**Unstoppable - wk 38 – Ready Apologia**

**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 - Paul heads home to give a full update and offering.**

**But while doing the right thing – everything fell apart… at least in the appearance of things.**

* **Acts 21 – Only been back 12 days when a group of Jewish people jump him while he is worshiping God in the temple- to murder him.**

**A riot breaks out Paul is dragged into the courtyard – the authorities show up and tear him from the mob and start to take him to the barracks. Chaos – hundreds of people!**

**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...**

**Acts 21:35 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!” (Bloody, ripped clothes, breathing heavy)**

**37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the tribune, (like a Sergeant) “May I say something to you?” (speaking in Greek) And he said, “Do you know Greek? (you understand me?) 38 Are you not the Egyptian, then, who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?” (Are you the terrorist from Egypt causing trouble? Assumed he was a criminal) 39 Paul replied, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. (I’m not that guy!) I beg you, permit me to speak to the people.” 40 And when he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great hush, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, (some transl. say he spoke in Aramaic) saying: (Acts 22:1)** **“Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.” 2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said:**

**Crowd becomes silent as he speaks in their treasured language.**

**He gives his story in detail - how he persecuted Christian / was confronted by Jesus/ became blind/ was healed/ began to follow & preach the good news of Jesus to everyone even Gentiles.**

**Bloody, abused, torn clothes, speaking in pain he gives his testimony.**

**(We don’t skip verses – so we are going to read the whole thing) Acts 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. (Important pharisee and school) 4 I persecuted this Way (Christians) to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. (That is his before Christ)**

**“I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from.”**

**I loved God enough to kill people for him – but that is not God.**

**6 “As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ 11 And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.**

**This was a miraculous story – there were witnesses.**

**12 “And one Ananias, (disciple of Jesus in Damascus) a devout man according to the law, well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One (Jesus - Messiah) and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’ (This is how Christ)**

**Paul wanted them to know that he still served the God of his fathers. “I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed.”**

**17 “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance (while in the temple – another miracle – a vision) 18 and saw him (Jesus) saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ 19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ 21 And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” (This is his after Christ)**

**They will not accept you here, but I am sending you to the gentiles to be my witness! This was God’s plan.**

**This is one of five times we get Paul’s testimony in the New Testament.**

* + **Acts 9: Luke tells the story to the readers.**
	+ **Acts 22: Paul tells the story to persuade the Jews.**
	+ **Acts 26: Paul tells the story to persuade the Gentiles.**
	+ **Philippians 3: Paul tells the story for theological understanding.**
	+ **1 Timothy 1: Paul tells the story to give encouragement.**

**Paul gives us the 3 Steps of a Good Testimony**

**Acts 22:1** **“Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you.”**

**Defense – “apologias” = apologetics. A ready answer.**

**Peter uses the same word in - 1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect…**

**He addressed them as – “Brothers and fathers” (Acts 22:1)**

**Though we are mocked or attacked, we are to give a ready answer with gentleness and respect. He was not angry.**

**Humbly and respectfully – knowing he is not without sin. This was his largest Jewish crowd yet – on the steps of the temple.**

**\*\* BC: Before Christ – What my life was like good and bad.**

**Notice Paul did not too many details. He hit the major points.**

**I was successful, happy, arrogant, and violent. I was a sinner.**

**\*\* HC: How Christ – How Christ intervened in my life.**

**Paul was not searching. He was not at the end of his rope. He was gaining influence and power – could not have been better.**

**But Jesus said – you are mine.**

**\*\* AC: After Christ – How my life was affected by Jesus and my now.**

**He does not gloss it over – make empty promises of prosperity, cars, houses, healing and friends!**

**He stands before them broken and bloody… this can be yours!**

**And it’s for all nation – both Jew and gentile. That was it…**

**Acts 22:22 Up to this word they listened to him. Then they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” (Kill him!) 23 And as they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, (sign that they considered his words blasphemy) 24 the tribune ordered him to be brought into the barracks, saying that he should be examined by flogging, (torture & question, got to be something more) to find out why they were shouting against him like this. 25 But when they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” (Plot twist! You’re about to get in trouble, I will press charges)**

**26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” 27 So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” (falsify this meant death) 28 The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” (You look terrible – how could you ever afford that?) Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.” (I have been a citizen my whole life)**

**29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him immediately, and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him. (Oops… they did not care about the local’s but they looked out for Roman citizens – had extra rights.)**

**The Govt. system of Rome and its regions: Rome occupied Jerusalem - local authorities could not condemn to death anyone w/out Roman approval (trial) and all Roman citizens had special rights in court (trial).**

**Unlike the other Apostles, Paul was a former Pharisee and a born Roman Citizen - he knew both systems and their strengths. God picked Paul for very specific reasons.**

**Acts 22:30 But on the next day, desiring to know the real reason why he was being accused by the Jews, he unbound him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.**

**What follows is a series of trials, lies, jail, and long transfers taking him all the way to the Roman emperor Nero. For the remainder of Acts, Paul will be jail. Several years & 4 chap.**

**Next week – trial number 1 before the Jewish court.**

**What is the takeaway here? What can we learn from this?**

**Lesson from the arrest**

* **We are citizens of heaven – and of earth. (Dual citizenship)**

**Philippians 3:** **20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ…**

**Ephesians 2:19 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God…**

**As citizens of heaven, we still have rights and responsibilities here on earth, where God has placed us. Dual citizenship.**

**Paul instructs what it means to be both:**

* **A duty to obey.**

**Paul- Romans 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. (Goes on to say they are instituted by God to judge the criminals. Obeying honors God.)**

**Peter- 1 Peter 2:13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. (Goes on - even if you’re not free – live as you are free!)**

**What about when they conflict with God’s word?**

**Biblical civil disobedience - Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. (What follows is jail)**

**You are to obey God over man and accept the consequences.**

* **A duty to pay.**

**Taxes, fees, customs – Romans 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.**

**Pay respect to authority – Romans 13:7 – Pay respect to them. / 1 Peter 2:17 Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**

* **A duty to pray.**

**Pray for all authorities, good and bad – 1 Timothy 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.**

**Pray that we will lead a peaceful godly life – 1 Thess 4:11 … aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you.**

**Pray to stand in the gap for the unbeliever – 1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”**

**The bible does not say we are commanded to engage in politics, but we can. If we can bring hope and peace we should try.**

**The kingdom of Heaven is our home and final destination, we are pilgrims, sojourners, and travelers - but until we get there, we have a vital role to play here.**

* **God is always working for his glory.**

**John 5:17 In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”**

**In the middle of lies, deception, and persecution… God is working.**

**In the middle of pain, suffering, and accusations… God is working.**

**In the middle of unexpected turns and distress… God is working.**

**In the middle of a godless government… God is working.**

**In the middle of sharing your faith at work, home, school… God is…**

**I want to tell you how God worked in my life (my testimony)**

**BC**

* **Born in Tulsa and moved nearly every year in childhood.**
* **Father left as a baby – several stepfathers in a dysfunctional home of drug and alcohol abuse – and some physical abuse.**
* **By 13 – I was depressed, had major anxiety, and confused.**

**HC**

* **A friend told me about Jesus. That Easter, my family went to church. My mom was radically saved. 3 wks later, I walked an isle and found a heavenly father who will never leave me.**

**AF**

* **Life was still crazy and dysfunctional – but Jesus was my peace.**
* **Mom & latest stepdad divorced – but God is my faithful father.**
* **Moved again, this time to Texas - but heaven is my home.**
* **God blessed me with a wonderful family – who all serve the Lord.**
* **Called to ministry – preached on the streets, on the corners, in churches, preached around the world – that is my treasure.**
* **God has enabled me to be like a father to many – that is my inheritance.**

**God took a broken lonely kid and gave him hope and voice.**

**And he can do the same for you.**

**What’s your story?**