**Unstoppable - wk 43 – From Malta with Love**

**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 obeyed and the gospel made it to Garland, TX.**

**Previously on Unstoppable:**

**Acts:20-27 – (27 yrs since Jesus) Pauls’ missions**

**On his way to face Caesar (an appeal to the highest court) they encounter a hurricane – the ship crashes and is destroyed.**

**On his way to face Caesar (an appeal to the highest court) they encounter a hurricane – 2 weeks lost at sea – 600 miles off course.**

**(Last wk – lessons from the drift and storms)**

**The ship crashes and is destroyed. Some swim, some grab planks – they make it to the shore! 276 survive.**

**Once they got there, they found out two things - Malta has nice people and aggressive snakes - Acts 28:1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. (60 miles south of Sicily) 2 The islanders (the local natives – not the Roman occupiers) showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.**

**Imagine rainstorm - crashed - swimming to shore – still storming – the crew is alive but tired and freezing - fire is built.**

**People see the crash and come out… are you okay?**

**3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood (no chains the prisoners are lose – Paul gathering wood) and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. (a snake sinks its teeth into you - what do you do?)**

**4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.” (Dikee – goddess of justice) 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. (Whoa!!)**

**6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; (They knew the snakes - venomous and deadly) but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.**

**This is where snake handling churches comes from – fake snake**

**Mark 16:17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” (not in original text – most likely a summary of Acts added later)**

**Notice how people can be so fickle and erratic.**

1. **One minute – their showing kindness (I love you – let’s be friends)**
2. **The next minute you must be a murderer - dead to me (I hate you)**
3. **The next – you’re a god (I want to be you – I worship you)**

**\*\*The gods got you now – now you are a god! "You're a murder... no you're a god" People are tossed around by circumstances and feelings. In the world most will either hate you or love you.**

**Acts 28:7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. (the Gov. local roman authority) He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. (Nearly lost at sea - to staying in the big house – with big meals! A 3-day vacation for Paul, Luke, & Aristarchus on a Med. island – with Julius in tow – who is this guy who survived the snake?)**

**8 His (Publius) father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. (Not because of their faith – but because God wanted to) 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. (people were coming from all over the island – and God was healing them)**

**10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed. 11 After three months…**

**\* Wintered in Malta – 3 months. It was this time that many were brough to him and God used him to bring healing to the Island.**

**During that time, all their needs were met.**

**(Spring had come, time to leave - get your passport on the road again) 11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island - it was an Alexandrian ship (like the other one holds about 300 people) with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. (Sons of Zeus – known as the protectors) 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. (on the ship, getting acclimated) 13 From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. (arrived on Italy) 14 There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came (lit headed toward) to Rome.**

**They left there on foot – walking the Roman Via Appia hwy.**

**Next week – the end of the story… or is it?**

**Stand out moments from Malta (for Mom)**

**\*\* Negative circumstances are not always a sign of God’s disfavor**

**Paul was walking obedience, trust and faith… then this happened.**

**Did the bite hurt? Most likely badly. But we don’t hear, “God why!” If I didn’t have to get wood!! If we hadn’t shipwrecked!! If I hadn’t listened to God – this would have never happened!! I did what you said – I survived the wreck, now this!!**

**God’s word was – I will get you Rome – not – I’ll get you Malta.**

**God did not preserve Paul from the storm only to let him perish by the snake. Paul knew and trusted God’s faithfulness.**

**Philippians 4:** **1 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

**What’s the secret? Knowing - God has me and will strengthen me through this.**

**\*\* Our positive experiences are not always a sign of God's favor**

**Healing is not evidence of God's favor / wealth is not evidence of Gods favor / a parking spot is not evidence of God’s favor.**

**Sometimes God does give healing & provision, sometimes he does not. The evidence of God’s favor is grace – God’s unmerited favor.**

**Luke does not say they became followers of Jesus - the miracles were not a sign of favor on them or to convince them to believe = They were still lost – but God healed them = common grace**

**Paul did not say - I’m not going to pray for you or help you unless you become a Christian.**

**He prayed for them as an ambassador of Jesus.**

**Matt 5:44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

**Bible's message - Life is hard – sin is hurtful - trust in Jesus – and do good to others.**

**\*\* Malta was not on their map – but it was on God’s map**

**God worked in the storm to get them exactly where they needed to be.**

**Sometimes the storms will bring you into relationships that you never expected to have and provision you never knew you needed.**

**The storm brought them to an island full of need! Not because they deserved it but God because God willed it.**

**God is faithful and can be trusted throughout the storm’s, shipwrecks, and snake bites of life.**

**\*\* Sin always deserves judgment**

**Acts 28:4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.” (Justice has got you!)**

**They kind of got it kind of right – Sin has to be paid for.**

**We won’t get away with it. (Numbers 32:23 - “…behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.)**

**Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

**All sin has to be punished – and its wages is death.**

**Some of you are playing with the serpents of sin.**

**Paul is latched onto by a poisonous snake - but look what happens**

**Acts 28:5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.**

**\*\* “Divine Justice” is satisfied by the work of Jesus on the cross.**

**Christ took our punishment on the cross – justice has been satisfied.**

**Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**- They knew Karma: We get what we deserve (worldview)**

**- But Paul knew Christ: Jesus got what we deserve**

**In Genesis 3 – the first appearance of Satan and sin is seen in a serpent and the sting of their sin has affected us and killing us ever since. (Snakes are pictures of sin, Satan, and sickness in Bible)**

**After the fall – the serpent (Satan) was judges - Genesis 3:(14 So the Lord God said to the serpent…) 15 And I will put enmity (war and hate) between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

**Who is the offspring of the woman? Jesus Christ born of a virgin. And on a Friday 1990 yrs ago, Jesus was bruised and stricken for our iniquity – but he crushed the head the serpent!**

**THREE TRUTHS:**

1. **The truth is – we deserve the poison of our sin.**

**Was Paul a murderer? Yes. He deserved divine justice!**

**We are all sinners (Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God) we all deserve divine justice & death – all of us!**

1. **The truth is – Jesus destroys the poison of our sin.**

**Jesus satisfies and takes the sting of sin and its death!**

**There is no other antidote – no other remedy for the poison!**

**You’ll never be able to do it – or be good enough to get it.**

1. **The truth is - this must be received by faith.**

**Sins poisonous power was broken by the cross of Jesus.**

**But the only way we can shake it off is by faith in Jesus.**

**John 8:24** **I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he (the Christ – savior), you will indeed die in your sins.”**

**1 John 5:12 - Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

**For some of you – your sin is latched on tight! It’s teeth are deep. You are dying. Jesus is your only hope.**

**\*\*\* And Satan like that snake will find his place in the fires of judgment! His day will come. Divine Justice will come.**

**Maybe you came for Mother’s Day. The greatest gift you can present to your mom is to receive the gift of salvation from God.**

**My mother is not here – but I know she was a follower of Jesus, and I know I will see here again on a future Mother’s Day – thank you Jesus!**