**Unstoppable - wk 41 – Even you**

**Acts - Jesus: The Sequel**

**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.”**

**The Gospel is spreading around the world even in opposition. They saw the Roman world – God saw us!**

**RECAP: 2nd part of Acts - follows missions & adventures of Paul.**

* **Paul is arrested in Jerusalem in a mob murder attempt.**
* **He was transferred to Caesarea for an impartial hearing.**
* **Only to be left in jail for 2 years – until a new Gov takes over.**

**Acts 24:27 When two years had passed, (sitting in a jail cell waiting) Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison. (Enter the new Gov - Now we know it is 60AD)**

**Alright, now things are going to get cookin’, let’s get the trial underway. A large section today – we don’t skip a verse.**

**Acts 25:1 Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, 2 where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. (Alright – didn’t waste any time) 3 They (Ananias) requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. (If your religion makes you a liar and a murderer, there is something wrong with your religion.) 4 Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. 5 Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.” (Sounds like he is a no-nonsense kind of guy.)**

**6 After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. 7 When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.**

**The case (Acts 24) Paul is a plague, troublemaker, gang leader, ringleader, blasphemer, and rioter. Exaggerating and lying.**

**8 Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.” 9 Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?” (Wait a minute! Out of the pan and into the fire. Seems like a step backwards. He will die if he goes.)**

**10 Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. (I’ve been here 2 yrs waiting a trial- #3) I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. 11 If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!” (I am not going back, they will kill me – I appeal to Caesar, a right for a Roman Citizen – much the supreme court of Rome) 12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!” (He had no choice)**

**13 A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice**

**King Agrippa II - Jewish province ruler under Rome. His father beheaded James, grandfather beheaded John B, great uncle was Herod at Jesus’ trial, great grandfather Herod the great (Matt 2) killed the babies. He was Jewish but used Rome for power.**

**Bernice - (Agrippa sister) history suggests it was incestuous. Used marriage for power.**

**Festus tries to explain the situation to Agrippa**

**13 A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. 14 Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. 15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.**

**16 “I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. 17 When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. 18 When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. 19 Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.**

**This gets to the point of what the fuss is about. Jesus is crucified and rose again! The resurrection of Jesus! They can’t stop talking about it!**

**20 I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. 21 But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.” 22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.” He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”**

**23 The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. (spectacle filled with important people!) At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. (what an audience to speak in front of)**

**24 Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor, I decided to send him to Rome. (Festus – found no guilt in him) 26 But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore, I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. 27 For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him.” (Help me write the briefing and charges)**

**Trial / hearing #3**

**Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: (His apologia before renown & wealthy people) 2 “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.**

**4 “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, they are willing, (well known around Jerusalem – ask around) if that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. (I was a devout very religious Pharisee) 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. (What promise? The promise of the Messiah) 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?**

**You as Jewish believe in an eventual resurrection. The promised messiah (Jesus) proved it by His resurrection.**

**Paul’s Defense will be his testimony – the 3rd time in Acts**

**9 “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. (Acts 7) 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities. (Later writes about this w/ great regret - 1Tim 1:15)**

**He was an angry self-righteous terrorist toward Christians.**

**12 “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’**

**A goad is a sharp tool used to prod animals to move.**

**Ox would kick it and resist. It’s pointless to try to resist God. “You can’t stop what I am doing! Stop trying.”**

**15“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. (What you do to them, you are doing to me!)16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. (A word for someone here) I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.**

**17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’**

**Jesus tells him I am appointing you - a servant (minister) and a witness of what you see and will see! Things yet revealed.**

**I am sending you - to open the spiritually darkened minds.**

**From dark to light – for power of Stan to the power of God.**

* **Know this - The world is in darkness.**

**Bound by the power of Satan – with lies, deception, and sin.**

**Satan is actively leading people away from Christ.**

**Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, (sensitive to the HS) they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.**

**The world is in moral decline – “separated from the life of God.”**

* **Know this-There is only one hope for this world, the light of Jesus!**

**Jesus is the light of the world – shining a light and life on it!**

**Breaking the chains of Satan and the power of sin and darkness.**

**Jesus tells Paul, I am appointing you and sending you to them!**

**Acts 26:18… so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’**

1. **So, they can be set free from the power of sin and darkness**
2. **So, you they can be forgiven of their sins – and know God!**
3. **So, they can be set apart into a family with God!**

**“Those who are Sanctified,” set apart for a purpose- consecrated.**

**How? “by faith in me.” Not works, religion, church, rituals, customs, or being a good person. An invitation for all present.**

**Jesus brings: a new direction, new purpose, new place, new life – and a brand-new start! (2 Cor 5:17 - if anyone is in Christ…)**

**\*Jesus has the power to change everything! Even you!**

**(Will you see and be free like me?) 19 “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. (How could I not respond to his proof) 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. (Explain repent)**

**The message: you must turn to Jesus by faith – leave your old life behind. A new life will be the result – *not the prerequisite.***

**Major themes here presented to the crowd:**

**\* Faith - in Jesus / \* Repentance - need and turning to God**

**\* Forgiveness - of sin, because God is Holy / Adoption – new family**

**\* Sanctification – set apart for a new purpose and life**

**\* Holiness - To live differently (walk in new life) - different person!**

**21 That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. (I’m not a rioter, gang leader, political activist, blasphemer of God.) 22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen - 23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”**

**The prophets testify Messiah will suffer (the crucifixion) and rise from the dead in a glorified body ( the 1st to do so) and will bring the good news to the nations! That is why he is attacked.**

**Festus responds, “wow, amazing! I am so convinced. Tell me more.”**

**24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” 25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. (The tomb is empty many saw him; thousands can testify of this) 26 The king (Agrippa) is familiar with these things, (You have heard about all this) and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. (It was no secret – it’s good news!)**

**I am not crazy – I am convinced!**

**- I am convinced that Jesus is the Messiah!**

**- I am convinced that Jesus was crucified four our forgiveness!**

**- I am convinced that Jesus rose from the dead!**

**- I am convinced that Jesus has called, appointed me, and sent me!**

**- I am convinced the whole world needs the hope & light of Jesus!**

**This is not wishful, it’s factual and historical. True & reasonable.**

**\*\*I am so convinced of this and I am willing to die for it!**

**27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” (Paul is about to go full preach on him…) 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 Paul replied, “Short time or long - I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”**

**I pray you do eventually (all of you) that you know the life, love, grace, and hope of Jesus Christ. To know him like I know him… but without all the beatings and arrests.**

**What do you do with a dead man named Jesus – who came alive?**

**Last week:**

* **Ananias (High priest) – Angry and resentment – No**
* **Tertullus (the Lawyer) – I do what they say – No**
* **Lysias (Arresting officer) – self-serving – No**
* **Felix (old Gov) – Holding out for something better – Not now**

**This week:**

* **Festus (new Gov) – Mocking, you’re crazy! Never**
* **Agrippa (local King) – Spiritual – but not interested – No**
* **Bernice (Agrippa’s sister) – silent no comment – No**

**They didn’t want to turn from darkness (sin) or from power of Satan.**

**They didn’t want to receive the forgiveness of sin.**

**They didn’t want to submit their authority to Christs authority.**

**They didn’t want a place among God’s people.**

**They ultimately said – they don’t want true hope.**

**In other stories of Paul, you hear about local people, soldiers, inmates becoming followers of JC. But 2 yrs and a lot of NO’s.**

**Acts 26:30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. (This was a little to confrontational) 31 After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.” 32 Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”**

**They determined, not guilty – but Paul had already appealed.**

**That means – Paul has to go to Rome!**

**Paul in haste – was fulfilling what God had planned. But what happens next – nobody expected. (Next week)**

**2 Years of limbo in the Waiting – Waiting is not wasted:**

1. **A season of rest- For Paul it was season of providential protective custody. After years of non-stop, a break. Friends came to see him.**
2. **A season of building our faith- as we trust in God. (1 Peter 1:3-7) He stayed faithful and lived with a clear conscience before God.**
3. **A season of readiness - Secure in faith, ready to preach the gospel. He did not see much fruit on the outside, but we see it eventually.**
4. **A season of preparation- God was setting the stage for the next season. God has a different clock and calendar than what we keep.**

**Waiting is not wasted**

**I want to end with Acts 26:18 …so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’**

* **You can be forgiven today (all sin washed away)**
* **You can have a place today (you can have a family)**
* **You can have significance today (consecrated to me)**

**By faith in Jesus.**