**Unstoppable - wk 39 – I’ve got a bad feeling about this**

**“I’ve got a bad feeling about this” – Star Wars**

**Acts - Jesus: The Sequel – it’s been 40 weeks.**

**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.**
* **Acts 21-22 – Back 12 days, an attempted murder and arrest.**

**Paul reveals he is a Roman citizen with special rights – a Roman trial is required. Put in Jail. The next day…**

* **Acts 23 – Trial 1 – a fight breaks out – and a plot to ambush Paul and the Roman police on the back roads is discovered. Paul is transferred to a new venue for a new trial.**

**What follows is like a crime drama series. With twists turns, court trials, fights, near death moments. The last 5 chapters has incredible detail. Luke was there – writing from a first-person perspective.**

**A former Christian terrorist turned evangelist is now being terrorized by his former friends and companions.**

**What would cause a man to risk his life and be willing to die - one who was forever touched and changed by the resurrected Jesus.**

**As things seemed to be getting worse. Jesus appeared before him one night in jail - Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”**

**1. Take Courage, the Lord is near**

**2. It’s not over till God says it’s over**

**(We pick up in Caesarea – Paul is now waiting in jail for his next trial (hearing) by his Jewish religious accusers.) Acts 24:** **Five days later the high priest Ananias (the accusers) went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, (the lawyer) and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. (They had just tried to have Paul ambushed and murdered – now by the book) 2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: (the governor)**

**The Jewish religious leaders make their case**

**“We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. 3 Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. 4 But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. (Kissing up - Butter up the judge – they hated the Roman authorities)**

**5 “We have found this man to be a troublemaker (he is a plague), stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. (lies) He is a ringleader (gang leader) of the Nazarene sect (another early name for Christians) 6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; (blasphemer – by bringing Gentiles to the temple for worship) (more lies) so we seized him. *[7] But the commander Lysias* (the police chief) *came and took him from us with much violence,* (Throwing Lysias under the bus - more lies) *[8] ordering his accusers to come before you.* 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.” (total fake news) 9 The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.**

**Paul is a plague, troublemaker, gang leader / ringleader, blasphemer, and rioter. Exaggerating and lying about Paul.**

**Gov. Felix asks Paul for a statement…**

**Paul’s defense**

**10 When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. 11 You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. (I was minding my own business at church) 13 And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. (They are lying – there is no proof)**

**14 However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. (I ain’t gona lie – I follow Jesus) I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. 16 So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. (I don’t hate them and I serve with great devotion the God they claim to serve – I have done nothing wrong)**

**17 “After an absence of several years, (he was on his mission trips) I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings. (offerings he collected on mission for the Jerusalem Christian church) 18 I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the temple courts doing this. There was no crowd with me, nor was I involved in any disturbance.**

**19 But there are some Jews from the province of Asia, who ought to be here before you and bring charges if they have anything against me. (the ones who have been following me for years, tried to kill me more than once - they are the ones who need to be here – where are they?) 20 Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court) - 21 unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: ‘It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.’” (Everything else is hearsay)**

**22 Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, (knew about Jesus) adjourned the proceedings. “When Lysias the commander comes,” he said, “I will decide your case.” (When the one who arrested Paul during the riot and wrote the letter of accusation to me gets here…) 23 He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs. (No chains - but still locked up. Friends came and went)**

**24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. (Daughter of Herod Agrippa – any relation to Salome??) He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come,**

**Paul explained three things in their discussion:**

**Life & the afterlife. Rom. 6:23; Psa. 9:17; Luke 16:19-31; Mark 9:43; Luke 16:24)**

* **Righteousness – What God demands (but we can’t)**

**God’s righteousness & our sin problem made righteous in Jesus. Jesus is the answer to this problem.**

* **Self-control – What God desires (but we can’t)**

**Our inability to save ourselves – our need for Jesus and the HS. Jesus is the answer to this problem.**

* **Judgement – What God will do (because we can’t)**

**God’s wrath and judgment rests upon those apart from Christ.**

 **Jesus is the answer to this problem.**

**25b Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” 26 At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.**

**Political corruption is nothing new.**

**(So,a few weeks later they talked again, no. When Lysia showed up… no) 27 When two years had passed,**

**2 years! Ever wonder why God sometimes leaves us in difficult situations? All the wasted years.**

**All Paul had was Jesus words:**

**1. Take Courage, the Lord is near**

**2. It’s not over till God says it’s over - I’ll get you to Rome.**

**Felix (was eventually fired – see history) was succeeded by Porcius Festus, (alight now things are going to get moving…) but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.**

**Enter the new Gov. Festus – he conspires with Jewish leaders to have Paul taken back Jerusalem - where they were going to ambush and kill him. It seemed like a step backwards…**

**In 2 weeks… New characters and plot twists.**

**5 PEOPLE – 5 QUESTIONS**

**Ananias and the Jewish court: Anger**

**Lashed out – and plotted to destroy. Dishonesty and false accusations.**

**His hate for Paul and Jesus – kept him from hearing the truth.**

**Acts 23:2-3 "God will strike you, you white-washed wall!" (you hypocrite) Recorded by Jewish writers as a cruel and corrupt high-priests. Assassinated during a mob less than 10 yrs later.**

* **What are you so angry about?**

**Are you angry at God? Maybe your really angry at life at yourself.**

**You can blame others and God – but you will eventually answer to God.**

**Tertullus – Jewish lawyer: Following the crowd**

**Did was he was told and went along with the others. Said what was expected. Repeated the words of Ananias.**

* **Are you following the crowd?**

**Are you just doing what others tell you? You can follow someone, culture, a speaker, follow what is popular – right to judgment. We will stand before God and give account to what / who we follow.**

**Lysias – the Tribune, officer in charge: Serving himself.**

**Acted neutral - shuffled people around. Looked out for self – covered himself from accusations. Twisted story to make himself look good.**

**He claimed to have saved Paul (23:17) but he actually nearly beat him to death (22:24-49)**

* **Who are you really serving?**

**You say you’re serving others, serving God, serving the church – but you’re really looking out for yourself and self-interest.**

**The truth will eventually come to light. Motive will be known.**

**Choose this day whom you will serve – verse.**

**Felix – Roman Governor: Never committed**

**Procrastinating opportunist. Interested but hoping to get something out of it. Some come to church to get something out of it – but don’t really want to commit to what Jesus has to say.**

**When he heard about judgment – he was afraid – his response was – tuck it away, don’t think about it. “When I find it convenient, I will send for you…”**

* **What are you waiting for?**

**Deal with the truth while you still can - Isa 55:6-7**

**Luke mentions how Paul talked about judgement and makes sure we know Felix rejected the truth – he later faced God’s judgment. He had plenty of opportunities – he heard the gospel often.**

**Was intrigued, but never committed – never had faith. Too much on the line.. status, power, carer.**

* **God does not always fulfill his promises in the way we expect.**
* **God’s timing is not our timing**

**His ways and thoughts are not like our own.**

**Isaiah 55:8** **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. 9 “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

* **Who will you put your trust in?**

**People, governments, the court system - or in God?**