

Can you think of anything in life that's unstoppable? I know it seems Hurricane Irma is unstoppable – but it'll soon come to pass. By definition if something is unstoppable then it can't be stopped (I know... Profound!). Yet this side of heaven, everything is stoppable. What is unstoppable is anything attributed to the love/grace of God. His love is unstoppable – He'll never stop loving you; He'll never stop pursuing you; He'll never stop forgiving you; He'll never stop calling you and inviting you to Himself.

Did you know there's one thing this side of heaven involving you/me that God ordained to be unstoppable? The **church!**

What comes to mind when you think of *church*? It's likely what you imagine the church to be is different from what 1<sup>st</sup> century believers thought and what God planned for it to be.

From inception, the church is nothing more/less than a **movement of the H.S.** It was never intended to be a work of man but an *unstoppable* work of God. It's a **movement to give witness** to the belief that Jesus died as God's one solution to the problem of sin and that He arose from the grave to prove He was who He said He was and did what He said He'd do to **rescue humanity** from the wages of sin.

I find it interesting that in the Greek NT, the word translated **church** (*ekklesia*) a compound word – *ek* means *out of* and *kaleo* means *called out*. So an *ekklesia* is a **movement** of a group of people called out around an idea/mission of God.

Unfortunately, over the years, a terrible thing occurred. Soon after Christianity became accepted w/in the Roman Empire, instead of being a **people on mission**, the church began to become as **a place you** went to for religious services.

Did you know our English word “**church**” doesn’t come from *ekklesia* but from the German word *kirche* – meaning *a sacred place where you gather for religious purposes*?

The danger of the church in every age is to cease being a movement and instead become a ministry that provides services to people – or worse, a place simply to attend.

I believe this shift in thinking fundamentally has changed the way people relate to the church and how the church functions today. Sadly, for too many people, the church has become a place to attend or an event to sit through, instead of a movement to which our lives are launched. And here is the one thing about a movement that makes a movement a movement – it moves and moves exponentially – which brings us to Acts 1 and the purpose of the church.

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the H.S. to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating w/ them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized w/ water, but in a few days you will be baptized w/ the H.S.” Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **But you will receive power when the H.S. comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**” Acts 1:1-8*

This AM as we embark on this journey through the book of Acts, I want to begin by looking at the key ingredient to this **unstoppable** movement – the Holy Spirit.

## I The PROMISE

v. 1:4-5

*Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised...but in a few days you will be baptized w/ the H.S.*

**The gift of all gifts.** Prior to His ascension, Jesus promised a gift to the disciples to empower/guide them until His return. This gift was to **author** their lives. *What can't be missed is the life of the disciples and their mission was to be fully powered by this Gift and not from their ability/ingenuity.*

No one can live the Christian life independent of the H.S.  
The Christian life is a life lived in submission, under the influence of the H.S.

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:6

What's true for us individually is true for us corporately – the whole of the Christian life and church is absolutely dependent the H.S. We walk in the Spirit not the flesh.

In Acts 19, the H.S. was busting loose and Ephesus was in awe of the power/presence of God. Lives were being changed in droves. But 30 yrs later, Jesus spoke of the Ephesians and says while I love that you have a passion for the Bible, for the Gospel mission, and you're willing to stand for Christ in a Christ-less culture, I'm sick that you've lost your 1<sup>st</sup> love. He was saying, I appreciate the boldness you have in the flesh, but you're trying to operate independent of me – and the church only works in the Spirit.

*But you will receive **power** when the H.S. comes on you;*

**power** (*dunamin*) a dynamic, explosive power from God

This is what Paul prays for the Colossians: *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you w/ the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened w/ all **power** according to his glorious might so you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his people in the kingdom of light.*

I want to remind/re-teach what I think is an essential lesson.  
**Good vs God** – Christian life is God in you living thru you.

God gives us His power for a purpose that we might become a living, breathing, walking testimony of His grace.

*...you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

**witness** (*martyr*) one who gives testimony of what has been done by laying aside his life for something greater.

Upon receiving the gift of the H.S., the disciples were to become witnesses of the good news – beginning right where they were throughout the entire world. **And so should we.**

**world** – refers to the geographical world – to every nation

**nations** (*ethnos*) – refers to every ethnic group in the world

Quite simply – God’s church has been commissioned to bear witness of the love/grace of Jesus Christ to every nation, tribe, and ethnic group throughout the world.

When you think about it – it’s both a brilliant/bizarre plan. Brilliant in that God entrusts the sharing of His love into the hands of a feeble humanity who can give 1<sup>st</sup> hand testimony of the transformational power of God. And bizarre, b/c we can’t be a witness w/out living submitted to the H.S. We couldn’t be a more unqualified group for such a great task.

There’s never been a more critical assignment given to a less qualified group of people. But God doesn’t call the qualified – through the H.S. he qualifies the called.

**How does God qualify us – He lives in/thru us – prayer!**

If we're to walk/exist in the Spirit – it requires two things from us. (1) we must know and obey the Scripture and (2) we must hear and follow the Lord's leading thru prayer. This is what the disciple did.

*They all joined together constantly in prayer...*

joined together (*homothumadon*) *homos* = of the same kind – *thumos* = mind/passion; they were united w/ the same passion and purpose. Their hearts were wrapped around the same priority.

prayer – in desperation, they sought the Lord's will.

No great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer – Christians persistently praying for revival. J. Edwin Orr

In 1857, Jeremiah Lanphier, a businessman burdened by the spiritual condition of his day, knelt in the back room of a small church in NYC w/ a broken heart and a simple request: “Lord, what will You have me to do?” That day, God birthed in his heart to begin a businessmen's prayer meeting at noon one day a week for an hour. His invitation simply read, “Come when you can, leave when you must.”

On September 23, 1857, he launched his prayer meeting and found himself alone. After 30 min., another man finally joined him – then another and another – until there were six men – so they prayed.



The following week, 20 men came. The next week 40. By January 1858 (3 mo. later), they were meeting simultaneously on three floors of the same building. By March, 6000 gathered daily in NYC, 6000 in Pittsburgh, 2000 in Chicago, 4000 in Philadelphia... and there were meetings also held taking place in Washington D.C, Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Mobile.

By May, 50,000 people in NYC had trusted Christ for salvation. A New England newspaper reported that in entire towns had come to Christ – meaning there were no unsaved adults! It was estimated that for a period of months, 50,000 people a week were accepting Christ across America. By early 1859 (18 mo. after 1st prayer meeting), Over 1 mil. people had accepted Christ in the U.S. At that time, the population of U.S. was approx. 30 mil.

**Important Spiritual Truth** – God in His sovereignty has chosen to limit His activity to the prayers and obedience of His people.

*God rules the world and His church through the prayers of His people. That God should have made the extension of His kingdom to such a large extent dependent on the faithfulness of His people in prayer is a stupendous mystery and yet an absolute certainty. God calls for intercessors: in His grace He has made His work dependent on them. He waits for them. Andrew Murray*