



Unstoppable

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As time goes on things change, no one is exempt. I've noticed that names don't come to mind as quickly. I open my computer and can't remember what I was about to do, I have a blog in mind on Tuesday, but on Thursday I can't remember what it was. The other day I was telling someone about this year's Bible study, and as I told the story I noticed that I could remember the concepts, but sometimes the order of events was fuzzy, and some of the names just wouldn't come to me. I take a Gingko Biloba supplement for this...but I also think if I practice retelling it, as I have done in past [blog posts](#), I will be more versed at recalling the details. Let's see how it goes.

This year, in [Bible Study Fellowship](#) we are studying Acts and Letters of the Apostles. The title of the study is Unstoppable. The Book of [Acts](#) is in the New Testament, just following the Gospel of [John](#). As John ends, we read about Jesus's death on the cross. His body is placed in the tomb, and three days later the tomb is empty. Jesus then appears to Mary Magdalene who then shares the Good News with the disciples. The final chapter of John, chapter 21, the disciples are in a boat fishing on the Sea of Galilee overnight, but caught nothing. Early in the morning, when they are near the shore, a man tells them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat, at which time they catch more fish than they can count. Moments later they realize the man was Jesus.

Acts, written by Luke, gives account of the happenings following Jesus's ascension into heaven forty days after he was resurrected. "He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." (1:9) Before His ascension He advised the, *now apostles*, not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the gift God the Father would send. Judas, the disciple who sold Jesus over to the Sandhedrin for 30 pieces of silver, died and needed to be replaced. The apostles replaced him with Matthias, who had been with them and had witnessed all of the works of Jesus. Ten days after Jesus's ascension, the gift arrived. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." (2:2-4) This is called the Day of Pentecost - which means 50 days - it is celebrated 49 days after Easter.

The different tongues in which they all began to speak, served as a unifying factor. As Peter spoke, their hearts were convicted. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (2:41) **This story serves to teach us that the Gospel is for all people.**

In the following days and weeks, the apostles preached the news of Jesus to the people and miracles were performed causing even more people to take notice, “many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.” (4:4) This attention angered the Sanhedrin, the government officials who had crucified Jesus, so they seized Stephen under false witness (6:13) “‘For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.’”¹⁵ All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” (6:14-15) Stephen was questioned about whether the charges were true. He began his testimony with, “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia...” Stephen began with God’s story described in Genesis so that everyone would fully understand and be brought up to speed. In fact, their understanding made them furious and they gnashed their teeth at him. (v. 54) While Saul held their coats, the Sanhedrin stoned Stephen to death. “But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep. (v. 55-60) **This story serves to reiterate the Great Commission - ‘Go Ye therefore and make disciples.’ It is our duty to share the Gospel no matter the cost. Stephen was the first martyr, but we don’t see in Scripture that he writhed in pain while he was stoned to death, we see that the glory of God was shown to him. The Bible even uses a gentler word than death, it says he fell asleep.**

In the next chapter we see Saul destroying the church. “Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” (8:3) That is, until he was blinded for three days while the Lord worked on his heart. Once his vision was restored, “he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.” (9:20) **This story serves to remind us that God has the power to change any heart. We don’t know exactly how many people Saul killed, but it is believed to have taken place over a three year time span. As time went on, Saul, later known as Paul, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write Holy Scripture. Paul wrote Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, 1st & 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and he is believed to be the author of Hebrews. We also cannot assume that our own lives are doomed because of our past. God was able to take Saul, a murderer, and change him into someone trusted enough to record God’s own Holy Word.**

The Church continued to grow. In Acts 10, Cornelius, described as, “a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.” (v. 1-2) Cornelius experienced a vision telling him to send men to Joppa to bring back Simon Peter. Meanwhile, Peter, at his home in Joppa sees a vision of a heaven opening up and lowering a sheet to him off of which many different four-legged animals, reptiles and birds began to scurry. A voice told him to ‘kill and eat.’ A devout Jew, Peter responded, “‘Surely not, Lord!’ Peter replied. ‘I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.’ The voice spoke to him a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.’ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.” (v.14-16) Right about this time, the men sent by Cornelius arrived, so Peter went with them - a move that was strictly against the customs of the time. Jews and Gentiles did not

associate. In Cornelius' home a crowd of Gentiles were gathered. (v. 27) Peter shared the Gospel with them all and added, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." **We must realize this, too. The Gospel is for unstoppable. God does not have favorites people or favorite groups of people. As humans we have divisions and prejudices, but our divisions and prejudices are not of God. God created man, and Jesus died as the atonement of all human beings' sin. We must put away our fears, precepts, and notions in order to be obedient to the Word of God and "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matt 28:19)**

Amen! Amen!

Sorry, this was a little lengthy, but it needed to be said.

Have a wonderful week!

Kim