**Unstoppable - wk 23 – Always Open**

**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.”**

**15-20yrs since Jesus. Paul, Barnabas and companions – first mission trip – preaching the Gospel in Galatia (Turkey) - map.**

**Pisidian Antioch Last wk new disciples, chased out of town after 2 wks**

**Map- Acts 13:51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

**\*Never did they think - let’s go back it’s not working.**

**Iconium – Acts 14:1 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. (They did the same thing all over again)**

**Awesome – a great number of both! The Gospel of Jesus is preached = Deity, death, resurrection, for forgiveness of sins.**

**14:2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the other Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. (So they left - no) 3So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. (First time they were called apostles)**

**Lessons from Iconium**

**\*\* The Gospel never has closed doors**

**3 (they) …spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord,**

**The opposition was poisoning the minds of others – and P&B response was - to stay a long time. More to be done.**

**They were not easily discouraged - committed to the gospel and help the new believers. Gospel door is always open**

**\*\* The Gospel is confirmed by itself**

**1b …a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.**

**It says a great number believed – but some did not. But even if no one believed it is still true. We no do make it so. We see again and again – the Gospel is true even if it is denied. But…**

**\*\* The Gospel is sometimes confirmed by miracles**

**3b …who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders. (What were the signs and wonders – we are not told.)**

**The purpose of miracles in the Bible - even with Jesus is to confirm the authority and message of the Kingdom. Draw attention to the gospel.**

**Jesus did not heal everyone and neither did they. It’s not a sign we will be healed now or that it’s now normal or expected.**

**God enabled them at that moment - it was not always the case – but that day, for that purpose - God enabled them.**

**It was not something they conjured up, prayed through, called down, declared, confessed, forced, or had on a calendar.**

**S&W were to confirm the message of Grace – unfortunately many today (my background) seek miracles, and signs & wonders as the endgame - rather than the message of Grace. They miss the point.**

**Map - Acts 14:5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. (Surprise attack - then kill them) 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, (Don’t seek suffering - if it can be avoided) 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.**

**They preached the Gospel!! They did not travel as miracle workers or a healing service – it is never to be the message.**

**They went to preach and sometimes there were healings.**

**Lystra – Acts14:8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.**

**This man in hearing of Jesus - his faith in Jesus was discerned. Never walked – Paul moved by the HS – no PT – he walked.**

**This was not a TV miracle – this was authenticated.**

**11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, (local language – P&B did not know what they said at the time) “The gods have come down to us in human form!” 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. (Lystra ledgend)**

**Hermes is Zeus son, the creator of language - Hermes spoke for Zeus. Showing the age difference and who doing the talking.**

**13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.**

**Word gets out - crowd grows - they run home and bring back dead animals, crops, and flowers to sacrifice to them.**

**They realize that the locals are worshiping them.**

**Others might be tempted to enjoy the attention, accolades, and special treatment. Feels good to be special – need a break…**

**They were not tempted - It infuriated them… Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, (both called Apostles – here Barny name is first - the director, but Paul is more outspoken) they tore their clothes (Jewish reaction to blasphemy) and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: 15 “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. (Stop we are only humans!!) We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things (lit. vain, unreal, godless, useless things) to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them.**

**Those deities, statues, and idols - are not real, useless and dead! Turn to the only true and only living creator God of all. The LORD God – Jesus!**

**Then - Paul does not quote OT to them (they are pagans), but rather uses natural revelation to help them grasp the truth.**

**Acts 14:16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” 18 Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them. (Sacrificing to them!!)**

**Two Big Theology doctrines here:**

* **Common Grace: God’s kindness to all people; laugh, love, pleasure, happiness. (It is not a saving grace)**
* **Without excuse - Nature bears witness that God is good and personal. (Ro 10:14-21, Jo 3:17,** **Lev. 4, Num. 15:22-31)**

**Psalm 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."**

**What can creation alone really tell us about God?**

**The universe and stars (the heavens) – God is glorious and powerful**

**Beauty in creation (trees, oceans, nature, people) – God is good**

**Details in creation (science of life) God of purposeful design and order**

**Love (having, giving, knowing) - God is a God of love**

**Relationships (friendship and communication) - God is personal**

**Justice in creation (animals and human) - God is holy and of judgment**

**Intellect & discovery (search for answers) God of wisdom & knowledge**

**Cool breezes, calm waters (sounds of nature) – God is a God of peace**

**Changing seasons (Fall / spring) - God of hope and new beginnings**

**Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.**

**His divine attributes are clearly seen in nature – that is to say his character qualities and essence.**

**But this is condemning knowledge only not saving knowledge.**

**God gives general revelation – to call us to seek Him.**

**Lessons from Lystra**

**\*\* Our faith cannot be based upon experiences**

**They were emotionally engaged declaring worship!**

**They were caught up in the moment – they were having church. Singing, worshiping, offerings… but was fake, false, superficial.**

**Emotions & experiences can be counterfeits for true spirituality.**

**\*\* Our faith cannot be based upon miracles**

**They saw a miracle – but their idea of God had not changed.**

**That is because miracles alone do not change a heart or save a soul.**

**I’ve known people who have seen miracles, chased miracles, given a miracle, and still walk away with a false view of God.**

**\*\* Our faith cannot be based upon people (they idolized P&B)**

**Ever notice some churches seem to worship - celebrity preacher. Hang on every word, bringing sacrifices for them to live in lavish lifestyles,**

**Some worship doctors, musicians, athletes, motivational speakers, etc. No person is meant to be worshiped - it will ruin people the worshiped and the people who worship them. (False idols)**

 **We are wired and called to worship the LORD GOD alone.**

**We can’t base our faith on a person, pastor, preacher, parent, minister, or mentor - because what we like changes and people will let you down and disappoint. It cannot / will not last.**

**Acts 14:19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. (Followed by people who hated them, wanted them dead - walked 150 mi to stop them, 5 day walk - some real hate. Crowd turns against them!) They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. (You're going the wrong way!) The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. (Got medical attention and determined to leave on their own terms)**

**1 min you're idolized – the next your demonized**

**1 min they think you're a god the next nearly stoned to death**

**\*\* Our faith cannot be based upon our successes or difficulties**

**Run out of several towns... and they are in the will of God. Nearly killed, and still in God’s will? Called and sent by the HS - Are you sure?**

**People getting saved, miracles, sign and wonders - amazing! Riding high. God is showing up! A move of God, but wait…**

**A brutal death sentence. How bad must he have looked, bloodied and unconscious? Dragged out to be eaten by the wild animals.**

**God enabled them earlier to do signs and wonders – but now it seems God leaves them bloodied and left for dead.**

**We think that living in Gods will is skipping, laughing, and singing birds, we don't expect the flying monkeys.**

**Understatement: Gods will, can be hard**

**Don’t grade your walk by the material blessings and health. Grade your walk by your obedience. And obeying God can be hard.**

**Jesus tells his disciples - John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (Expect opposition and trials - there are days you will feel like bailing - but I will never bail on you!)**

**Opposition does not mean you are failing... Rejection is sometimes a sign of success, not failure**

**1 Cor. 16:8 But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.**

**Open doors don't mean smooth sailing – P&B open door included a show down with a sorcerer, mobs, people lying about them and a public stoning... that's God's open door.**

**Imagine how he must have looked – barely alive, surviving a stoning.**

**It is to this many see him writing to them later…**

**Galatians 4:13 As you know, it was because of an illness (frailty - sickness) that I first preached the gospel to you, 14 and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn…**

**The last thing he ever said to the churches in Galatians - Galatians 6:17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (Scars for Christ) 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.**

**Nearly stoned to death in Lystra - but guess what? One of those who believed was a woman who had a son that Paul met on a later trip. That young man was Timothy - who became Paul’s spiritual son. (Acts 16:1-2)**

**What looked like a disaster was a set up for one of the most blessed friendships in the Bible. I would say that was an amazing and God ordained trip.**

**Derbe**

**(So, they leave Lystra) Acts 14:20b The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. 21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples.**

**Despite the trials - the work of God continued. They preached the Gospel! The GOOD NEWS of Jesus is unstoppable.**

**Lesson from Debre**

**\*\* We will not all suffer life threatening persecution**

**It was a good season in Derbe – they were there for a while.**

**Will all Christians suffer persecution? Apostles did, most early Christians did, but not all Christians did. (Ac 9:31)**

**1Tim 2:2 …pray for authority that you may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.** **/ 1Thes 4:11-12 - encouraged to …lead a quiet life and work hard and be a person of respect. / Rev 3:10 – Philadelphia will not experience trials.**

**We will not suffer the same way our brothers and sister around the world do – ours is perhaps less extreme and subtle.**

**Don’t seek persecution (Mat 10:23, Ac 9:23-25, Acts 14:6, 2 Co 11:32-33)**

**It is a privilege to suffer (Phil 1:29-30, Matt 5:10-12)**

**Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

**What happens next is shocking - they go back to the places they were chased out of. Why? More on that next week.**

**What we can walk away with**

* **Pray for open doors - at work, family events, school, neighbors**

**Acts 13 - It all started with a time of prayer – God what would you have us do?**

**Pray – and be ready - God will open doors for you**

* **When you obey God you’re always in the right place**

**Regardless the trials and resistance, the pain or suffering - if you are obeying God, you are right where God has you to be.**

**Is your faith based on a person or experience? Have you based your faith on a miracle or moment? These are unstable foundations**

**When the trials and heartache come - only Jesus himself will last.**