

Unstoppable Kingdom

Globally: Light that Penetrates Darkness

Acts 18:1-17

We are spending the year 2024 at Salem Church talking about the Unstoppable Kingdom of God from the Book of Acts. Please remember...

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..." **Matthew 6:33**

What is the Kingdom of God?

"God's active and sovereign reign throughout history bringing about His purposes in the world through Christ Jesus. In the simplest of terms, the Kingdom of God is what the world looks like when King Jesus gets His way."

Jeff Christopherson

Jesus Prayed: *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* **Matthew 6:10**

The Kingdom of God Comes in Three Forms (Lloyd-Jones):

- **The Kingdom Came in the Person of Jesus Christ**

"The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." **Luke 17:21b**

- **The Kingdom Comes as People Surrender to Christ as Lord**

"For the kingdom of God is...a matter...of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." **Romans 14:17**

- **The Kingdom will Come when Christ Returns in Glory**

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"

Revelation 5:9-10

The book of Acts is a powerful representation of God's Unstoppable Kingdom at work in the early church and disciples. But one thing is crystal clear: When it comes to the Kingdom of God, you're either in or out. And, if you're in, then you have a job to do...we all do!

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." **Matthew 5:14-16**

Today we will look at how Light and Darkness Contrast in the Unstoppable Kingdom!

Main Idea: Citizens of God's Unstoppable Kingdom Shine as Lights in a Dark World

*"After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³ and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. ⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' ⁷ And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. ⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.' ¹¹ And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³ saying, 'This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.' ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵ But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.' ¹⁶ And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this." **Acts 18:1-17***

Two Aspects of the Unstoppable Kingdom Locally in Acts 18:1-17

I. Depths of the Darkness

Have you ever been shocked at the darkness around you? Blatant vulgarity and immorality out in the open? And, just when you couldn't imagine being surprised any further, something even worse happens. New York City isn't worse than other major cities, but because we are the largest city in the US and the most influential city in the world, what happens here is always broadcast around the world. The darkness of our city is in the poverty, homelessness, addiction, and mental health crisis running rampant. It's seen in the sexual immorality that is openly flaunted in our streets, and in the way our leaders and influencers mock God's design of marriage, sexuality, and gender. We see violence against the most vulnerable (seniors, children, and the unborn), theft, vandalism, and other crimes daily. Materialism and greed are not only tolerated, but they are celebrated as virtues all around us. It is true that we live in (and I moved to) a dark place!

New York City has NOTHING on Corinth. It was way worse...

"...licentiousness remarkable even in the permissive world of Graeco-Roman paganism." **F.F. Bruce**

"Among the Greeks the word translated 'to live like a Corinthian' meant to live immorally." **John Polhill**

“Corinth was associated in everybody’s mind with immorality...on its flat summit stood the temple of Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of love. A thousand female slaves served her and roamed the city’s streets by night as prostitutes...Corinth was the ‘Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire.’” **John Stott**

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.” **Romans 1:28-32**

Hopeless could describe Corinth, spiritually speaking. But...

“After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.” **Acts 18:1 Why???**

Citizens of God’s Unstoppable Kingdom Shine as Lights in a Dark World

ii. **Brightness of the Light**

The stage in Corinth was set to show forth the light of the Gospel!

“In order for light to shine so brightly, the darkness must be present.” **Francis Bacon (1620)**

Paul Confronted Darkness with Light in Three Ways

● **Blessing Rather than Burdening Others (Acts 18:2-3)**

Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla were supporting their own gospel work through tentmaking (leatherworks). They were contrasted from the street-philosophers who always wanted money for their ideas.

● **Spreading the Gospel Far and Wide (Acts 18:4-8)**

Starting with the synagogue, then to Titius Justice’s house, and in open air settings Paul shared the gospel openly to all who would listen.

“Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed & were baptized.” **Acts 18:8b**

● **Trusting the Lord and Obeying His Word (Acts 18:9-17)**

At a critical moment, the Lord encouraged Paul to continue his ministry and promised that the opponents in Corinth would not be able to touch him. Then it was proven by the episode before Gallio.

“And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” **Acts 18:11**

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you**

were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (written about 5 years after Acts 18.)

How do we thrive as lights in such a dark place?

The same parts of our body that allow hearing, also control balance. Even if someone is deaf they can still keep their balance, but how?

Our eyes not only permit conscious vision, but they also independently register light impulses that regulate our bodies internal daily clock. Even people who are totally blind and have no perception of light can have normal hormonal responses to bright light.

Light impulses travel through the retina, optic nerve, and to the suprachiasmatic nucleus of the brain (aka: the pacemaker) which stimulates the pineal gland which releases Melatonin (the hormone of darkness). Scientists have proven, when bright light hits the eye, the hormone of darkness shuts down and no longer produces Melatonin. God made us this way to help us rest at night (darkness) and be active during the day (light)!

Our eyes are for 1) Sight, 2) Biorhythms, & Jesus says they also #3)...

“Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.” **Luke 11:34-36**

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” **John 8:12**

“Believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” **John 12:36**

Whether in ancient Corinth, or in modern-day New York City, if Kingdom Citizens focus our attention on the darkness, we get a spiritual melatonin that drives us deeper into that darkness. But, if we focus instead on the light of Jesus, then our spirit awakens to his greatness, and we can be the LIGHT that PENETRATES the DARKNESS!

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
- *The Bible Exposition Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
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- *The New American Commentary: Acts* – John B. Polhill (1992)
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- *Acts for Everyone* – N.T. Wright (2008)
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- *Acts* – K.O. Gangle (1998)
- *The Kingdom of God* – Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1992)
- *The Message of Acts* – John Stott (1994)
- *Kingdom First* – Jeff Christopherson (2015)
- *The Kingdom Agenda* – Tony Evans (1999)