative - Jesus is risen, Acts is the what now?**

**Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, (locally) and in all Judea (geographically) and Samaria, (demographically) and to the ends of the earth.” (Globally)**

**What follows is an unstoppable move of God that has lasted over 2000 years. BUT – not exactly moving the same way.**

**Today we find ourselves in Acts 5 – and begin to see a new normal**

**After marriage, kids, survive cancer, loved one lose - the new normal...**

**Today an unexpected new normal.**

**THEIR NEW NORMAL – Is a paradox - Two things...**

**NN 1 - Power - miracles followed - it was the new norm for them**

**Acts 5:12 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. (the apostles did) And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. (Just outside Temple - to pray, worship, and teach Jesus.) 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. (Notice the legal authorities did not like them – but people did.) 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. (Daily still becoming followers of Jesus)**

**15 As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. (Things like this are where some TV and revival charlatans get prayer clothes, and sugar packets - I'll lay over your request - NT was no doubt unique and specifically for the Apostles) 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. (At this time all of them were healed - God started off with a bang! Jesus told the apostles he would do this thru them.)**

**They were preaching Jesus and healing people.**

**17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. (envious of the crowd) 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. (What? After all that - God lets you go to jail) 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. (Now we see - this set back was a set up - for God to show himself.) 20 “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.” 21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. (Fresh out of jail = they preached) When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin (Jewish court leaders) - the full assembly of the elders of Israel - and sent to the jail for the apostles. (Who should have been in jail) 22 But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 23 “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” (either angel locked door behind him, or possibly bypassed the door and were transported?) 24 On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to. (Puzzled – their life is on the line...)**

**25 Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” (They are at it again!) 26 At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. (Arrested them again)**

**27 The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. (No mention of their escape) “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s (JC) blood.”**

**29 Peter and the other apostles replied: (underline this) “We must obey God rather than human beings! (Civil disobedience – not a defense or plea for mercy – a simple explanation. We follow God not you. They knew who is in charge!)**

**(Then Peter gets his preach on) 30 The God of our ancestors (the one you claim to serve) raised Jesus from the dead - whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. (Straight up says - Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead) 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. (Peter speaks of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation, and our redemption) 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” 33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.**

**34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. (Step outside - ever been in one of those? Saul likely there - explains why we know what was said - Luke a friend of Paul) 35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. (It’s just a passing wave)**

**(The he says something true and profound) 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” (it is just a fad!)**

**Gamaliel - remember most movements eventually die out. This will too if it’s a human thing - but - if it’s a God thing - not even us can stop it!**

**40 His speech persuaded them. (Called the apostles in and let them go - God showed them - Woo hoo! God does miracles... claim this one!**

**This would be a great place to end - you need a miracle - God always heals & God will always set you free... right? But...**

**40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. (Beaten w/ whips on the back and chest - what part sounds like a win?) Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.**

**People miraculously healed - angel gets them out of jail - they're preaching God's word! Flogged? How could this happen? Where was God then – where was the angel?**

**NN 2 - Persecution - this was to be part of the new normal for them**

**We tend to expect God to get us out of the prisons in our life / We like to expect every setback to be God doing a set up for our miracle.**

**We don't expect this - break the jar**

**We don't expect to be beat along the way.**

**We don't expect the wounds and scars.**

**Floggings were done publically - as they were beat, those watching were to yell the OT law at them admonishing them to not do it again**

**You can imagine as the whip falls... they might hear.**

**The Lord our God, the Lord is one . . . you shall have no other gods**

**Stop blaspheming the name of the Lord” - "Stop preaching Jesus, repent of your sin and return to God, lest you perish - The pain with every blunt & blow - their back and chest beaten & bloodied**

**Notice their response... 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, (ticked off at God because he didn't come thru - wondering what they did wrong to deserve this - thinking if they just had more faith - devised a plan to get back at them...)**

**41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. (This is real Christianity) 42 Day after day, in the temple courts (in public) and from house to house, (in homes) they never stopped (unstoppable!) teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Rejoiced for the beating for Christ suffering for them!)**

**How do we get to 5:41? That no matter what happens - what miracles we get or don't - what chains are loosed or not - what pain we endure - we rejoice that we know and live for Jesus!**

**Unstoppable: 5:16 vs. 5:41 - Five Things to Remember**

1. **God’s power shows up on God’s timetable**

**Acts 5:15-16, Acts 28:1-10, 1 Cor 12:6-11, Mark 6:4-6, 1 Tim 5:23**

**God is not a genie in a bottle, pray, rub the bible, add $, pull lever!**

**BUT Acts 5:16 says that, “…all of them were healed.” “All I know is we should be living Acts. God always heals everyone!” Are you walking hospital hallways healing everyone? Why not?**

**I want to say - God is the same today as then - God can do all things - God does the miraculous and God still heals - But the Apostles were given a special unique authority and power as the church was birthed.**

**2 Co 12 - Paul: miracles were a sign of the truthfulness of the message**

**And that God's power is always given as he wills and determines**

**We make a critical mistake when reading Acts - we forget it was a 30 yr period - there were seasons when miracles were wide and when they were sparse - when all were healed and when only a few.**

**Those events are recorded because they stood out as special**

**I.E. when Paul was stranded on Multa (Acts 28) everyone he touched was healed and one time in jail chains fell right off of him (Acts 16) – BUT then in another season he could not even help his buddy Timothy or Epaphrodita of stomach pains (Phil 2) or his own ailment (2 Cor 12) and couldn't get himself out of jail (Acts 20) where he ended up getting beheaded.**

**We can't put God's miracles on a calendar and hand out tickets - it is as God wills - we pray, believe, and He does as He wills to accomplish his purpose.**

1. **Unrealistic spiritual expectations = disappointment with God**

**John 10:10, Matthew 10:22, Luke 6:22-23, 2 Corinthians 4:17**

**How many of you have ever had to deal with disappointment with God?**

**Show of hands - looking back it was most often because of unrealistic expectations. I think this is a tool of enemy to lead us astray.**

**God is not obligated to do anything for us. If we think He is, we don’t understand his holiness.**

**We often over promise and under deliver when leading people to JC. We promise life in HD. God always heals, your miracle's coming- but the discouraged, guilt filled, disillusioned are left.**

**Jesus promised trouble, persecution, trials, hardship - that people will hate you – and… that he would be there every step of the way.**

**Acts 14:21 They preached the gospel in that city (Derbe) and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.**

**That’s encouragement? A great moment for Christians is the realization that eternity is greater than now - and what we do here and now, and experience here and now is tiny compared to eternity**

**2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (We must destroy the notion that God will always bring good times - the promises in scripture are most often about eternity not the here and now...)**

**God does give us great moments in this life - but they are just a glimpse of his grace, and all God has for us in the next life.**

**They understood that we are citizens of heaven passing thru.**

1. **Serving Christ can be dangerous**

**2 Corinthians 4:4/ Acts 12:1-3**

**This is not a video game... a cake walk... a practice run – life is not rubber bullets - this is real - the enemy does not like you.**

**A soldier going off to war - that is not what I signed up for, I just wanted college - No, you signed up to fight. Memorial Day - those who gave their lives - fighting - the danger is real.**

**We did not become a Christian to get a scholarship, grant or degree - but to advance the kingdom – and the danger is real.**

**All thru Acts - The new norm - Power - miracles, signs, wonders, transformed lives - AND Persecution - beheaded, stoned, crucified, beat, families torn apart.**

**How about that on a flyer: Become a Christian and you too can be beaten and displaced.**

**Christian are painted as pathetic, pansy, passive people - but true Christians are the bravest people in the world - standing up to fight for others - proclaiming Jesus in spite of the pressure and pain.**

**Around the world today Christians are being persecuted for their faith. 70 mil + have been martyred for their faith since 33 AD. This year alone 160,000 believers will die / 200 mil will be arrested, tortured, beaten or jailed for their faith – In many nations it is still illegal to own a Bible, share your faith, or allow children under 18 to hear of Jesus.**

**They know 5:41 - But they leave this life rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering hardship for the Name of Jesus.**

**The battle is real and dangerous - 1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (he does not want to lick your face - but devour you) 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (But God will keep you from harm...no) 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (When this life is over – until then, never forget the battle is real)**

1. **Lots of things will just not make sense – yet**

**Job 11:7-12, Psalm 139:1-6, Psalm 147:5, Isaiah 46:10**

**Acts 12 - Peter later again in jail, an angel frees him - but we often skip the two verses before - a day earlier James (John's brother) had his head cut off.**

**We don't - and won't understand how and why God does all that he does - we can't pick and choose chapters as prescriptions for situations in our life. They describe truthfully – God’s faithfulness in all circumstances.**

**There will be plenty of things in this life we just will not understand - some we eventually will... others we will not in this life.**

**Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.**

**Sometimes we'll be healed - and sometimes we wont.**

**We rejoice when we do – and we rejoice when we don’t.**

**Sometimes we'll be let out - and sometimes we'll be beaten**

**Some things we are not meant to know.**

**Suffering is a gift that leads to repentance, redemption, and reliance. Romans 5:3 And not only this, but we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

**Whatever you're are facing -**

1. **We always get the grace we need when we need it (1 Cor 10:13)**

**(This is for someone today) 2 Corinthians 12:8 Three times I pleaded (serious prayer) with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. ” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

**I think of this jar broken... In Christ - when we walk in 5:41 - The light of God's grace shines through our brokenness and declares the hope of Jesus.**

**Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.**

**I'm want to live 5:41 - Come Hell or high water - come trial or triumph - I am living for Jesus. Can you make that declaration?**

**42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.**

**God help us to live 5:41 and by the HS become unstoppable!**

* **Are you are going through the fire? Are you taking as beating?**
* **The first step is to follow Jesus. Why would you face life without him? Life is tough enough!**

**We pray for God’s healing power – or –**

**The grace to empower us through it**