**Unstoppable - wk 10 – Lies, Lies, Lies**

**Acts is Jesus: The Sequel. Luke Vol 2 – 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, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Unleashed and unstoppable w/ purpose)**

**They began to experience supernatural growth. Last time they organized ministry leaders to address the growing challenges of a growing community.**

**BTW - Anti-organized religion comments. Church is to be organized. Shepherds, elders, deacons. It is biblical.**

**Today Chap 7 – begins a dark turn of events that births amazing fruit**

**There will always be those that praise God for it & those that oppose it!**

**What find out quickly is that some gladly embrace the truth – but others will not only “not believe” but are offended and will seek to destroy those who believe it.**

**It was at first threats… but now we will see people die!**

**Acts 6:8 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, (chosen as deacon to help w/ food distribution to widows) performed great wonders (HS marvels unexplainable) and signs among the people. (Miracles that point - authenticate)**

**God is using him in unexpected / unique ways- to point to Jesus.**

**God begins to show his power in other disciples, not just the apostles – still uncommon. Apostles had delegated authority by Jesus, but now others but only as God determined.**

**9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) (freed Jewish slaves) - Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia - who began to argue with Stephen. (Names and locations that place the events in history)**

**Map - Cyrene & Alexandria (On the northern coast or Africa)**

**Cilicia and Asia - Asia Minor, Turkey. Tarsus where Paul is a Pharisee. He was part of that group coming against Stephen.**

**Why were they so bothered by Stephen? The key is the word sign – miracles that point. Jesus was the focus and attention.**

**10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. (Not the wisdom of stephen)**

**Nothing says he was smarter, more experienced, or better educated. This was not about a seminary degree - but that he was, “full of God’s grace and power.”**

**(This group of leaders took him to court) 11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” (Stephen blasphemes God and God’s word - Lies!) 12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law.**

**What do you do when people lie about you? What about if they lie about you because you’re a Christian? People would not do that. Really? Listen - People are not good - we are all selfish and self-preserving w/out Christ. The heart is wicked.**

**12b They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. (speaks against the temple of God - lies) 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” (will burn the temple down and change the Mosaic law – lies. Breaking these laws meant death!)**

**Have you ever had people lie about you? Over and over? False witness – and get others to lie about you too? How do we want to respond? Defend self or counter attack.**

**15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, (in court after hearing accusations looked at him waiting) and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. (the last great witness to the Sanhedrin)**

**Acts 7:1 Then the high priest (Caiaphas) asked Stephen, “Are these charges true?” 2 To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! (He then begins to preach the gospel to his accusers.)**

**How did he respond to the attacks?**

**From Waiting on Tables to Waiting on God**

1. **He had a servant heart - Humility**

**Selected as a deacon, He started passing out food to windows - here to serve – deacon - towel over the arm. God is looking for the faithful servants – not self-entitled show boaters.**

**He saw beyond the table – they were a reflection of true leadership. The table in this life is a preseason for the next - that everything we do here is a job interview for eternity.**

1. **He was full of grace and power**

**Acts 6:8 - Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power…**

**Grace of Jesus – God’s favor / Power of the Spirit (dunamis)**

**How do you get it? You can’t – it’s by grace (God’s doing)**

**There is no formula for what Stephen had. No event, prayer service, altar call or promise. It is God’s to do as he wills.**

**God empowered him to a unique work.**

**Acts 6:10 - He spoke with the Wisdom of the Spirit**

**He had - “The wisdom of the Holy Spirit”**

**It was not the wisdom of this world – a Godly wisdom.**

**Luke 21:15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.**

**What is the difference between Godly wisdom and earthly wisdom?**

**How Godly wisdom looks:**

* + **Deep fear of God - knowing the person and power of God**

**Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**

**To know Him is to understand his might and be in awe. Some claim to know God – but have no reverence and fear.**

**Fear of God is not bad thing it is a beautiful powerful thing. Like a good parent who a child fears and loves.**

**A reflection of power, safety, trust, and reliance.**

**James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**

* + **Pure – uncontaminated, motives honorable before God.**
  + **Peace-loving – is not looking for conflict and strife**
  + **Considerate – gentle**
  + **Submissive – teachable, ready to listen and obey**
  + **Full of mercy – tender hearted, compassionate**
  + **Good fruit – what follows you are good and profitable**
  + **Impartial – not influenced by others power or position**
  + **Sincere – not a hypocrite, not a phony**

**These reflect a different kind of wisdom and approach. When dealing with others, authorities, friends, spouse, parents…**

**We see Stephen reflect this kind of wisdom.**

**Acts 6:10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. (Then one after another – lies where brought against him)**

1. **He lived above accusation**

**They had to strum up false accusers – had nothing but lies.**

**There was nothing to really bring up.**

**Philippians 2:15 …prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world…**

**What living above reproach looks like…**

1. **He rested in the goodness of God**

**Acts 6:15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.**

**In the face of opposition, in the face of lies, threats, and falsehood - his face was evidence of that peace.**

**Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

**There was no assurance that it would work out for Stephen (spoiler alert, it doesn’t) But he did have assurance of God’s goodness and will.**

**He was able to stand before his accusers and attacks w/ peace**

1. **He was not argumentative**

**Acts 7:1 Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these charges true?” 2 To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me!**

**He did not justify himself; they were not interested in the truth. But he did answer them, by the Spirit of God.**

**Years later Peter would say this – possibly thinking back to Stephen.**

**1 Peter 3:15-16 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, (life above accusation) so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.**

**We don’t need to argue or prove a point. But we are to be ready to answer the questions.**

1. **He knew the scriptures - and was able to explain them.**

**What follows is the longest recorded sermon in Acts. So long we will take a look at it next week. It is layered and from scripture.**

**The next 51 verses he sums up the entire Torah and Jesus life Stephen knew and studied God's word.**

**“Well, I can’t do that…” Why not? You have access to a Bible, and free study tools, and the Holy Spirit. What is keeping you?**

**You may not stand in front of a crowd like Stephen, but you can respond to a friend or family member.**

**The good news of Jesus is for every Christians to share.**

**Romans 1:16 - For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes…**

**Jesus God of eternity – physically came to earth. Walked this earth without sin and died on the cross to satisfy the justice of God – to forgive us of our sins. We must respond by faith to know his grace.**

**Full of grace and power – Stephen stood boldly in the face of lies and accusations. Why not just give in and go home?**

**Because once you know Jesus – truly know Jesus – your life is never the same again!**

**What follows is Stephen’s last sermon – no goodbyes – they attacked him and dragged him to a violent bloody death by stoning. What did he say that made them so mad? Read Acts 7 then come back next week.**

**Prayer:**

**God in your mercy fill me with grace and power to change the world.**

**Salvation.**