

“The End of Acts?”

Psalm 14; Acts 19:1-10

September 1, 2024

Introduction

- Years ago, I was reading some Augustine for fun (I did that back in the day, not so much anymore).
- In it, I realize that he’s complaining. I mean, this is one of his sermons from way back when.
- But what he’s complaining about is kind of funny.
 - o You see, the gladiatorial games are that Sunday morning I guess and there’s like nobody in worship and he groans about it.
- There are some people who just “do” religion like an item on a list with very little differential between faith and ordinary stuff.
 - o Don’t get me wrong, we all get into ruts, but what I’m talking about is making faith relatively inconsequential among other things.
 - o We all do this sometimes but I’m talking about ongoing disregard for what is actually believed.
 - It’d be like someone who agreed with the idea that sin was bad but that wasn’t going to stop them personally from doing it.
- Sometimes, we just want religion as something new or exotic in our lives.
 - o I really saw this when I was at Myers Park.
 - We did 8 services on Christmas Eve, 8.
 - We normally did 2.
 - o Why did we do 8?
 - Because there was an interest in it.
 - Not a bad reason, mind you, but perhaps not the best one after all.

Paul reaches Ephesus

- Now, in Acts, we’ve got to remember the telescoping of time.
- This is actually the beginning of Paul’s third missionary journey.
- He ends up in Ephesus.
 - o Ephesus is in modern day Turkey, I believe, or Turkive, as we saw at this year’s Olympics, they changed their name.
 - o Ephesus was a big city at the time, filled with money and merchants.
 - Much like Athens before, Ephesus would’ve been a center of idolatry.
 - Particularly, it was a center for worship of Diana (Artemis) and there were a large number of silver merchants here.
 - o I imagine the idolatry still struck at Paul’s soul but there he meets something new.
 - A group of believers who’ve been baptized into John the Baptist’s movement.
 - Remember, BEFORE Jesus, John the Baptist went around, calling or a baptism for the repentance of sins.
 - o This was NOT baptism into Jesus Christ.
 - They have it partially right.
 - Partially right ain’t fully right.
 - o Partially right excursus
 - In “*Jurassic Park*,” the park’s creators believed they had everything under control. They were confident that their cloning technology, security measures, and understanding of the dinosaurs were enough to safely open the park to the public. However, they were only partially right. While they had achieved the incredible feat of bringing dinosaurs back to life, they underestimated the complexity and unpredictability of nature. This partial understanding led to catastrophic consequences when the dinosaurs escaped their enclosures and chaos ensued.
 - These believers were partially right but weren’t completely right.
 - o So, he instructs them again on what it means to be saved by Jesus Christ.
 - It really is quite simple.
 - Although we were yet sinners, Christ died for the unrighteous.

- That's right, we believe that we are fallen sinners, that we're fundamentally flawed and need help.
 - That sin separates us from our Creator and that we require salvation from some other source.
 - We are insufficient to save ourselves from our sin.
 - Which means we are doomed to everlasting death.
- But there is good news.
 - In the fullness of time, God heard our groans and chose to save us through a new covenant.
 - A covenant not etched on stone but instead inscribed into our hearts so that God is closer to us than our next breath.
- Having beliefs isn't enough. You've got to have the Holy Spirit.
 - **James 2:19-20** - *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."*
 - **Matthew 7:21-23** - *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

How do you know?

- Transformation of Character
 - **Galatians 5:22-24** – *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."*
 - When believers come into the light, so to speak, there is a change of character.
 - Do you remember the movie, "The Blues Brothers?" Such a classic.
 - There's this scene where John Belushi gets the Holy Spirit and he summersaults down the aisles to get prayed over.
 - I wish it was like that all the time.
 - Change comes, although sometimes it's not so movie-spectacular.
 - Yes, by the power of the Holy Spirit, more and more of your life should exemplify the Spirit.
- Desire for God's Word and Prayer
 - 1 Peter 2:2 – *"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."*
 - There is with new life always the desire to know more of God.
 - This desire is generally lived out through deep study and appreciation of the Bible as well as the cultivation of a deep inner life of prayer.
 - I'm really learning about prayer through the work that James and Kay are doing.
 - Such a vital part of our faith walk is prayer.
 - And we get it wrong so much of the time.
 - Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John – John 15:15 – *"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. "*
 - Prayer is therefore just like talking to our best friend.
 - When the Holy Spirit is moving in your life, people know, you're reading the Bible, you're praying more often.
- Conviction of sin and repentance
 - John 16:8 – *"And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."*
 - When you're in the Spirit, you care about your sin and wish to see it removed from you.
 - Repentance in the Old Testament is a word called SHUV.
 - I love this word because it literally means "TURN" as you turn from your sin and face the light of Jesus Christ.

- Kairos story
 - Letters broke a man.
 - He'd done so much wrong! That was the first thing that came to his mind. As in, 'God forgives all of this.'
 - It was astonishment, gratitude and love all at once, such a powerful experience.
- Sharing the Gospel
 - This is the final sign that you're being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
 - The urge to share the good news with others no matter what the personal cost to do so.