

“Unstoppable God”
Acts 5:17-42

Introduction: Pg. 913 - Redemption Kids (upstairs)

Palm Sunday...

Hosanna: In Psalm 118 is a cry for salvation. But when they shouted it as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, it meant: “Salvation is here!”

“Hosanna to the Son of David” = Jesus is the promised King, who will deliver us.

“Hosanna in the highest” = is a saying let everyone praise this Savior.

In their celebrating, they didn't know he was going to suffer (v30)

The work of Christ was about to be stopped, or at least it appeared.

Palm Sunday would give way to Good Friday. The Savior Died.

But Good Friday gives way to Easter Sunday morning. The Savior is alive...

So we celebrate today in the fullest sense! We know the rest of the story! Victory is here.

FCF: Do we live in that victory?

Story

Back and Forth between the Antagonists in the story and the Protagonists.

Antagonists consisted of the high priest and the Sadducees.

- The high priest was the chief officer in the temple and served as the primary mediator between God and his people through the sacrificial system.
- The Sadducees were one of three prominent schools of thought in Judaism known for strict adherence to the law and a rejection of the resurrection.

The Protagonists are the apostles, the followers of the ultimate hero of every Story, Jesus.

Movement 1: Opposition, Intervention & Obedience

Read 17-24

Explain story.

- Opposition
 - Due to Jealousy (popularity was rising!)
 - Preaching Jesus, more believing in him.
 - Signs and Wonders...
 - They saw the power of God at work and the foundations of their own belief and their power among the people crumbling. After all, they had a great relationship with the Romans, so any “destabilizing element in the culture [threatened] their control.”
 - Why? The apostles were saying Jesus is the Messiah. The Jewish establishment was saying, “Nope! Jesus was not the King of the Jews, that’s why we crucified.”

Acts 5.17-42. Unstoppable God.

- {P} This is the second time they were arrested. We saw it last week!
- Intervention
 - But God doesn't leave his people for a moment. He is always with us, and at times, he works powerfully to deliver us out of the mess we're in.
 - This time, he sends an angel to pull off an amazing prison break.
 - And the angel gives them a command. (Verse 20).
- Obedience
 - Look at the action of the apostles. "When they heard that's exactly what they do."
 - Their obedience was immediate. They withheld nothing in their devotion to Jesus!

T: As you might expect, the antagonistic authorities didn't appreciate this! But the apostles weren't trying to hide, simply do the very thing God asked them to do. That leads to v.27.

Movement 2: Interrogation, Threat, & [Mini-Sermon]

Read 25-32

Explain story.

- What would they do?
 - Bring them back in for interrogation...
 - But not by force, because of their popularity among the people. They were afraid of an uprising. Verse 26 says they even felt threatened for their own life!
- Threat
 - Once they bring them back before the high priest in what amounts to a trial scene, their interrogation is laced with threat.
 - Look at Verse 28: "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name (OF JESUS),"
- Mini-Sermon
 - Well, guess what....
 - We must obey God rather than man, which is another way of saying - we're listening to him not you - come what may!
 - And then they proceed to tell the story again.
 - Verse 30 - Enter their framework (The God of our fathers)
 - Verse 30-31 - Challenge their framework (you killed)
 - Verse 32 - Complete the framework (this gift is for anyone. Spirit is a gift from God to all who respond with the obedience of faith.)

Movement 3: Decision, Persecution, Response (Rejoice and

Read 33-42

Explain story.

- Decision
 - Perplexed.

- Warn them. That didn't work!
- Arrest them. That didn't work!
- Kill them. We'd love to but we might get stoned ourselves if we do so.
- Gamaliel Speaks up
 - We've seen this before (34-37)
 - Theudas -
 - Judas the Galilean
 - Because of that, with theological reasoning, he says...
 - Leave them alone. Here's why:
 - If it's of man, it will fizzle out, just like Theudas, just like Judas.
 - But if it's of God, no one will be able to stop it.
 - God delivered through supernatural means (angel) and natural means (Gamaliel).
- Persecution
 - They took his advice, but did their best to shut them up.
 - They beat them, probably by the method of flogging.
 - The apostles would have had to kneel with their back exposed. Then 39 lashes would follow with a leather whip that would wrap around their back, hit their chest, and finish on their back a second time.
 - They charged them (again, maybe thinking that that beating would motivate them to be silent).
 - But look at how the apostles respond...
- Response:
 - Leave them rejoicing!
 - And they WERE NOT silent, but continued speaking of Jesus, teaching and preaching that he is the Christ!

T: Let me give you three encouragements when it comes to representing Jesus in your own life.

When you represent Jesus...

I. Expect Consistent Opposition

Filled with jealousy (5:17)

- Ananias & Sapphira: Filled with Satan - we will lie. (5:3?)
- With the Spirit? (2:4?)
- Peter, John and the apostles say, "You might be filled with jealousy, but we are filled with God. We have the Spirit!"
 - Whatever fills us influences us. *Ephesians 5:18*
 - If we are filled with the Spirit, we will live under his influence and do the work that pleases him.

Listen: Many want to hear. Many do not want to hear. The experiences of Jesus' earliest followers help set our expectations.

Why would we expect everyone to say, “Oh yes, I’ve been waiting for you to tell me about Jesus.”
I prefer being my own god. Who likes that?

“The intensity of the opposition is because of the enormity of the gospel opportunity.”

But when we are persecuted, God is present!

- He is with us.
- Our suffering is his suffering (Col. 1:24ish)
- Never doubt God’s presence in the midst of your pain!

[[{P} Excursus on Persecution...

- Started in chapter 4
- Heightened here...
- Reaches it’s peak in 7-9... Stephen and the work of people like a man named Saul.
- Persecution for us???
- Persecution around the world...]]]

T: In spite of the opposition, they . . .

II. Display Exceptional Obedience

Exceptional obedience pushes past barriers.

- We saw their immediate obedience in verses 20-21, but once again in the face of threat in verse 28, they respond by saying: “We must obey God rather than men.”
 - Reminiscent of what they said a chapter earlier in 4:19-20: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot help but speak of what we’ve seen and heard.”
 - They were compelled. It was something they had to do. They had no choice. Like Jeremiah, the reality of Jesus was so real, so alive, so compelling to them, they had to tell someone about him.
 - Conviction leads to confession. (“We believe therefore we speak!” 2 Cor. 4:13)
- No threat.
- No fears.
- No imprisonment.
- No cost was too great to keep Peter, John, and the apostles from fulfilling what Jesus told them to do.

- 3 times they are threatened or persecuted. 3 times they talk Jesus anyway. Exceptional obedience!
- We see this kind of devotion today in the heart of a 19 year old Nigerian woman named Liyah. She, along with 110 other schoolgirls, was abducted by Boko Haram the Islamic extremist group

terrorizing parts of Africa. 105 of the girls were released last week (the other 5 are presumed to be dead), but Liyah was held back because she refused to denounce Christ.

- God, give us the faith of Liyah!

- They were set free from prison, not to retreat from the mission but advance the mission of witnessing to his resurrection.
 - So appropriate for us this time of the year to remember what Jesus has asked us to do.
 - What do you think about the life of Jesus? What do you make of his death? Let me tell you. Let me bring you to our Good Friday service at Medford High at 7p.
 - What is the resurrection of Jesus all about? I'd be happy to tell you. Let me bring you to our Easter service next Sunday, 10:30a.

- It was the power of the Spirit within them, they enabled them to push past every barrier.

- Listen: I don't what keeps you back from representing Jesus, but there is no barrier, no excuse that overcome this one truth — God is in you.

- We saw their immediate obedience in verses 20-21, but they went way beyond that.

T: Not only will exceptional obedience push past barriers...

Exceptional obedience sets no barriers!

- Did you catch the state of the gospel in Jerusalem?
- Look back at verse 28. "We strictly charged you to keep your mouth shut, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching."
- Wow. FILLED Jerusalem.
- Then, after they were beaten, it says in verse 42: "And every day (underline, circle, highlight, double underline) EVERY DAY, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease (underline, circle, highlight, double-underline) DID NOT CEASE teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

Motives to sharing the Gospel:

1. The glory of Jesus: People are not worshiping him.
2. Eternal destinies are at stake:
 - The joys of heaven - eternity with God.
 - The horrors of hell - eternity apart from God.
3. The Love of Christ:
 - 2 Cor 5:14: "For the love of Christ compels us, for we are convinced: that one died for all."
 - Nothing motivates sharing the gospel like the gospel.
4. Obedience:
 - The one who loves us the most and (hopefully) the one we love the most: asked us to, told us to.
 - Will he ever ask us to do something that is not good for us? We are missing out on joy, when we fail to obey.
 - But here's one more: When God tells us to do something and we don't do it, what does that Bible call that? Sin. Oh... There is a sin nobody talks about (ironically, it is): the sin of silence.

- At the end of the day, talking to others about Jesus is a matter of obedience. (Mt 28:18-20)

Examples of breakthrough

- Here's some encouragement: one guy in my Community Group who was praying for a breakthrough in this area talked to 3 people about Jesus in the past week. One of the women in our CG has been praying about the same thing. Through the course of conversation with a coworker, she got to talk to her about Jesus and at the end of the conversation, her coworker said: "You know, I'm not surprised you shared this with me because I see it in everything you do."
- We have less to fear than we think we do!

T: What's the ground for our confidence? The mission belongs to him. Therefore, it can never be stopped.

III. Move Forward Unstoppable

Look back at verses 38-39. I believe this is one of the most life-giving, confidence-producing, mission-motivating statements in the Bible.

Our God is UNSTOPPABLE.

Do you see the implication? We are unstoppable in him.

God is marching us forward...

- Matthew 16:18 - Jesus promised to build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us!
- BUT we are not leading the charge.
- We follow Christ, who is the stronger man (Mk??)

How can you stop someone up who counts suffering a reason for celebration?

1) The Vision of Resurrection was driving this! Even if you kill me, I've seen the end of the story. "To live is Christ! To die is gain!"

2) Oneness with Christ! To suffer for Christ was to join Christ in his suffering. Why? Because Jesus and his followers are ONE. They were full of him. In Christ and Christ in them.

If Jesus is the Messiah (hello Palm Sunday)

If Jesus is victorious (hello Good Friday)

If Jesus is alive (hello Easter Sunday),

We have every reason to be confident in him. He leads us in triumphant procession... **(2 Cor. 2:14-17)**

The Point: Display exceptional obedience as you live for our unstoppable God.

Conclusion:

People... PRAY...

Acts 5.17-42. Unstoppable God.

Before Dan leads us in a song of celebration, I want to open this up as an area for prayer!

People.

Easter: 400+. Bring out the chairs.

People: not just to come, but to experience the power of the resurrection and the salvation Christ offers them, at Good Friday, through our Eggstravaganza, and NEXT SUNDAY!

The time is now!!

Stand. Pray. Sing.