



Series: Unstoppable (Part 21)

Speaker: Henson Lim

### **INTRODUCTION**

We return once again to the origin story of the great Apostle Paul. Following his life-altering encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, we are reminded that “success” did not come to Paul overnight. In fact, it was not until some 14 years later that Paul set off on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-28). Why then did God gift Paul with this grand prophecy that he would spread the gospel to “the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15) only to hit a long pause button where nothing seems to happen?

Parallel to Paul’s story is the story of the church. Following the great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, all were scattered (Acts 8:1). The steady growth of the church since Pentecost appeared to come to a sudden halt as well. What then did the church, particularly in Antioch, do in the midst of this long pause to mature over time (Acts 11:25 to Acts 13:1) to become the ‘home base’ from which Paul and Barnabas launched their ministry?

What can we learn from long pauses, in our personal and corporate lives?

## **DISCUSSION**

1. How might you describe your journey of working towards maturity in Christ in 2020 and 2021?
  - a. Have you received the revelation of the gospel?  
Are you waiting for your kingdom assignment?  
Are you facing obstacles in carrying out your assignment?  
*What long pause might you or the church community around you be going through?*
  - b. Read Acts 9:8-19, paying attention to Saul/Paul. What did he do in his blindness?  
Read Acts 11:19-30 and 13:2-3. What did the church do in its period of persecution?  
*What did you or the church community around you do in the long pause?  
How did it compare to what should have been done?*
2. Read Acts 13:4-12.
  - a. Compare what Elymas was doing (v8) to what Paul was doing before his conversion (Acts 9:1-2). Also, compare Elymas' experience (v9-11) to Paul's (Acts 9:3-8). How might they be similar or different?
    - i. What, if any, might this tell us about what personal maturing looks like? What might this understanding of personal maturing mean to you?
  - b. How might you approach the long pauses God has given you differently if you knew that they were to prepare you for His future assignments?  
How might you relate to the long pauses God has given the church community around you?

## **WHAT WOULD YOU DO**

The marks of a maturing assembly are:

1. People who can claim to have candidates of character amidst them, gifted by the Holy Spirit to carry out the work of God in cooperation and coordination with the entire church (notice e.g. Agabus in Acts 11:27-30);

2. People who come from diverse backgrounds, unified in one common identity and community (notice how e.g. they worship, fast, pray, and send missionaries off with each other in Acts 13:1-3);
3. People willing to 'loose' their resources to fulfil a greater calling (notice e.g. the disciples' eagerness to provide help to the people of Judea in Acts 11:29, and the church's willingness to set Barnabas and Saul apart for their missionary journey in Acts 13:3).

How evident are these marks in the church community around you? What can you do, as a member of this church community, to help it grow in these marks?

### **MEMORY VERSE**

*"I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they praised God because of me." Galatians 1:22-24 (NIV)*