

Acts 28 – Unstoppable – To be continued

I imagine in every household there are those jobs that everyone avoids doing. The attitude is someone else we do it. This is a bit of a problem if you live on your own. Jobs like putting out the bin, doing the washing up, turning off the dripping tap, turning off the lights in that room when there is no one in it.

We have a job to do as followers of Jesus that no one else will do. We can't leave it someone else. The job is to help others come to know Jesus. If we don't think it we certainly act like someone else we do it. I know this week I missed opportunities to speak about Jesus.

Right from the beginning of Acts we see that the Apostles had a job to do. The job of helping others come to know Jesus. Right from the beginning they didn't leave it to someone else. Even when it was hard which was all the time. It was because Jesus has a job to do. Seeing people hear the Gospel and turn to him.

We see in Acts the work of Jesus continuing – the unstoppable Gospel being preached. This work is to be continued through his people.

1. What was promised? The spread of the Gospel.

Read: Acts 1:8

This verse contains the promise of Jesus to his disciples. The promise is that they would receive power when they Holy Spirit came and then they would courageously speak about Jesus. This would start in Jerusalem and spread to the 'ends of the earth.' It is the programme for what would happen in the book of Acts.

Although we are introduced to lots of people along the way, people who have been the messengers; people who have tried to get in the way of the messengers and the message; people who trusted in the message. Acts is not a biography of people or of any one person. It is the unfolding story of the promise of Jesus. It is not a story tied to Peter or Paul who were main characters but the story of the risen Jesus through His powerful Spirit doing his work through the Word ie the message of the unstoppable Gospel.

What was promised? The spread of the Gospel.

2. What did we see? The spread of the Unstoppable Gospel

There are 6 summary statements or 6 Pivotal points in the book of Acts that show that the book is about Jesus keeping that promise of Acts 1:8.

See 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31.

All these statements express that the Gospel is being spread and it is being spread from Jerusalem out to the 'ends of the earth.'

So Paul turns up to these places in Acts 28 and finds believers.

This Jesus achieving the picture we have of the future in Revelation where we see people from all nations around the throne of Jesus worship him. Christ will have the prize for which he died an inheritance of Nations.

3. How did it happen? Through Preaching, opposition and pain

Firstly PREACHING – We are told in Acts 28:31 that Paul preached boldly. This is what we see all the messengers doing. Firstly they went to the Jews and then the Gentiles. This was the pattern right through the book of Acts.

What was preached by Paul? He had one message Jesus. JESUS – JESUS – JESUS.

A mate I worked with at a church in Sydney spent a lot his time teaching Religious Education in primary schools. One day a young boy ran up to in class and said Bruce you come here every week and teach the same thing every week. You teach us about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. That's all we ever hear from you.

This is also true of Paul. He has one message. Jesus is the main character of Acts. He's the main character of the Bible. Every story whispers or shouts his name.

Why? We all need a mediator. Someone who would stand between us and God. God is holy and we are not. We cannot approach God on our own. We are not worthy to be in his presence because of the way we have treated him.

Jesus comes and dies to take our sin on himself. The sin that I have committed in the past, the sins I have committed today and the sins I will commit in the future to make it possible for me to not only approach God but to have intimate relationship with him. Through the death of Jesus God looks on us not 'just as if we have never sinned' but also 'just as if we obeyed.'

This is what Paul preached because all people everywhere need a mediator and the only mediator is Jesus.

What came with the preaching of the Gospel is OPPOSITION AND PAIN.

When the unstoppable Gospel was preached it was opposed. Whether Peter or Paul the Jews opposed them. And the Gentiles.

We saw it in riots, arrest, trials, torture, murder by stoning, storms and shipwrecks.

Circumstances seem to be against the Gospel. Opposition to the messengers and the message. External opposition and internal opposition. Paul spent nearly 5 years being inactive in the world.

Were they wasted years? Was he champing at the bit and pawing the ground like a restless rebellious horse? No

See Philippians 1:12-14

Paul didn't become full of disappointment, regret or anger. But his circumstances caused him to redirect his attitude.

I met with a bloke this week who was recently injured his back so that he was off work for 3 weeks. It caused him to be in bed on his back for a lot of that time. He did a lot of reading and listening to sermons. He said God used it as a time to wake him up to the fact that he wasn't taking Jesus seriously in his life. He said if God did that again he would be happy because he is not closer to God because of that time.

What seems to be opposition to the advance of the Gospel is crucial to the advancement of the Gospel.

You might think what can I do. I am busy. I am old. I am sick. I don't have much time. I don't have much energy. I spend my time going from doctors to doctors.

I know when I got sick I was like a restless rebellious horse snorting and kicking trying to get out of the yard. Even now when my day is interrupted and part of it wasted going to have my regular blood test I think what an interruption what a waste of time. Instead of changing my perspective and seeing as a time to slow down be with people I wouldn't otherwise be with. A time to talk about my experience of the reality of God to me in the sickness. Talk about the hope I have beyond this life that is full of sickness and pain and disappointed. Turn your interruptions into moments of opportunities to live and speak about Jesus.

How did it happen? Preaching, opposition and pain.

4. What will we see? The unstoppable Gospel to be continued

Read it: v.31

The book finishes very open ended. It leaves you wondering what happened to all the characters like Paul but we are not told.

v.31 tells us that the Gospel went out Unhinderedly. It is Unstoppable.

Acts ends but the story is continuing.

If a Christian would take the form of a flower. What would it be? A rose or a tulip. A Christian is called to be a dandelion. It has all the attributes of a Christian witness. It is the first sign of hope in the spring. It is an expression of love as it's the first flower given by a child to their mother. A dandelion makes itself known to its neighbours quickly. A dandelion is not conscience of class. It casts itself equally on the rich and the poor. It provides beauty where nothing else will grow. A dandelion can be trod on; dug up, pulled up and still bounces back with its witness as if nothing happens. A dandelion is a victim of slander because it is called a weed but it pushes on to conquer the world. Wouldn't it be great if we all acted like dandelions in the world?

Each of us needs to ask, "What about me? Am I as committed to helping others know Jesus as I ought to be? Am I relying on God's power to do all that I can to see as many people reached for Christ, both locally and worldwide?"

Here's some points that will help you move in the right direction:

1) **Ask God to burden your heart with the lost.**

Put it on your prayer list. If we are apathetic about those who don't know Jesus, we are not like Jesus, who had compassion on the lost.

2) **Get some training so that you can confidently share the gospel.**

There are many books that teach you how to share your faith. Memorize the verses you need to help lead another person to faith in Jesus Christ.

3) **Inform yourself about the cause of world missions.**

Operation World is an excellent informative book to help you learn about and pray for the nations of the world.

4) **Read missionary biographies.**

The thrilling stories of those who have taken the gospel to the remotest parts of the earth will strengthen your faith and will encourage you to get fully behind our missionaries. Read about Jim Elliot, John Paton, Adoniram Judson, Hudson Taylor, William Carey.

5) **Go as a short or long term missionary.**

You don't have to be gifted as an evangelist, translator, or teacher to be used in missions. Many missions are desperate for support personnel. God can use both young and old in the cause!

6) **PRAY, PRAY, PRAY.** Rely on the Holy Spirit. When was the last time you spoke about Jesus conscience of relying on the Holy Spirit? Don't be self reliant be Spirit reliant. Show you are desperately dependent.

Will you commit to being part of the continued story of the unstoppable Gospel?

Will you give your all to help others come to know Jesus?

What will it look like in your life? On Sunshine Coast? In Australia? In the world?

Let's commit ourselves to accomplish the mission the Lord has entrusted to us!