

Unstoppable

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[0 : 00] We're in Acts chapter 5, that reading that Brenda read for us. Acts chapter 5 from verse 17 to the end of the chapter we'll look at.

! Before we do so let me just say another prayer. Oh Father God we are weak, needy, and sinful people. We so need your help now as we look at your words. Your word which we believe still speaks to us today. We pray please speak to us afresh from it this morning through this passage in the book of Acts. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

To many, this book, the Bible, may seem like a dry, old, dusty, ancient document which has very little to do with life in the 21st century.

Perhaps for some it speaks of a man who seemed to be a good chap who taught many good things but died in weakness.

Perhaps he rose again but that's not got any relevance to me now. A survey was done by the Bible Society a few years ago on people's views of the Bible. It was done amongst a wide variety of people.

[1 : 46] And there on the Bible.

They said they see guidance in the Bible and comfort and wisdom. We can't get away from the fact that the biggest answer was outdated.

Many believe that this book, the Bible, is outdated. No relevance to me today. Maybe that's even you here this morning.

You're sceptical about the Bible. Does it have anything to do with me and my life today? And yet this morning we are gathered here in this room and we are opening this book once again because we believe God's word is powerful.

That God's word is life. God's word is life. And that God, through his word, does his unstoppable work in this world. God does his unstoppable work in this world through his words.

[3 : 17] And that's what we're going to see this morning in this chapter. Even though there is opposition to God's word and to God's people.

Even though people stand up against God. God is still at work powerfully through his work, words. And his work is unstoppable.

So two big points this morning. First of all, God unstoppable. God unstoppable. The apostles, they just kept telling people about Jesus.

They were commanded not to by the Jewish authorities. Peter and John stood before them and they said, Don't speak anymore in the name of Jesus. But they just kept going.

And have a look how the Jewish authorities react to this in verse 17. Then the high priest and all his associates who were members of the party of the Sadducees were filled with jealousy.

[4 : 25] Filled with jealousy of the apostles and their popularity and the church growing. Filled with jealousy. They'd been told to stop.

And yet they wouldn't. And it just keeps growing this work. The authorities are out of control they feel. But they keep standing up against the apostles.

So much so that verse 18 says, They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. They stand up against the apostles.

They stand up against the apostles. Who carry on in preaching the words. And really, they're standing against God. So, not just Peter and John this time, but all the apostles are put in the jail.

They're told to stop by being locked up securely in a jail. Behind bars. Behind bars. No way of escape. God standing by to make sure they never get out of that jail.

[5 : 37] Sent apostles, messengers of God. Sent to preach God's word silenced. But God is a God of miracles. God is unstoppable.

Have a look. Verse 19. The very next verse says this. But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out.

God is unstoppable. That jail door. That jail door. That was in the way. God freed them from the jail. And he commands them to carry on.

Go. Verse 20. Go out. Tell the people. All about this new life. Life. Some of us here at Calvary last Sunday evening stopped to consider Jesus' famous words at the end of Matthew's gospel in the Great Commission.

Where Jesus tells the apostles in our passage to go. And as he tells them to go, he says that he has all authority in heaven and on earth.

[6 : 51] And we pause to meditate on that little bit where Jesus said, all authority is given to me. He has all authority to tell his people to go.

To go and preach the word. Go and tell of me. And in the face of opposition from the authorities, God is showing once again that he is still the one in authority.

He is the one who has created the heavens and the earth, who reigns on his throne, and he won't let the work of his kingdom being built come to an end.

And so a jail door that is locked is no problem for our God who is on authority. No problem. No problem. We also meditated last Sunday evening on the words, I am surely with you to the very end of the age.

And I think even in verses 19 to 20, we see that Jesus is with his people. The angel of the law comes to open the doors and tells them to go.

[8 : 04] I am with you. Go and do this. You look at the authorities involved in verse 21 to 24 and there are just a complete loss to know what's going on here.

They get to the jail and they find it locked, but there's no people inside. Have a look. Verse 23. We found the jail securely locked with the guards standing at the doors.

But when we opened them, we found no one inside. What's going on? They were there. We promise you they were there, but they're not there now. We don't know how this has happened.

So verse 24. On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to. It unnerved them, wondering what this might lead to.

This is a bit scary. But God is showing. He is unstoppable and you cannot stand against him. You see, you can chain up this book, the Bible.

[9 : 17] You can put God's people into jail. You can do all you want, but you cannot stop God from working. There's many things that feel unstoppable in the world.

For those of us who are English in this room this morning, we have felt Spain's unstoppable power to win football matches. They won every match at the Euros.

They were worthy winners. But one day they will lose a match. We trust. They're not as unstoppable as we might think.

One day they will lose. I don't know what it will be, but one day they will. On Monday evening, I was coming down to this building to open it up for some people from the council who are meeting here. And the rain was falling. I could not stop the rain. I wanted to. And I had to go out on it to come and open it up.

[10 : 23] And I got wet, even though driving around the corner to open it up. I wish the rain would stop. And it did stop in the end. The rain might fall.

It might feel like it will never stop. But it does stop. And today it's dry. Praise the Lord. As for a jail door.

Being locked inside it. That stops people. Most of the time. But our God, he is completely unstoppable.

So much so that this guarded jail door is no problem. No barrier for God. We must move on.

And Peter ends up speaking to the authorities again in verse 30. To tell them that you can't stand against God. To tell them that even death is no barrier for God.

[11 : 29] Verse 30. What does it say? It says, The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead. Whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

Peter reminds the authorities again of Jesus. Whom they killed. You tried to stop him. You tried to kill him. You brutally nailed him to a cross.

But look where Jesus is now. Verse 31. God exalted him to the right hand as prince and saviour. That he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

Look where Jesus is now. He is raised. He is exalted. At the right hand of God. You cannot stand against God.

Death was no problem for him. Death was no problem for him. And so Israel. God's people. They can now turn in repentance to him.

[12:29] Because their Messiah has come and done this great work. Even these Jewish authorities that Peter is speaking to. Even they can turn to find life in him.

And as Acts goes on to show us. The Gentiles can also come in and find salvation from Jesus. God's work is not just limited to the people of Israel. It's going out to the nations. God's work is unstoppable in his worlds.

God's. You cannot stop God's work. And that's what Gamaliel. One of the Pharisees who's against God.

Stands up to say. He stands up to say. You can't stop God's work. How does he say that? Well let's begin looking at his speech.

[13:25] In verse 36. Some time ago. Thudus appeared. Claiming to be somebody.

And about 400 men rallied to him. He was killed. And all his followers were dispersed. And it came to nothing. Thudus it seems appeared as some.

Man claiming to be a messianic figure. And he led people into the wilderness. And he was captured. And he was killed. Along with many of his followers.

He was silenced. No more to speak. Or be heard of again. And then verse 37. Gamaliel gives another example.

Verse 37. After him Judas the Galilean. Appeared in the days of the census. And led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed.

[14:26] And all his followers. Were scattered. And so. Gamaliel. Gamaliel. Expects.

That this. Work that is going on. Among the apostles. This name of Jesus. Which is being preached. It's just of human origin. And so it's all going to fizzle out.

Have a look at what he says. In verse 38. Therefore in the present case. I advise you. Just leave these men alone. Let them go. For if their purpose.

Or activity. Is of human origin. It will fail. Don't worry guys. In a few months. This will all have fizzled out. It's not going to come to anything.

But. Verse 39. But if it is from God. You will not be able to stop these men. You will only find yourselves. Fighting.

[15:23] Against God. Oh I don't know if Gamaliel really thought. That this was God's work. Maybe he did. But he did know. That if it is God's work.

You cannot stop it. He knew that God. Is unstoppable. And so. If it is God's word. If we try and fight against it.

It's not going to come to anything. We're just fighting a lost cause. You cannot fight against God. It's pointless. So don't kill them.

That was the threat to the apostles here. Don't kill them. It'll stop. Finally a Pharisee. He speaks truth. You can't stop.

God's work. For God's work. Is unstoppable. That's what we're seeing. In this passage. So for us.

[16:20] Should people try to silence us. Take comfort. That God's work is unstoppable. When I lived up in North London. In a place called Southgate.

A Southgate tube station. Whilst I was living there. There was a preacher. Preaching on the streets. And he was arrested. That was really shocking.

For us to hear. Let us not lose heart though. Should that happen. Should opposition. Rise up against us. God is at work in his world.

And his work is unstoppable. For God's church remains. Two thousand years later. The gospel message is still being proclaimed. In this country.

In the USA. As is seen today. And all across the world. God is working. And Jesus. He has not left the building.

[17:18] He has not left the church alone. He reigns. And he's exalted. At God's right hands. Thudas.

Judas. The Galilean. Who are they? We know so little about them. We don't have national holidays. To celebrate their death.

And resurrection. And their births. But Jesus. He turns the world upside down. Christmas time. We remember Jesus' birth.

Okay. Maybe it didn't happen in December. But we remember Jesus' birth. We have a national holiday to do that. At Easter time. We pause. And we remember Jesus' death and resurrection. We've got a whole holiday devoted to it. For many it's just an excuse to eat lots of chocolate. But. It is to stop.

[18:17] And remember Jesus. Remember Jesus and God's unstoppable work. In his world. Just keeping you awake.

Second. Second. Second point. Word unstoppable. Word unstoppable. God's word is unstoppable. Have a look again at verse 20.

Go. The angel said. The angel of the Lord said. Go. Stand in the temple courts. And tell the people all about this new life. The angel wants them to go.

And tell the people. Tell the people about Jesus. The life. And so verse 21. What do they do? At daybreak. They entered the temple courts.

As they had been told. And began to teach the people. They teach the people. And verse 25. What do we find them doing? Then someone came and said.

[19:18] Look. The men you put in jail. Are standing in the temple courts. Teaching the people. God's word was going out.

Through the apostles. In the face of this opposition. It was going out. They were standing. Boldly teaching of Jesus. Teaching of him.

Who is the life. We sang in that hymn. Just now. He is power. Into strengthless souls. And life into the dead. He is life.

And they are speaking. God's word. Speaking the name of Jesus. Life. To people. But the opposition.

Continues to try. And stand against them. Verse 28. We gave you strict orders. Not to teach in this name. He said. Yet you have filled. Jerusalem.

[20:14] With your teaching. And are determined. To make us guilty. Of this man's blood. God's. They remained.

Obedient. To teaching. God's words. And they say. You filled. You filled.

Jerusalem. With your teaching. You filled it. With the word of God. That's just the beginning. Of this going out. A key verse.

That. We keep coming back to. In Acts. In Acts. Chapter 1. Verse 8. Says this. This is words of Jesus. But you will receive power. When the Holy Spirit.

Comes on you. And you will be my witnesses. In Jerusalem. They're doing that. They're witnesses. In Jerusalem. Jerusalem is filled. With God's words.

[21:10] But also. In all Judea. And Samaria. And to the ends of the earth. If these authorities. Are struggling. To control this. Well. It's only going to get bigger.

It's going to go out. To the whole world. You can't stop his work. Through his words. And so they remain. Obedient. To proclaiming his words.

He's commanded them. To go. And so they are going. And the apostles know. That he is to be obeyed. Over and above.

Anybody else. Have a look. Verse 29. Peter and the other apostles replied. We must obey God. Rather than human beings. And verse 32.

We are witnesses of these things. And so is the Holy Spirit. Whom God has given to those. Who obey him. They are obedient. Christians.

[22:07] It reminded me. Of the story. Of John. Bonyan. An Englishman. Maybe. If you know anything. Of him. You will know. That he wrote the book.

Pilgrim's Progress. Very famous. Book. That he wrote. Now John. John Bonyan. When he was alive.

For various reasons. He was a dissenter. Of the Church of England. Because all Christian worship. In this country. Was banned. Unless it was held.

In Church of England churches. The authorities. Were against. Bonyan. Because he kept. Heading out. To preach. And he was determined.

To keep. Doing so. And so a warrant. Was issued. For his arrest. And yet. This did not. Stop him. From having.

[23 : 04] Concern. For others. Who needed. To hear the gospel. So he carried on. He had. A wife. And children. At home. In Bedford. But he also knew. He had responsibility. To preach the gospel. And so he. Boldly. Continued.

To go. And preach. Despite the warrant. For his arrest. And indeed. He was arrested. And taken in. For questioning. And when asked. What was he doing. He said this. I was coming. To instruct. And counsel people. To forsake their sins. And close in with Christ.

Lest they perish miserably. He was committed. To preaching. The gospel. He knew. It was important. That sinful people. Hear of their savior.

[24 : 02] Went on trial. Before the authorities. For meeting. And preaching. With people. He was questioned. And Bunyan said again. Something else.

Extraordinary. If it is a sin. To meet together. And seek the face of God. And exhort one another. To follow Christ. Then I will sin still. If it is a sin.

To meet together. And seek the face of God. And exhort one another. To follow Christ. Then I will still sin. He knew it was important. More important. To be obedient to God.

Than it was. To the authorities. Who are standing against God. And the preaching of the words. And John Bunyan. Like the apostles.

He was in prison for it. The second sin. He had in prison. He completed. His book. The Pilgrim Progress. Which is still being used.

[25 : 00] By God today. You cannot stop. God's work. Through his word. In his world. His word. Is unstoppable. Unstoppable. And so if our God.

Who reigns above. Tells us to. Keep speaking of him. Keep declaring his name. To the nations. Then we have to. Because his name.

Speaks life to the dead. And we can take confidence. That his word. Is unstoppable. And so we can remain. Obedient to proclaiming.

His words. We see. In this passage. That the apostles. Continue. Then. To speak. The gospel. Boldly. Have a look again. At verse 30. Look how bold. Peter is. The God of our ancestors.

[25 : 59] Raised. Jesus from the dead. Whom you killed. By hanging him on a cross. The God of our ancestors. They confronted them.

Again. Not for the first time. With the fact that. They killed. Jesus. They were boldly. Declaring the truth. And to speak of.

Of Jesus. Hanging on a cross. Well for. Jewish people. That would seem. Very weak. And powerless. For the.

Book of Deuteronomy. Says anyone who. Is hung on a pole. Is cursed. By God. It's not. How to speak of someone. Unless it is true. Unless it is God.

Taking the curse. Of his people. On himself. Which it is. And therefore. Peter can boldly. Proclaim it. To these folks. These authorities.

[26 : 57] As he believes. As he takes confidence. That God's. Word. Word. Is unstoppable. That God's word. Is power. So he will speak it boldly. To the opposition.

And he shows them. As we've seen already. Very clearly. Of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 31. Again. It's what wonderful verse. God exalted him.

To his own right hand. As prince and savior. That he might bring. Israel to repentance. And forgiveness. Of their sins. He shows very clearly.

That Jesus reigns. At God's right hands. And if this is not true. This is complete blasphemy. To say to these Jewish people. But this is true.

God has come. For his people. He's been under God's curse. And now he reigns. As prince and savior. For his people. They continue.

[27 : 58] To speak. The word. Of God. Boldly. And finally. We see in this passage. That even. Suffering. Cannot stop.

The unstoppable word. So after that. Bold. Proclamation. Of the gospel. How did the authorities respond? Verse 33.

Shows us. When they heard this. They were furious. And wanted to put them. To death. When they heard this. They were furious. And wanted to put them.

To death. That was their reaction. It was an offense. To them. They were furious. We heard earlier. In the passage. They were jealous. Verse 17. They were filled. With jealousy. And this jealousy.

Drives them crazy. That they just want. To put them to death. We'll hear no more.

[28 : 54] Of it please. Peter. But after. The speech. That we looked at. From Gamaliel. After he. Persuaded.

The. Rest of. The council. That actually. If this is from God. It's pointless. Of fighting. Against them. They choose not. To put them to death.

But they do. Choose to. Flog them. Have a look. At verse 40. His speech. His speech. Persuaded them. They called the apostles in. And had them.

Flogged. And then they ordered them. Not to speak. In the name of Jesus. And let them go. They were flogged. They were told.

Don't speak. Any longer. Of Jesus's name. Verse 41. May sound a bit weird. That the apostles left. The Sanhedrin. Rejoicing.

[29 : 50] Because they have been counted. Worthy. Of suffering. Disgrace. From the name. And. I reckon. We could have a whole sermon.

On that verse. Certainly. It looked like it. When I was. Preparing. I've. Rejoiced it down. But for now. We do see.

Here. That they rejoiced. They counted. Worthy. Of suffering. Not that they rejoiced. In the actual. Suffering itself. In the floggings. They weren't like. Oh please. Flog me again. They didn't say that. That would be weird. But they rejoiced. That they were. Counted. Worthy. To suffer. Because they follow.

The name of Jesus. That name. Which is life. That name. Of Jesus. Who they looked to. For salvation.

[30 : 46] Who they know. Has suffered. Greatly. For them. He suffered. For them. On the cross. Went through. Awful. Agonies.

For them. And so. They were. Rejoicing. They counted. Worthy. Of. Being identified. With him. The savior. Of the world.

Jesus. And Jesus. Is suffering. Led to resurrection. And as we. Have heard. From Peter. He is now. Exalted. In heaven. It's led to glory. Suffering. Leads to glory. And so. These apostles. They may suffer. But they know. Resurrection. Life too.

They know. They're heading. On the pathway. To glory. Maybe. Maybe. The words. Of Jesus. That they heard. Him preach.

[31 : 39] Came to their minds. Blessed are those. Who are persecuted. Because of righteousness. For theirs. Is the kingdom. Blessed are you. When people insult you.

Persecute you. And freely. Falsely. Say all kinds of evil. Against you. Because of me. Rejoice. And be glad. Because great. Is your reward. In heaven.

For in the same way. They persecuted. The prophets. Who were before you. Maybe they took. Hope. And confidence. In those words. Of the Lord Jesus. They saw.

The privilege. That it was. To suffer. For the sake. Of the Lord Jesus. The name. That brings life. To the dead. And so. They carried on. Speaking the words.

Teaching of Jesus. Because God's. Word. Is unstoppable. And it brings power. And life. To the dead. And so.

[32 : 36] How convinced. Are we. Of the life. And the new. And living hope. That this book. The Bible speaks of.

Or do we just see it. As outdated. And of no relevance. To our lives today. Are we. Are we. Are we. Are we convinced.

That this book. The Bible. Is the vital resource. For our evangelism. Or do we believe. That we need to put on. Some sort of. Show.

To attract people. Into the kingdom. Or. Or can we. We simply. Trust. That this word. The Bible. Has unstoppable. Power. To bring life. To the dead. Hope. To the hopeless. If we believe. That.

[33 : 32] Can I warmly. Commend. This resource. To you. It's called. The word. One to one. We've got. Loads of copies. Around the church. Building. Of it. It simply.

Helps. Us. To read. Through. Some of John's. Gospel. With somebody. It's got an attractive. Layout. And it can help us. To look at.

God's words. God's word. That is powerful. We could say. To someone. Would you. Like to sit down. And read this. With me. There's also.

An app. That you can use. If that. Would be better. For you. Or another thing. We can invite.

People. To come. To church. To hear. The word. Of God. Preached. Because we believe. That God's word. Is powerful. And so.

[34 : 28] Even if. We invite. Them to come. And. Eventually. They say yes. And they come along. And hear a sermon. From Leviticus 25. It will be okay. Because God's word.

Is powerful. God's word. Is unstoppable. God's word. Is life. And so. Use it. Ask people. To read it. With you. Invite them.

To come. And hear it. Proclaim. God's word. Does his. Unstoppable. Work. In his. Worlds. Let's pray together.

Our father. God. Thank you. So much. For your. Words. Thank you. That your word. Is life. And power. Thank you.

That the name. Of Jesus. Is. Life. And power. Power. Into strengthless. Souls. It speaks. And life. Into the dead.

[35 : 30] Help us. We pray. To have confidence. In this word. In the bible. This week.

Help us. We pray. Give us opportunities. Open doors. To speak of you. To speak of the name. Of Jesus. With people. We pray that. For our. American friends.

This morning. As they're. They're with us. This week. Give them. Open doors. To speak of you. To people around us. And give us. People who live here.

In Brighton. A confidence. To speak of you. To invite them. To read the scriptures. With us. Lord. Do your great.

Unstoppable. Work. In this city. We pray. And we ask this. In Jesus name. Amen. We've got a final.

[36 : 26] Hymn to sing. It's probably. Better known. To a lot of us. As a mighty fortress. Is our God. But the. Words of our hymn book. Have slightly changed it.

Hymn written by Martin Luther. And it speaks. Of how unstoppable. Our God is. And it also speaks. Of the opposition. That we may face.

But even in that. We take confidence. In God. And his unstoppable power. In our world. So let's. Stand together. And sing. Of the Lord.

Amen. Our God stands like a fortress, God, with walls and will not fear us.

He helps us race against the shore of which we shall assail us.

[37 : 35] The enemy of all, in women blesses both.

This seems his victory hour, he fears the worldly power. And longs himself with power.

We bid the battles to abide, people that once rejects us.

The righteous one will lead the fight, by God himself diventries.

He lost in the panacea, Christ Jesus in his feet. His battle, King and Lord, God's true and daily words.

[38 : 48] No one can stand against him. And though the world seems full of hills, with the redeemed's prowling.

Christ may treat his people still. We need not fear their house.

The tyrants of his age, stuck with the armless face.

Their sentence has been passed. He died of sin. to serve gods and wish we who loved him treasure.

Then let them take our lives, whose children must learn twice, and carry all the way, this is a sure new thing, ours is the lasting kingdom.

[40 : 45] We'll stay standing for a final prayer. Before I lead us in that, please do stay around to chat, get to know each other, and there's tea and coffee served through in the back hall, so do help yourself.

Let's pray together. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Amen.