**Unstoppable - wk 37 - Last Hoorah!**

**Acts - Jesus: The Sequel**

**One of the most detailed and historic books in all of ancient lit.**

**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/ a purpose)**

* **Acts 1 - The resurrected Jesus says goodbye, but - I'll be back!**
* **Acts 2-8 - The Church is empowered and grows in Jerusalem.**
* **Acts 8-11 - Gospel begins to pour into Judea and Samaria.**
* **Acts 11-20 - Gospel reaches Greece, Asia, & Rome – 28 yrs later.**
* **Acts 20 - 5 yrs away, Paul is headed home after tearful goodbye.**

**Acts 21 - Today could easily be three sermons – but they are linked together – and wanted you to see them all at once.**

**But why the long road to Rome? Explain (Map). For accountability and to take an offering he had been collecting to help the believers there.**

**On the road again**

**(Map) Reads like a journal - Acts 21:1** **And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. (Traveling on a cargo ships) 3 When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. (Decide to go looking for Christian disciples.)**

**4 And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. (Revealed thru the HS trouble is there - don’t Go - and he felt urged thru the HS – to Go)**

**(Map) 5 When our days there were ended, (7 days) we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. (They walked all the way to the port) And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed 6 and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home. (What an amazing, detailed picture…)**

**(Map) 7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers (Christians) and stayed with them for one day. (The gospel was spreading, Christians were in nearly every city – God is moving!)**

**(Map) 8 On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, (look up an old ministry friend) and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, - and stayed with him. (Acts 6-7. OD, “original decan” – confronted a demon, lead the African man to the Lord and was transported) 9 He had four unmarried daughters, (young teens) who prophesied.**

**What a heritage – instrumental in the early days of the “original Jesus revolution”, preached, saw miracles, settles down in Caesarea with a family, 4 teen daughters on fire for God. And still an evangelist, preaching the word of God!**

**10 While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”**

**He gave an illustrated prophecy - use belt to illus**

**This was Paul’s third warning.**

**12 When we heard this, we (Luke included) and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. (Something bad is there – but Paul is convinced that it is God's plan for him to go) 13 Then Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? (When your told it’s going to be hard – but you know you need to do it anyway) For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”**

**The warnings from God, were not intended to stop him, but to prepare him.**

* **Can you be talked out of what you know God says to do?**

**Can you be convinced to give up? People have told me many times to give up on Livingway, to quit, to close… But I know what God told me.**

**Even Christians with good intentions will try to stop you. And they may be right - but you have to follow the will of God.**

**Not everyone will understand what God has told you - AND - you will not understand everything God as told them.**

* **At the end of the day are you ready to say – God’s will be done?**

**V14 “Let the will of the Lord be done.”**

**We prepare, pray, listen, think about it – act on it – but still… God your will be done. Can you rest in that?**

**As long as it does not contradict God's word, step out in faith - Our response is, and we rest in, "God's will be done."**

**(MAP - back on the road) 15 After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. 16 And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason (aka. Jason) of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge. (The eight that started in Troas, and others that slowly joined them – it was a full house – just outside of Jerusalem.)**

* **We truly do - get by with a little help from our friends.**

**All the stops, help, meals, late night talks, laughs, and prayer time – it was his partners and friends that made the mundane so enjoyable.**

**I love the relationships and hospitality they show each other.**

**Notice “Early disciple”– not a 12, but either knew Jesus or one of the first converts. This guy was now older in the Lord and still truckin.**

* **You’re never too young to be a voice for God (Phillips daughters) and you’re never too old to help serve others (Mnason)**

**Youth can only serve (But God has given them a voice)**

**And the older folks don’t need to anymore (But God is still calling you to serve) We need each other to work together.**

**A Strange request**

**Acts 21:17 When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. (Half-brother of Jesus and current Jerusalem Christian elders – the apostles were out spreading the gospel) 19 After greeting them, he (Paul) related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified God.**

**He gave a full account of all that God did. (video, pics, and souvenirs) The trials, arrests, and more importantly the growth and advancement of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men.**

**20b And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, (local Jewish Christians loved their Jewish traditions) 21 and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. (Told Paul was trashing the Torah) 22 What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.**

**A lot of Jewish Christians are after you. But we have a plan…**

**23 Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24 take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.**

**Sponsor these 4 guys in their Jewish Nazirite vow at the temple – and purify yourself post trip as is customary, so everyone can see you offering and observing. To dispel rumors. He was to do this to show them he was not against them.**

**25 But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.”**

**(Acts 15) From earlier council meeting years earlier - respect others dietary convictions and live a pure life.**

**26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled, and the offering presented for each one of them. (He followed the plan)**

**There is debate that Paul was being a hypocrite - pretending to be OG Jewish? Here is what I think was happening.**

* **We are to build bridges to those around us for the sake of Christ.**

**He was not pretending; he was Jewish and did practice some of those customs still in his personal walk with God - but never forced them on others.**

**And he taught as a follower of Jesus that they were not the way to righteousness – only Jesus is.**

**He was not doing this for righteousness – but to build a bridge.**

**1 Cor 9:20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 22b … I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (20-23)**

**He could have said - What? I risked my life to collect this offering and come here. To shoe my love and support – and I get this? Forget you all! But his attitude was of accommodation.**

**- He was more interested in winning people, than arguments.**

**- Salvations over social media, testimonies over politics.**

**- Fruits of the spirit over frustrations of this world. (Gal 5, Phil 4:8)**

**The beginning of the end**

**Acts 21:27 When the seven days were almost completed, (everything went back to normal, no... little did he know it was to be his last day of freedom) the Jews from Asia, (non-Christians) seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,**

**He was followed and attacked in many towns by Jewish leaders from Asia - Galatia. 12 yrs and still trying to get him.**

**(They were) 28 crying out, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place. Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” 29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. (Strictly against the law) 30 Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. (They started a riot in the temple!) They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut.**

**Pic of the temple – He is trying to build a bridge and set an example - he is attacked and dragged out!**

**31 And as they were seeking to kill him, (not just a beat down – they want him dead) word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion. 32 He at once took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. (Roman police authorities tower of Antonia was only 2 floors away - 200 soldiers were on the scene) And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.**

**Someone call 911! The police arrive and stop trying to kill him – how bad do you think he looked?**

**33 Then the tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. (As was prophesied) He inquired who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. And as he could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks. 35 And when he came to the steps, he was actually carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, 36 for the mob of the people followed, crying out, “Away with him!” (It was so bad they had to pick him up and carry him out as people were trying to get at him – crowd is out of control).**

**Condemned just feet away from where Jesus was tried 28 years earlier. As they are dragging him away Paul asks if he can say something... beaten and bloodied - Paul shouts to the crowd... where we will pick up next week. (Acts 22)**

**A few things from chapter 21 I want to leave you with**

**\*\*\* Living for God - will not always exciting**

**The first half of this chapter is a travel log. Just the regular day to day stuff of going from one place to another.**

**Every day was not a spiritual high. Motivated by obedience – Paul and the others lived everyday for Jesus. The mundane and the big occasions were just as important.**

**\*\*\* Living for God – will get messy**

**Walking in the will of God does not always give us clarity when we are in the middle of it - there will be times when we won't get it...**

**Our walk with God is like sausage / pepperoni - we like it, until we see how's it’s made - we want that until we see what it takes to get there. Some want the caliber without the cost. A platform without the process.**

**\*\*\* When you do the right things and the wrong results happen, don’t be surprised. (John 16:33 – you will have trouble)**

**He did the right things: \* He went to Jerusalem - at the Lord direction. \* He went to the temple to honor Jewish Christians- at the instruction of the council – and this happens…?**

**1 Pet 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.**

**- Even if the right thing brings the wrong results, keep doing the right thing**

**1 Peter 4:19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.**

**- Don’t assume that hard times mean a wrong turn**

**Ex 14:1-31, Ps 23:3-4, 2 Tim 2:22, James 1:13-15, 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-10**

**- Instead of asking, “WHY?” try asking, “WHAT?” God, what do you have for me to learn at this time – in this season?**

**Their response was right - 14 we ceased and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done.” (NIV ...we gave up and said, "The Lords will be done")**

**BTW - If you’re being persecuted, make sure it’s for being a CHRISTIAN, not for being a jerk. (1 Pe 4:14-17)**

**We eventually find out the Lord is control of this the whole time**

**Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”**

**A verse as you leave today:**

**Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (It's time to trust Jesus)**

**Following God in the journey of life may not bring what you expect, but if you trust in Jesus - it will bring a peace of God that surpasses understanding (Phil 4:6-7) knowing you are in His will.**