**Unstoppable - wk 24 – Coming Home**

**Coming Home from a long trip…**

**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).**

**They have been on the road for about a year.**

**MAP**

* **Cyprus – Many believe – faced off w/ a sorcerer – and an official**
* **Perga – Preached the word – John Mark leaves to go home**
* **Pisidian Antioch – Many believe - and they are chased out**
* **Iconium – Many believe, signs & wonders, plot to murder, escape**
* **Lystra – Some believed, miracles, worshiped as gods, stoned!**
* **Derbe – Many believed.**

**It’s been incredible, but they reach a point where they believe it is time to head home – much deserved rest. After all it’s been lots of work, physically injuries, & barely made it alive.**

**Two things up front:**

**1. The Gospel of Jesus is worth dying for!**

**This is the mindset and backdrop for all of Acts.**

**(Responding to being in prison for Jesus facing death) Phil 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Either way – it’s a win)**

**Dying for Jesus is not a loss nor futile - but is gain to the believer. There are millions who have given their life for the work of the gospel. It is not a waste. They ran the race with their eyes on the prize of Christ. We celebrate that, inspired by it, and emulate it.**

**There are few things worth dying for- not a job, education, trip, money. I would die for my family, and I would die for others to know the gospel of Jesus Christ! Jesus, I give my life to you!!**

**They nearly died – now it’s time to head home - Possible trip (Map) could have been home in less than 2 wks and visited family in Tarsus, but they do the unexpected – and it takes several more months…**

**The Long Trip Home**

**Acts 14:21b Then they returned to Lystra, (stoned to near death) Iconium (tried to kill him) and Antioch, (chased out by a mob)**

**WHAT!? They went back to every city that chased them out - dangerous – they risked their lives again for what? Why?**

**22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.**

**2. The Church of Jesus is worth dying for!**

**The church represents two things - disciples, followers of Christ, the redeemed, the saints of God. And - the corporate local organized institution of making disciples.**

**“We have got to go back and make sure they are healthy.”**

**Making disciples is worth dying for. Mission work is mostly this.**

**Acts 14:21b 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. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.**

**Risking their lives again – they go back to do 3 things:**

1. **Strengthened - reinforcing the structure = teaching the WORD**
2. **Encouraged - Stand strong in the faith - it will be hard sometimes**
3. **Appointed – leaders to help disciples mature – to walk with you**

**(Map) Acts 14:24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, (region) 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.**

**These are churches in these cities - Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Perga, Attalia - that Paul wrote the Letter of Galatians. (Gal 1:1 - “To the Churches in Galatia”)**

**14:26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, (did not return to Cyprus - gone 1-2 yrs. Finally sailing home to Antioch) where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. (Their sending church) 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.**

**Open doors? They were chased out and people tried to kill them – nearly died, it seemed more like the doors were shut!**

**Last wk - Open doors do not mean it won’t be hard or have opposition.**

**It’s not about the numbers it’s about the disciples.**

**P&B never gave up. God’s doors are not based on resistance.**

**Resistance did not hinder the growth of the church**

**No phone calls or letters – this is the report. It was wild. We faced off with a sorcerer and lead a govt official to Christ. Many believed, we saw miracles and signs and wonders – but boy were we hated too. We were chased out of almost every city and check this out (Paul lifts shirt - shows face and scars) I nearly died. BUT – BOY WAS GOD GOOD!!**

**Acts 14:28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. (Recouping and they served the local. We later find out they were there 3 yrs before the next trip)**

**From this point on Acts is mostly Paul's adventures**

**In fact - Majority of the NT is Paul's correspondence with the churches he started - checking up on and encouraging them.**

**Some very big things jump out of this short passage**

**Lesson from the Trip Home**

**\*\* Ministry follow up is extremely important.**

**They risked their lives to follow up with the disciples – it was just as important as the initial decisions.**

**This was my fallacy with street preaching and often the issue with outreach ministries, and many churches. … no follow up.**

**We are to strengthen and encourage believers.**

**Why is this important? To live for Jesus is no small thing – to offer the gospel without hardship is false advertising.**

**We tell people to say a prayer, try to be good person, and be sure to give your 10%. We are missing the point. And often leading people to a false assurance of salvation.**

**The point was not just conversions or converts but to make disciples by planting churches - as Jesus said.**

**Matthew 2818 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (I speak as God and command this to you) 19 Therefore go (to your neighbor and the nations) and make disciples of all nations, (this is for every tongue) baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Because I am with you – have courage and know it’s going to work!!)**

**What does follow up consist of?**

**We give the Gospel and them – make sure they know this… New to Christ – thinking of following Christ…**

**Understand the cost - “make disciples of all nations”**

**By faith we die to self and follow Jesus - unfollow other things.**

**Turning from sin - baptizing them…**

**Baptism represents a washing and a turning - Romans 6:3 Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Raised to walk new)**

**Know who you gave your life to “name of the Father and of the Son and HS”**

**This is a declaration of faith and doctrine! The deity or Jesus, the Trinity – God became a man. The Work of the Holy Spirit.**

**Let’s not talk doctrine – let’s just worship God!**

**Worship what? Worship who? Doctrine matters.**

**Grow and learn what Jesus said and taught - “teaching them”**

**There is so much more to learn and grow in! That is why we come together – to learn and grow together.**

**Live it out! - “to obey everything I have commanded you.”**

**This is not about information – but spiritual transformation.**

**This is the great commission – preach the gospel and make disciples. Mission work. This can be difficult and challenging Which is why….**

**Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church…**

**\*\* Church organization is extremely important**

**They risked their lives to appoint Pastors, elders, and teachers – to grow and shepherd. Church planting and church organization is vital.**

**“I don’t like organized religion.” Do you like unorganized religion? It will not always be easy - they told them - expect opposition - but keep on pointing to the outfield – keep swinging.**

**Why is this important?**

**They set out to build the church had Jesus commanded**

**Matthew 16 – (Jesus asked his disciples who do people say I am? Some say John the Baptist, or a dead prophet come back to life.) 15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (promised savior – the only true living God standing right in front of us) 17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, (Petros – Stone or boulder) and on this rock (Petra – massive unmovable rock mountain) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.**

**\*\* Catholic – on Peter, a position of church authority (The Pope)**

**\*\* Protestants – the gospel authority (Jesus)**

**Notice - they didn’t go back and tell them to follow Peter, but to follow the LORD. The church is built upon the declaration of what Peter said – not Peter. Jesus is the Savior – God with us!**

**SO, they set in leaders to help them stay on track.**

**Acts 14:23b (They) …appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.**

**\*\* Pastor and elders are extremely important**

**Appointing pastors and elders is not to be taken lightly.**

**They did just close their eyes or throw darts – it was covered in prayer and fasting – and they were committed to the Lord.**

**1 Timothy 3:8-13, Titus 1:5-9 - Give us the requirements.**

**Above accusation, faithful in marriage and family, self-control, kind, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, gentle, patient, not a lover of money, lover of what is good, just, hold’s firmly to the gospel truth.**

**Basically, people of character and spiritual maturity.**

**Why is this important?**

**This is not to be taken or given lightly. But…**

* **Churches are often led by personalities and motivational speakers, rather than pastors who properly handle the Word of God.**
* **Churches are often led by people who are cool and stylish – who at times are immature and biblically incompetent - rather than seasoned lovers of God’s word and lovers of people.**
* **Churches often hire pastors for their management skills rather than discipleship skills.**

**CS Lewis, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer - “Novelty may fix our attention not on the service but on the celebrant… Try as one may to exclude it, the question "What on earth is he up to now?" will intrude. It lays one's devotion waste. (Much like) the man who said, "I wish they'd remember that the charge to Peter was Feed my sheep; not Try experiments on my rats, or Teach my performing dogs new tricks.”**

**They risked their lives for Jesus and then again to appoint elders, pastors, and teachers – shepherds to make disciples.**

**\*\*\* Ministry accountability is extremely important**

**Acts 14:26 …sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.**

**They returned and gave account to their home congregation.**

**They were not lone rangers – doing their own thing.**

**They have a home church. They have a covering.**

**I have been told - If I come here – you need to know that I can do my own thing and travel when and where I want. My own ministry. Don’t expect me around or basically give accountability.**

**Why is this important?**

**It’s hard and we are prone to pride and self-destructive behavior.**

**What was their story? ACTS 14 Summed up**

**- We preached the Gospel - We made disciples**

**- We established churches - We appointed leadership – and**

**- We encouraged them to keep the faith in the face of opposition.**

**Three things**

**Today - we continue to preach the gospel! Amen!**

**Today - the gospel continues to face opposition! Amen!**

**Today - God continues to build His church! Amen!**

**\*\* Christian - say no to lone ranger ministry. This is not God’s design.**

**\*\* Seeker - I want to end asking you the question Jesus asked those around him - Matthew 16:15 “Who do you say I am?”**