**Unstoppable - wk 44 – The End… or is it?**

**Everybody turn to Acts 29... are you there? We have come to the end**

**Been a great series - looking back / Acts: Jesus the Sequel**

**Covers 30 yrs - a lot has happened... Passport**

* **Acts 1 - The resurrected Jesus says goodbye, but - I'll be back**

**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.”**

**They were to be a witness of the Gospel - Good news – explain**

**And they did it… and here we are…**

* **Acts 2-8 - The Church is empowered and launches in Jerusalem**
* **Acts 8-11 - The Gospel begins to pour into Judea and Samaria**

**Gentiles start to receive and follow Jesus- changes everything.**

* **Acts 11-20 - The Gospel reaches people all around Roman world**

**1st half was primarily about Peter / 2nd half was about Paul**

* **Acts 20-27 - Paul arrested spends yrs in court system / sent to Rome & in the way shipwrecked on an island for three months.**
* **Acts 28 - 30 yrs after Jesus - Paul in chains leaves Malta for Rome.**

**Spring has come, time to leave - get your passport**

**Arriving in Italy - Acts 28:14 There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came (headed to) to Rome.**

**By sea – now by Highway. The rest is on foot.**

**Headed up the Roman Via Appia hwy (pic)**

**15 The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. (Actually, places along the highway to Rome) At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. (at the sight of his friends)**

**\*\* Nothing satisfies like being with the people you love**

**Paul’s had been praying for a chance to go to Rome for years Wrote Romans for a hopeful invite Jesus assured him he would.**

**He enters the city - 1,200,000 people – The best & worst of mankind**

**Entering Rome - magnificent - God actually got me here - riding a horse Enters the Porta Capena, followed the Claudia Aqueduct, past the Circus Maximax, thru the Roman Forum... then to the Castra Praetoria.**

**Would have seen all the wonders but was most excited to see friends. Relationships are more important than things, places, events, trips, job**

**Passport - I think of coming home to my family - life to my spirit**

**I want you to know something, you are loved & have a family here**

**28:16 When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. (House arrest - ankle monitor - Awaiting his appearance in court)**

**17 Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. (To state his case) When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. 18 They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. 19 The Jews objected, (they wanted to kill him) so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. (I was just trying not to die) 20 For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel (the messiah) that I am bound with this chain.”**

**21 They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. 22 But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.” (We have not heard about the charges against you – but we know about Christians!)**

**23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, (talked all day about Jesus) explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. (Used the OT. BTW- OT is all about Jesus) 24 Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.**

**Some bowed the knee and became followers of Jesus, but…**

**\*\* Not everyone will be convinced of Jesus**

**The best communicators / best messages / clear explanations / every question answered - some will still not be convinced**

**There will always be those who reject the truth - and it may be people you love - son, daughter, mother, dad, friend - some just will not believe - not everyone will accept Jesus as Lord**

**25 They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: (Frustrated at their hard-heartedness concerning Jesus - Paul quotes Isaiah 69)**

**Prophets in the OT would often stand up against the shameful things of the people - Paul quotes one of those verses.**

**This is Paul's final words recorded in Acts**

**His final words are scripture - not a sermon**

**25 …Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: 26 “‘Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; (you hear it and still won’t believe it) you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” (you'll see great things and still not get it - why?) 27 For this people’s heart has become calloused; (thick headed) they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’**

**Your heart, mind, ears & eyes are callused. If you believed this, you would find healing for your soul - but you don't.**

**28 “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” 29 After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.**

**So far – It’s a flimsy case / Jewish people in Rome don’t want to press charges / God brought Paul to Rome just like He said. He is right in the middle of God's will - Seems like things are going well – he should be out in no time...**

**30 For two whole years Paul stayed there (total of 5 years) in his own rented house (taxpayers did not pay for it - you did – you either work it out or you are convicted) and welcomed all who came to see him. (house arrest - under the watch of a guard 24/7) 31 He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!**

**And then... ???? turn the page look for more - Luke ends us with a cliff hanger (AD 62-63) - ever waited for a sequel?**

What happened next?

* **Locked up - (57-63) Writes Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon - witnessed to guards and talked to everyone who came**

**Philippians 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.**

**Philippians 4:17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. (That's how his needs were met - and rent was paid) They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.**

**Just a thought - 19 is not a promise for everybody - in context it's only for those who put Christ first and live generous lives.**

* **Released (c.63-67 AD) - travels to Spain (w/Tim & Titus) - to Crete (leaves Titus there) - to Ephesus (leaves Tim there) - thru Greece - back to Rome (writes to Titus & 1 Tim as pastors)**

**This info is derived from comments from Paulo in his letters and early church history.**

* **Arrested again - in Rome (c.67-68AD) - crack down on Christians by Nero (writes 2 Tim as a goodbye from a dungeon)**

**(c. 67AD) Paul is beheaded in his 60’s yrs – “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs records that Paul was led by Nero’s soldiers “out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword” (chapter 1, section X).**

**The same year Peter is crucified upside down... the others...**

**Apostle James beheaded / James (bro of Jesus) - clubbed to death after surviving being thrown from temple (Jerusalem) / Andrew - crucified (Greece) / Matthew - stabbed to death (Ethiopia) / Bartholomew - flogged to death (Turkey) / Matthias - burned to death (Syria) / Simon stoned (Persia) / Philip Executed (N. Africa) / Thomas speared to death (India) / Jude executed by arrows (Iran) / Mark dragged to death (Egypt) / Luke Hanged (Greece) / Barnabas - tortured and beheaded in Thessalonica... / countless Christians martyred (to this day millions are still put to death around the world declaring the resurrection of Jesus!**

**During Paul's service to God, he spends 8 yrs in prison, was shipwrecked 4X, is whipped, beaten, stoned, stripped, and left for dead several times - Yet remains faithful to the very end!**

**Acts covers 30 real yrs - did not happen in a month - the events were overtime - when we think about Acts we need to keep that in mind.**

**Looking back - Big lessons from the Journey**

1. **God still does miraculous – sometimes**

**Healing - sometimes / miracles - sometimes / guaranteed - never**

**Remember 30 yr period... diff outcomes at diff times. Their were seasons when miracles were wide and when they were sparse**

**Healing the sick, S&W, lame walking, Malta - miracles / later Paul could not even get healing for himself - Epaphroditus nearly died - was not healed after Paul's prayer - Showed up sometimes - and absent other times...**

* **Why? Here is the answer - I don't know.**

**Healing services are funny - we tell God on this date, you're going to do this - wow you're better than Paul & Peter, they couldn't schedule it. We can't put God's miracles on a calendar and hand out tickets - it is as God wills - We pray, believe, and He does as he wills (BTW - 39 of 40 miracles in Acts occurred out of church as they daily touched people)**

**There is no formula, no steps to a better you, or magic prayer -**

**Jesus heal me, but come what may - my life is yours**

1. **Life will be far different than we expect - even with Jesus**

**Following the events of Acts we realize few things went as planned - arrested and miraculously released - other times arrests and beaten plans changed, new directions - storms and turns - people move on.**

**No matter what plans we make or goals we set - one thing we can be certain about the future - Life will diff than we expect**

**James 4:13 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."**

**Make plans - but ultimately - your will be done - living w/ eternity in mind will set you free from the chains of life expectations...**

**Guess what? Your greatest tragedy / challenge might be ahead. How will you respond? Acts tells us how…**

1. **Ask, "What's next?" - not - "Why Lord?"**

**Acts shows us people who said - God what do you want to do next?**

**We spend a whole lot of time on the "what if's" - we replay it over and over - dwelling on the past - the last shot - the missed goal - the dropped ball - If I had gone the Dr earlier...**

**Paul’s 2 yrs in prison there were some of his most productive years in his live – writing NT and leading people to Jesus.**

**Paul knew trials firsthand - 2 Corinthians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.**

**God what's next - who can I help with my struggles**

**8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.**

**Sometimes things pretty rotten - turn out pretty rotten - but it can ultimately draw us closer to God**

**10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.**

**No matter how many times Paul was in Prison - regardless of the trials - he saw it as an opportunity - tell others about Jesus**

**1 Peter 4:19 - So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

1. **Jesus has come for all who will turn to him**

**Anyone: the dirty / sinful / murderer/ violent /sexually impure / the victim and victimizer / good and the bad / rich and the poor / the used & the broken / the left out / the popular - Jesus has come for you**

**They knew every person they met was a candidate for salvation**

**Acts is the beginning of Jesus words - "Come to me all who are weary and heavily burdened..." Paul echoes it in Romans - "Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" – Even you.**

1. **We are living Acts 29 - we are in it**

**The very same mission they were given we are given - 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.”**

**We been given a passport to the world - we are so pumped about our sports team - how about Jesus?**

**Locally (Jerusalem) - in our neighborhood/ community**

**Geographically (Judea) - to impact our region**

**Demographically (Samaria) - to cross racial and economic lines**

**Globally (to the ends of the earth) - this is for everyone! No one left out**

**If you are a follower of Jesus you have mission and a purpose**

**We are to spread the good news - savior has come - we can be forgiven of our sin - we can walk with God once again.**

1. **We are to share the good news - know it & be ready to speak it**
2. **Live honorable lives - #1 conversation in the early church**
3. **Show hospitality – living out our faith in the world**

**This revolutionized the Roman world and the early church.**

1. **Serve the kingdom – engage, connect – single person, as a family.**

**I have a new Acts 29 story - your story - your encounter with Jesus**

**Jesus is our passport to the Kingdom - stamped with Jesus Blood**

**Want to end with this**

**2 Cor 1:9 …this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again…**

**Don’t be like those Paul refers to as spiritual callous hearts – dull of hearing. Will you believe and follow Jesus?**