

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

**Acts 8:1-25 | Unstoppable | Acts 8:1-25 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor**

If you have a Bible this morning, I wanna invite you to turn with me to the book of Acts chapter eight. This morning, we're continuing our series through the book of Acts. We are in our 11th week of this series, and what we're gonna do next week is we're gonna take a short break from the book of Acts. We're gonna do a five-week series that's a bit more topical. It's gonna be focused on the ideas of evangelism, sharing the gospel outreach. Really, the whole heart is going to be on us reaching our Jerusalem, the city of San Francisco. What we've seen so far in the book of Acts is really the people of God being witnesses in Jerusalem. This is where Jesus said that their mission would begin, is they are witnesses in Jerusalem.

At this point in the book of Acts, I'm gonna have us take a little break, and we're going to consider how we can be witnesses in our Jerusalem. I think this is a good place for us as we come to Acts chapter eight to start to take that break, because what we see in Acts eight is that there is this movement from the apostles and the Christians being witnesses in Jerusalem to them doing that in the greater regions of Judea and Samaria. Here we see the gospel going forth to new places and to new people, and what's interesting is what sparks this. You might remember that last week we were in Acts chapter seven and we saw Stephen's speech proclaiming the gospel, lifting people's eyes to Jesus and to our only hope that isn't him, but then we saw that Stephen was killed for his faith, and then as the people stoned Stephen to death, they laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul, and that's where Acts chapter eight picks up.

So this morning we're gonna be in Acts chapter eight, we're gonna be in verses one through 25, I wanna read our passage for us this morning. Luke writes, "And Saul approved of his execution, "and there arose on that day a great persecution "against the church in Jerusalem, "and they were all scattered throughout "the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. "Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation "over him, but Saul was ravaging the church, "and entering house after house, "he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. "Now those who were scattered went about "preaching the word. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria "and proclaimed to them the Christ, "and the crowds with one accord paid attention "to what was being said by Philip "when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. "For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, "came out of many who had them, "and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. "So there was much joy in that city. "But there was a man named Simon "who had previously practiced magic in the city "and amazed the people of Samaria, "saying that he himself was somebody great. "They all paid attention to him, "from the least to the greatest, "saying this man is the power of God that is called great. "And they paid attention to him "because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. "But when they believed Philip, "as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God "and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized. "Both men and women, even Simon himself believed. "And after being baptized, he continued with Philip. "And seeing signs and great miracles performed, "he was amazed." Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For he had not yet fallen on any of them, they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, "so that anyone on whom I lay my hands "may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, "'cause you thought you could obtain "the gift of God with money. "You have neither part nor lot in this matter, "for your heart is not right before God. "Repent therefore this wickedness and pray to the Lord "that if possible, the intent of your heart "may be forgiven you. "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness "and in the bond of iniquity. "And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord "that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." Now when they had testified and spoke in the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

In 1553, Mary I took the throne of England. She began her five-year reign as queen of England. In those five years, she had about 300 Protestants burned at the stake, which earned her the nickname, Bloody Mary. Two of the Protestants that she had burned at the stake were Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer. These were two of the English reformers who were seeking to bring the people of God back to the true word of God, the true faith in Jesus Christ. When Mary came into power, she had those two thrown into prison. So for about 18 months, they were both in prison. Then on October 16th, 1555, they were brought to a stake in Oxford and together they were burned at the stake. Just before the fire was

lit, Ridley spoke a word of encouragement. He said, "Be of good heart, brother, "for God will either assuage the fury of the flame "or else strengthen us to abide it." Well, God did not assuage the flame. The fire was lit and the two men began to burn to death. And as they were burning at the stake, it was this time Hugh Latimer who spoke a word of encouragement. And he said, "Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, "and play the man." Meaning continue on what you're supposed to be doing. "For today, by God's grace, "we will light a candle in England "that will never be put out."

The burning of Christian martyrs can light not just a candle, but a torch that takes the gospel into dark places. Or as we see in the book of Acts, a Christian being brought out of the city and stoned to death can actually push the gospel and the Christians outside of the limits of their own comfort zone so that the gospel goes to new places and new people. One thing I think we see in Acts chapter eight is this movement of a gospel that cannot be stopped. In Acts chapter seven, you see for the first time someone killed for their faith in Jesus. People had been put in prison, they had been threatened, but now a man is dead for believing in Jesus and preaching about him. And you might think, well, maybe then the Christians will calm down a little bit. Maybe they'll become a little more fearful and less bold. Maybe they'll stop preaching the gospel. And in fact, it doesn't stop with Stephen. It says that persecution was going throughout Jerusalem. Saul was there approving of an execution and now going in house to house, dragging off men and women to prison. And yet the gospel is not hindered. In fact, it advances.

What we see, I think, in this passage is evidence that the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God continue to bring the gospel forth no matter the circumstances. What we see in this passage is an example that the gospel cannot be stopped. And this is what I want us to hear and believe this morning. Because we live in a city in which it can be intimidating to be a Christian. We live in a culture in which it can sometimes be difficult to talk about your faith in Jesus. Sometimes we might live in a time in which we start to question the power of the gospel because we don't see it changing lives or going forth maybe in the way that we would want. Today, I want us to see from Acts chapter eight that the gospel cannot be stopped. That no matter what circumstances are going on in the world, no matter what's going on in your life, the good news of Jesus Christ cannot be stopped. I want us to believe this, that we might more faithfully go out and share this gospel message. But even myself, times whenever I'm fearful, I feel awkward talking about Jesus or my faith to people. That because I believe the gospel cannot be stopped, I would be more faithful to go out and share this message with others.

Acts chapter eight, I think presents us with four oppositions or opportunities for the gospel to be stopped and the gospel, the spirit and the word overcomes each one of them. This morning, I want to draw those out for us that we might believe that we have an unstoppable gospel. Four ways that I think that we see in this passage, the gospel could be stopped, but it's not. In fact, it only advances further. First, we see that persecution only advances the mission. First thing we see in Acts chapter eight is that persecution does not stop the mission of God, it only advances the mission of God. You might remember back in Acts chapter one, verse eight, Jesus said to his disciples, "You will be my witnesses. "You receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you "and you will be my witnesses." In Judea, in Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Now what we've seen so far in the first seven chapters of Acts is really just the church being witnesses in Jerusalem. Now maybe the gospel had begun to spread in ways that we had not seen recorded in Acts, but what we see recorded in the book of Acts is really the church being faithful to that beginning of the mission, that they were witnesses in Jerusalem. But it's here in Acts chapter eight, verse one, that we see the gospel begin to move into Judea and Samaria. Here is what takes it there, it's the persecution of Christians. So read with me again the beginning of the passage, Acts chapter eight, verses one through four. Saul approved of Stephen's execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. Notice what Jesus had commanded and prophesied, that they would be as witnesses in Judea and Samaria is now happening, why?

Because of persecution that came against the church. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him, but Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Persecution scatters the church, when they were scattered, they preached the gospel and are witnesses to Jesus in Judea and in Samaria. The death of Stephen has only advanced the mission of the gospel. Esther Tullian, one of the church fathers once said, "The blood of the

martyrs is the seed of the church." Now when somebody is killed for their faith in Jesus, it does not hinder the mission at all, in fact it only advances the mission. We see this not just in Acts eight, but throughout church history. So often the places where the movement of the gospel has seen most stagnant is in places where it's most comfortable to be a Christian. So often the gospel goes out most quickly. The movement of the gospel happens most quickly in places where it is difficult to be a Christian, in places where persecution is happening. Persecution only advances the mission of God in the mission of the church.

And I want you to notice something that as the mission is advanced, see who is doing that. Says everybody left Jerusalem and went and shared the gospel except for the apostles. The apostles stay in Jerusalem, which means when the gospel goes to Judea and Samaria, it is not happening primarily by the leaders of the church, but by faithful ordinary believers in the church. God in Michael Green wrote a book about evangelism in the early church. He speaks about how most of the evangelism that happened throughout the known world at that time did not happen by the church leaders or the quote unquote professional missionaries. But it happened most often by amateur missionaries, by people who were just regular believers, who were going out, maybe forced out because of persecution and faithfully sharing the gospel. Listen to what Michael Green, how he describes it in his book. He says, this must often have not been formal preaching, but informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances in homes and wine shops, on walks and around market stalls. They went everywhere, gossiping the gospel. They did it naturally, enthusiastically and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently, they were taken seriously and the movement spread notably among the lower classes.

Oh, church family, wouldn't it be great if we gossiped the gospel? Like if that's just what we happen to talk about enthusiastically, we just chattered about Jesus. This is the way the gospel spread. Persecution came to the church and it forced people out of their comfort zones into these new places. And they simply talked about what Jesus had done in their lives. They simply proclaimed who he was and many people were coming to be saved. Persecution only advances the mission of the church. Therefore, the gospel can't be stopped. The gospel can't be stopped not just because persecution advances the mission of the church, but secondly, I think the gospel can't be stopped because human barriers are removed by the cross. The gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ can't be stopped because human barriers are removed by the cross.

It's the second thing you'll see in your notes. So when you think about the gospel going outside of Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, which you just kind of need to know about your geography of the New Testament is that Judea really just refers to the larger region that Jerusalem was in. So the gospel was not just staying there in the kind of city of Jerusalem, but spreading out to the broader region. But then Samaria was the region to the north of Judea. And you might know if you've been around the church, around the Bible much at all that Jews did not like Samaritans. Samaritans did not like Jewish people. You might remember there's this story about Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at the well. But where that story gets interesting, it's not really his meeting her at the well, but the fact that Jesus even chose to travel through Samaria, because we're told that most Jewish people totally avoided the region altogether. That's how much they dislike the Samaritans. There were centuries of theological disputes and political disputes and just animosity between each other.

But now the people of God who are of Jewish descent are going into Samaria and preaching the gospel to them. Says, verse five, Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. We don't know exactly which city this is, because at this time there probably wasn't a city called Samaria, but one of the cities in this region, Philip is there and he is proclaiming Jesus to them. And the crowds of one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them. And many were paralyzed or lame or healed. So there was much joy in that city. There would have been a time that for many Jewish people, they had no interest in seeing joy in a city of Samaria. Many Jewish people did not want to go into that area and cast out demons and heal people who are lame or who were sick, but yet Philip has this desire. He's been pushed out of Jerusalem and now he finds himself there in Samaria, performing signs and miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit and preaching the gospel. What has allowed Philip to overcome his prejudice that he so surely felt against the Samaritans at some point in his life? Is it not the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it not the message of the cross?

I know the cross isn't mentioned specifically here in the passage, but you think about what is the message of the cross. It is the fact that we are all equally sinful. That none of us, no matter how good we are, how religious we are, no matter what family we come from, what ethnicity we are, what culture we live in, none of us are more deserving of God's love. All of us are sinful and have fallen short of the glory of God. And yet the message of the cross is that the work of Jesus Christ is sufficient for all. The message of the cross is not that Jesus's grace can only reach Jewish people or only reach certain types of people or can reach a lot of people, but not those terrible Samaritans. No, the message of the cross is that all people are equally sinful and Jesus's grace is sufficient to cover all sins for all people. Paul makes his point in Ephesians chapter two that the cross, the message of the gospel not only reconciles us to God, but reconciles us to one another. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians two starting in verse 14. "For he," talking about Jesus, "he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in its flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in the place of two, so making peace. And he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

The message of the cross levels the playing field when it comes to us as people, therefore it tears down any barriers we have placed between us and other groups of people. No ethnic difference, no racial difference, no political difference can stand between us and another person when the cross comes into play, when the message of the gospel is preached. We all come together around one table because he is our peace. He has reconciled us to God, but also to each other. There's no human barrier that can stop the gospel. No hatred of another people, no dislike, no avoidance. Was there a group of people that you might feel a barrier between yourself and them? Maybe because of their background, maybe because of the way they vote, maybe because of the way you view the world, the way that they act. Is there some barrier that we as people have put up between ourselves and others? The gospel can overcome it. The divide between Jews and Samaritans was huge, but it is bridged in this moment because nothing can stop the spread of the gospel. Persecution can't stop it, only advances the mission. Human barriers can't prevent it because the cross brings down every human barrier.

Thirdly, nothing can stop the spread of the gospel because deceived people are awakened by the truth. Nothing can stop the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ going out because those who are deceived are awakened by the truth. Now, I hope you don't think I'm being rude or demeaning when I say deceived people. Again, as if I'm only talking about a certain group of people. Bible says that before we come to know Jesus, our deceived, all of us have been blinded by the enemy that is in this world. In fact, I think that's a good way for us to look at it, that people who believe differently than us, people who don't believe in Jesus, they aren't the enemy, but they have been blinded by the enemy. Each one of us in our natural state is deceived. But yet there is hope because deceived people, those who have been led astray, are awakened when the truth of the gospel is proclaimed.

So there were Samaritans that Philip goes to the city he preaches to. And you have to know, the Samaritans, they believed that there was gonna be a Messiah also. But they had some very different beliefs from the Jews about this Messiah. They thought he was gonna come to a different place, he was gonna come in a different way, his salvation was going to be different. So yes, they believed that a Christ was coming, but to think of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, that was going to bring a big shift to these Samaritans. But yet, when Philip begins to perform signs and miracles by the power of the Spirit and proclaim Jesus as the Christ, they begin to listen. And not just the typical kind of deception that many Samaritans were under, but these particular people, they had been led astray by one man named Simon. Listen to how Luke describes them. It says, "There was one man named Simon," verse nine, "who had previously practiced magic in the city "and amazed the people of Samaria, "saying that he himself was somebody great. "They all paid attention to him "from the least of the greatest, "saying that this man is the power of God, "that is called great. "And they paid attention to him "because for a long time, "he had amazed them with his magic.

"Simon's often called the magician, "but I don't think he was doing card tricks "or pulling rabbits out of hats. "He was probably doing some type of sorcery. "Now, different people have different speculations. "Maybe he was just delusions. "Other people think this was really supernatural activity, "but it wasn't from God. "But he had told people that it was. "The people called him great. "And it's not just they're impressed with him. "They think he is the power of God. "This man's not just setting up for himself a magic show "that would draw people's attention and get their money. "I mean, he is getting their faith. "They are following him. "They are believing that he is from God, "probably believing he is a messenger from God. "This is probably a lot like a cult. "And yet, when Philip shows up, "they are captivated no longer by

magic, "but by the power of the gospel. "Their eyes are awakened as they hear "and they see the truth." It says in verse 12, "But when they believed Philip, "as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God "and the name of Jesus Christ, "they were baptized, both men and women. "Even Simon himself believed. "And after being baptized, he continued with Philip. "And seeing signs and great miracles performed, "he was amazed. "These people who were once led astray "by this man performing impressive deeds "are now believing that Jesus is the one true king, "that he is the Messiah. "They're being baptized in his name. "Even the most deceived people, led the most astray, "can be awakened by the truth of the gospel message."

Think of the people that you might think are least likely to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. People who are raised in a different religion. People who are staunchly atheist and don't even believe in the existence of a God. People who have been hurt by Christians or by the church could never see themselves being part of that. Do you think that they are beyond the message of the gospel? Do you think that they would never be persuaded to believe in Jesus? Yes, they would never be persuaded if it was up to us. When the Holy Spirit of God is at work, even those people who are most deceived are awakened to the truth. Let's never believe that anybody is too far gone or would never believe the gospel. Maybe that's even you today. Maybe you showed up here this morning and you don't know why and you thought that religion or the message of Jesus was never for you, but maybe for the first time today, you'll be awakened to the truth.

Gospel can't be stopped. It wasn't stopped in Samaria. All these men and women are believing and being baptized. Luke tells us even Simon believed. Now there's questions about Simon's belief because of what happens next and what is said, which is interesting. Somebody who had gained such a following is now following Philip, being baptized in the name of another. But to come and kind of confirm this, the apostles come. Now we have to take a small theological excursus real quick. Just a little side note, here's the point of passage, but what happens next raises a lot of questions, so we need to think about it briefly. It says in verse 14, "Now when the apostles of Jerusalem heard "that Samaria had received the word of God, "they sent to them Peter and John, "who came down and prayed for them "that they might receive the Holy Spirit, "for he had not yet fallen on any of them, "but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. "Then they laid their hands on them "and they received the Holy Spirit."

Now this is the point of this passage, but this little section does raise a lot of questions for people. It said, "Now wait a minute, "somebody can only be baptized in the name of Jesus, "but not receive the Holy Spirit? "I thought those two things happened at the same time." And it's even some passages like this that have led people to say that belief in Jesus and being baptized in Jesus is separate from receiving the Spirit or being baptized in the Spirit. But you have to remember is that what we've said from the beginning is that what happens in the book of Acts is not telling us what always will happen or what always should happen. Yes, there are always principles to draw out and to learn, but Acts isn't always normative, meaning this isn't what always happens. What is happening here is the gospel for the first time is moving beyond Jerusalem and the people of Jewish descent. And as it moves out to these Samaritans, the apostles need to go out and verify the gospel message is being preached accurately and people are truly believing in Jesus.

A similar thing happens when the gospel first goes to the Gentiles, but what you'll notice is after this initial time with the Samaritans and the initial time with the Gentiles, that pattern is not repeated. We don't see the apostles needing to go out and make sure the gospel has been preached faithfully. We don't see a separation between someone believing in Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit. This was a unique occurrence in the early part of the life of the church and the gospel going out. So make no mistake, when you place your faith in Jesus, the Bible says you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. You receive the Spirit of God and he cannot leave you. He will not forsake you. You do not need some separate baptism. You do not need some special person to come and anoint you. When you trust in Jesus, you receive the Holy Spirit. As the apostles came and confirmed that the gospel had been preached there, people received the Holy Spirit. And as the Spirit came, it revealed something in Simon's heart.

Something maybe less noticeable than persecution or an ethnic cultural barrier, or even magic that's out there. Something that's deep within that could also threaten the spread of the gospel, but it can't. Even what happens within our own hearts can't stop the spread of the gospel because selfish ambition is thwarted by the Spirit. Here's the last thing that I just want you to see. We have a gospel that cannot be stopped. The spread of the gospel is unstoppable because even what happens so often in the human heart can't stop it from spreading. So we saw that Simon believed and was baptized. Now, we don't know exactly to what extent he believed. Luke just records that he believed. Maybe he

believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and maybe there's just some sanctification that was happening. Maybe he thought that he believed, but what happens farther reveals more. What we know is that there was still a great deal of greed within his heart. This is what happens next. In verse 18, "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "'I have this power also so that anyone "'on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'"

Now, at first glance, maybe this doesn't sound that bad. That here are the apostles coming and laying hands on people so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. And Simon says, "You know what? "We could really make this more effective. "We could maximize this. "Don't just make it about you having to lay your hands "on people, but I could be a part of this as well. "Give me this power." And maybe just because of his background, he's very misled and he's thinking that you're supposed to give some money for that type of thing. But it seems to be actually maybe more deceptive than that. There was something wrong with Simon's heart. And here was a man who was used to having a lot of people look up to him, call him great, follow him. He was used to being popular and powerful and influential. And now other people are. Philip is, the apostles are, and he wants to be back in the spotlight. He wants people to have to come to him again. There is this selfish ambition that is still within Simon's heart that is being revealed.

And I believe the Spirit awakens Peter's mind to know this. This is why I say the Spirit is the one who ultimately thwarts the selfish ambition. The Spirit lets Peter know what is really going on in Simon's heart, and this is what Peter says to him in verse 20, "May your silver perish with you "because you thought you could obtain "the gift of God with money." "Give neither part nor lot in this matter, "for your heart is not right before God. "Repent therefore this wickedness of yours "and pray to the Lord that if possible, "the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness "and in the bond of iniquity." Peter's words here are sharp and cutting. Just like the word of God, they cut down to the heart of Simon. Again, we don't know if Simon was really a Christian, if he really believed. I think some of the things that Peter says here leads some people to question it when he says, "You have no part or lot in this matter. "Your heart is not right before God. "You still need to repent." Maybe it was a sin that a Christian would need to repent of, or maybe he had actually not yet believed in Jesus. We don't know, but what we know is that it would have been very problematic for Simon to get this power. He could give out the Holy Spirit because he was doing it for selfish gain. But yet the Spirit thwarts this plan because the Spirit is protecting the church from selfish ambition.

Now make no mistake, selfish ambition has worked its way into the church many times throughout church history. Just like the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira have not kept hypocrisy out of the church for all time, this rebuke to Simon has not kept selfish ambition out of the church for all time. Many times because there is such a chance for you to get power in the church, for you to have influence, for you to have popularity. Listen, I've got a couple hundred people listening to me this morning. Where else would I be able to do that? There's a chance within the church, within Christianity, within religion for there to be power, for there to be popularity, and any time those things are available, human pride has the chance to work its way in. But no matter how many times selfish ambition has worked its way into people's hearts, whether they be big names that we know of, or whether they just might be within each one of our own hearts, it has not stopped the spread of the gospel throughout history and it will not. Even the selfish ambition that creeps up in your own heart, where you don't want to surrender to God the things that he is calling you to.

Oh, you want the blessings of God and the power of the Spirit, but not to make Jesus' name great, but to make your name great. Not to expand his kingdom, but yours. It creeps up in each one of us. But yet, even that selfish ambition in each one of our hearts cannot stop the spread of the gospel. The message of the gospel is going out to bring people, as we sang earlier, into freedom. Peter says to Simon, "I see this gall of bitterness, "this bond of iniquity that you're still under, "but yet there is freedom in the gospel. "If you find in your heart today, "some selfish ambition creeping up, "know that the Spirit can convict you "and lead you to repentance. "Know that you can be set free. "You no longer have to try to build your own kingdom, "but you can just surrender all and live for King Jesus." This is what we profess as we come to the table this morning, that the good news of Jesus Christ is what sets us free. But we also profess that this gospel message is powerful and still going out.

Yes, coming to the table and taking of the Lord's supper is about looking back to what Jesus has done. But it's also about looking forward. Paul says that every time we eat this bread and we drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. The gospel can't be stopped because Jesus is alive. Stephen saw him right before he died. The gospel cannot be

stopped because the Spirit of God is still at work. We continue to proclaim our hope in the Lord's death until he comes again. To FirstSF, as we come to the table this morning, let us be in hearts of repentance, turning from our own selfish ambition. Let us be in trusting in Jesus's grace to set us free from all the bonds of iniquity. But also let us believe that this message of the gospel is still powerful and still worth proclaiming. As we think about starting a new series next week being witnesses in Jerusalem, let us even go from this table thinking about how we can begin to share this powerful message with those around us who need to hear it. Let us believe that the gospel cannot be stopped.