

## Unstoppable...Power to Face Opposition

6/16 /19 – Pastor Randy

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Jesus said, “I will build my church”. Jesus did not come just to save individuals. He came to build a church. Jesus said the purpose of the Baptism in the Spirit is so we will be empowered “to be His witnesses.”

Being a witness to Jesus involves:

1. A verbal testimony to the truth about Jesus.
2. A lifestyle that testifies to the truth about Jesus. This lifestyle is both personal and corporate.

In Acts 2:41 Luke tells us that *in response to Peter's verbal witness* 3000 people were reconciled to God and became a part of the church, God's family.

In Acts 2:42-46 Luke paints a beautiful picture of these new Christians living out their faith together as the family of God. The key word (NLT) in this passage is “shared”.

2:42: “Shared meals”

2:44: Shared everything”

2:45: “Shared the money”

2:46: “Shared their meals”

The chapter closes with 2:47:

*“...all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day **the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.***

Luke's words convey a relationship between people being saved daily and the goodwill these new Christians were enjoying among all people. In 2:41 a massive crowd was saved as a result of Peter's words, but in 2:47 people were being saved due to the influence of, not just their words, but their works. Works of power and works of love. The people witnessed miracles taking place through the apostles and they saw the love they had for one another demonstrated by their generous sharing.

Acts 3 begins with a specific example of what Luke described was taking place at the close of chapter 2. The new believers attended the daily worship services in the temple, God was performing awesome miracles through them and people were getting saved. Let's look at this example.

Luke tells us that Peter and John were heading to the Temple in Jerusalem for the 3pm prayer service. As they approach the temple they encounter a man

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who has been lame since birth. Because Judaism placed such a strong emphasis on charity, the ideal place for the disabled and poor to solicit financial assistance was at the temple during the scheduled times for worship when it would be most crowded. The lame man called out to Peter and John, requesting money. Peter said, “Look at us”. We don’t have silver or gold to give you. But what we do have we will give. Then Peter said, “in the name of Jesus Christ get up and walk”, as he took the lame man by the hand and lifted him. Immediately, the man was healed. Luke emphasized the dramatic nature of this healing by mentioning that the man was lame since birth – pointing the severity of the disability – and by mentioning that he didn’t just start hobbling around, he jumped up, began walking and even leaping! Because this man was so well known to the Jews who frequented the temple, this miracle created quite a buzz. The reaction of the people was exactly what you would expect. They were “filled with wonder and amazement” and they rushed out in amazement to Solomon’s Porch, on the east side of the court of the Gentiles, forming a crowd around Peter, John and the man who had been healed. Darrell Bock tells us that Solomon’s Porch was a famous location for commerce and discussion.

I love the way the NLT translates verse 12. It literally states, “When Peter saw it he addressed the people”. The NLT captures the meaning of “it” by translating verse 12, “Peter saw **this opportunity** and addressed the crowd. The pattern here in Acts 3 is similar to the one in Acts 2. A supernatural manifestation of God’s power creates wonder and interest among the crowd which provides Peter with a great opportunity to explain the gospel. Peter’s second sermon is a lot like his first. Here is a summary of his message:

1. You shouldn’t be surprised and you shouldn’t credit us with his healing.
2. **Who Jesus is** - He has been healed by the God of Israel through faith in the authority of Jesus, God’s servant. The term servant is associated with the servant in Isaiah the greatest of all the servant songs of Isaiah, 52:13-53:12 where we read these words:  
*And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.*

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*All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.*

3. **Our Guilt Before God** - You delivered him to Pilate to be crucified. You chose a murderer over God's His Holy and Righteous Messiah.

4. **God's Faithfulness to His Promise** – Before and after Peter calls for a response he emphasized that everything that has happened is evidence of God fulfilling His promise that through Abraham's seed He would bless the whole world.

5. **Call for a Response** – Repent: Turn back from your rejection of Jesus.

6. **Mercy is Available** – You acted in ignorance....but forgiveness is available, the refreshing presence of God is available, and you will inherit the new creation. *"God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."* (vs 26)

We turned away but **God has sent Jesus to turn us back**. Our responsibility is to repent – turn back in faith to God – but Jesus enables that response!

At the close of chapter 2 everything is coming up roses for the apostles and the church. That rosy picture continues right through chapter three, but as we move into chapter 4 we are quickly reminded that while Jesus' promise to build His church could not be stopped, can not be stopped, and will not be stopped, that doesn't mean it will be all smooth sailing. The church will face opposition; it will be attacked and it will be assailed. But it won't be stopped, it won't be defeated. The powers of hell will not conquer it.

While Peter and John were still speaking to the crowd they encountered their first real opposition to their mission. The very sad fact was that Satan's opposition to Jesus and His church was mediated through the Jewish religious leaders! The very people who had been called to act as God's shepherds among His sheep end up violently persecuting God's servants and His people. A group of Sadducees and priests arrested Peter and John and jailed them overnight. This was a severe abuse of power because the reason given is that they were preaching about the resurrection which the Sadducees did not accept but which was accepted by the sect of Pharisees. They were arrested for an issue that was debated even among the Jewish leaders. They shut down speech they didn't agree with because they could!!

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Luke intentionally reminds us that the powers of hell cannot stop Jesus from building his church by writing, *“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

The next day Peter and John were brought into a gathering of the Jewish leadership intended to be very intimidating. They asked them who gave them the authority to do this? Before quoting Peter’s response, Luke tells us that Peter spoke as he was filled with the Holy Spirit as a reminder of how much we need the Holy Spirit. Peter’s response is particularly bold: “If you are asking by what means this man has been healed, then I will tell you and all of Israel!! It is by the authority of Jesus, the man you crucified, He is the one responsible for this man’s healing. Peter repeats, as he did in each of his first two sermons, that Jesus, whom they crucified, God raised from the dead. Alluding to a statement from Psalm 118 to add greater emphasis he said, “The stone you rejected is the very stone that God is building His whole house upon!” Peter, unintimidated, pulled no punches. Then he made his boldest, most provocative statement yet: *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

The Jewish leadership was struck by the boldness and authority with which Peter spoke. They were left speechless, mainly because they had an undeniable miracle standing right next to them. They sent Peter and John out and counseled together to determine what to do with Peter and John. They decided since they couldn’t refute the veracity of the message and the miracle they would resort to intimidation and force, they warned them and threatened them not to preach anymore about Jesus. Peter and John’s response was beautiful: “Maybe you think we should obey you rather than God, but we don’t agree...so we cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

As soon as they were released they immediately returned to the church and shared about the threats made against them. Immediately they lifted their hands. On Wednesday we will explore their prayer but for now I want to draw your attention to the result of their united prayer

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*And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

Just like when they were initially filled with the Spirit, they were united in prayer beforehand! And just like in Acts 2, being filled with the Spirit resulted in boldness to speak God's word.

Chapter four ends in a very similar fashion to chapter 2. Luke provides a brief description of the impact of the Spirit on the relationships within the church. Jesus promise to build an unstoppable church takes place on two levels. Jesus is building a church that is both deep and wide. The church grew in size and grew spiritually.

Here are the key characteristics of the church according to Luke:

1. Unity was experienced. Unity is not everyone doing the same thing, but everyone serving the same Lord with the same mission, beliefs, and values.
2. Love was expressed through generous, voluntary sharing.
3. Jesus was preached.

We have come full circle. The church witnesses by its preaching and its living.

### **APPLICATION:**

Jesus is building an unstoppable church, but not an unopposed or unassailed church. The NT is full of "warfare" language. Not physical warfare, but spiritual warfare. The NT authors stress the fact that the enemy we are fighting is not a flesh and blood enemy. The Devil is our adversary. We fight spiritual forces of darkness. Do not be surprised that you personally and the church corporately are opposed and attacked. Make use of the resources God has given you just as Peter and John did!

1. We need the body of Christ. They went immediately to prayer for the Holy Spirit's courage.
2. We need the power of the Holy Spirit so we need to PRAY FIRST!! They went immediately to prayer. PRAY FIRST!! PRAY FIRST!! PRAY FIRST!!

As I mentioned last week, the goal for the Christian is not just to check a box that we have experienced the baptism in the Spirit. The goal is to be continually filled with the Spirit

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On this Father's Day I want to take a minute and address the Dad's first and all the men here secondarily. God has given you a role of protector. Your biological family needs you to stand strong in the face of difficulties and challenges. Your church family needs you to stand strong in the face of difficulties and challenges. You need other men and other men need you. You need to be a bold, prophetic voice to your sons and daughters.