What happened to the amen?

Scripture: Acts 28:17-31

Subject: Ending

Central Theme: Impactful Endings

Objective Statement: I want to point to 5 details about the end of Acts that should impact our view of ourselves, our families, and our church.

Keyword: Details

1. The Call. V.17-20
2. The Curiosity. V.21-22
3. The Convincing. V.23-24
4. The Change. V.25-29
5. The Conclusion. V.30-31.

Introduction:

Connection:

- Who here loves Christmas movies?
- My two favorite Christmas movies are:
    - A Christmas Carol (Alastair Sim 1951, not the George C Scott one, and certainly not the Patrick Stewart one- No Star Treck Christmas Carol for me).
    - It's a Wonderful Life-
- I love both of these movies because of the redemption that is described and displayed in both of them
- In both of these movies, whenever I watch them, something strange happens at the end to me.
- Every single time something gets in my eye- like a piece of dirt or something- and I get a little choked up and there is this reaction.
- I don't know why… but it affects my tear ducts…
- I mean….I'm not crying or anything
- But it seems to happen every time.
- And it happens right their at the end…
- "God bless us, everyone".

- "Do you see that daddy? Teacher says, every time a bell rings, an angel gets its wings. "That's right. That's right. Attaboy, Clarence".

Tension:

- We love a good ending.
- It can make or break a story.
- A story with a great introduction, narrative hook, and plot line won't be a great story without a great ending.
- And today we come to the end of this story- the book of acts.
- And I believe you will be astonished at the ending…
- The ending of this story matters so much to how we ought to live as individuals and as a church

I want to point to 5 details about the end of Acts that should impact our view of ourselves, our families, and our church.

1. The Call. V.17-20

Acts 28:17-31

(17) And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

- Paul called all the well-known and influential Jews in Rome to his home.
- He was finally in Rome.
- He had told the Romans that he longed to be in Rome in his epistle to them.

Romans 1:11-15

(11) For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

(12) That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

(13) Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

(14) I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the

unwise.

(15) So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

- He was under house arrest.
- In a city as big as Rome there would have probably been multiple synagogues.
- Most likely he was able to get the rulers of these synagogues to come and see him.
- These would have been like all the people that had a problem with him in Philippi, Jerusalem, etc.
- There was a good chance that they would have heard about him and why he was in Rome.
- Paul still wants to meet with them, and so he calls them all together.
- He tells them of the false accusation that lead to his unlawful imprisonment.
- He continues in verse 18 explaining how this led him to Rome.

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(18) Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

(19) But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

(20) For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

- He claims here that the reason that he is innocent is also the reason he wants to talk to them.
- “Because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain”
- There is a reason for his arrest. It’s the “hope of Israel”.
- The crux of the issue was doctrinal.
- He believed in “the hope of Israel” and is now going to use this circumstance to make much of the Gospel.
- Isn’t this exactly what we have seen over and over again with Paul.
- He doesn’t love his circumstances.
- He knows that he is falsely accused.
- He knows that he did nothing wrong.

- He also acknowledges that God is using the bad for the expansion of the Gospel.
- I know that this is his thinking because of what He wrote to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:12-17

(12) But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

(13) So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

(14) And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

(15) Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

(16) The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

(17) But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Application:

- How do you view our circumstances?
- Has God placed you for the furtherance of the Gospel?
- Do you see your circumstance the way that God views your circumstance?
- Does He want the same thing for you?

Response:

- God help me to see as you see so that I will have the…
    - Perseverance
    - Perspective
    - Passion
        - …to do what you say and to speak up for you!

Let's look at the response of these Jews:

1. The Call. V.17-20

2. The Curiosity. V.21-22

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(21) And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

(22) But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we

know that every where it is spoken against.

- Notice they have a three fold response.
    - First, they state that they had not heard anything from the Jews that were against Paul.
        - This is good news because these men were not already riled up against Paul.
        - It seems to indicate that Paul didn't know what the attitude of the Jews would be when he contacted them.
        - If you kept running into problems with people of a certain way of thinking, you may be tempted to avoid people who may have a similar belief.
        - But Paul doesn't shy away from his kinsmen in the flesh.
        - He goes right to calling to conversation.
        - And because he does, we see a second response.
    - Secondly, they state they desire to hear what Paul has to say.
        - They want to give him a hearing.
        - Why?
    - Thirdly, they state that they see Christianity as a sect of Judaism, and Jews everywhere are speaking against it.
- So:
    - 1. They didn't hear any of the accusations and weren't automatically against Paul.
    - 2. They want to hear Paul's perspective.
    - 3. They wanted to understand what Christianity actually teaches.
- What did they do?

1. The Call. V.17-20
2. The Curiosity. V.21-22
3. The Convincing. V.23-24

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(23) And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning

till evening.

- This is so much like what we learned last week.
- What did Paul do when he went into a city?
    - He went to the jew first, and then to the Greek.
    - When he went to the Jew, he taught them about Jesus starting in the Old Testament- Moses and the Prophets.
    - And the response was similar every time:

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(24) And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

- Some believed.
- Some did not.

1. The Call. V.17-20
2. The Curiosity. V.21-22
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4. The Change. V.25-29

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(25) And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word,

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- The disagreement was between those that did believe and those that did not.
- This is the story of the whole rest of the church age. There will be many that believe and many more that do not.
- Paul sees this moment of disagreement and responds by pointing out an Old Testament prophecy.
- He quotes Isaiah 6:9-10:

Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

(26) Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

(27) For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

- There are a couple of ways to interpret this.
- One way to interpret this passage would be to say that God does not want them to respond with understanding, perception, hearing, seeing, conversion and healing.
- Is this really God's heart for these people?
- Who is at fault for their unbelief- God or the people?
- If they had no chance to repent, turn, and believe, why would Paul spend all day pleading with them from the scriptures?

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1 Timothy 4:9-10

(9) This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.

(10) For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

- What does the Bible say is God's heart for people?
- Does Paul have a greater heart for the lost than God does? Of course not!

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2 Peter 3:9

(9) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

- Does Paul have a great heart for the lost than Jesus did?
- No! This was Jesus' mission that Paul is on.
- What did Jesus tell Zachaeus?

Luke 19:9-10

(9) And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

(10) For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

- Who does God want to be saved?

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1 Timothy 2:1-6

(1) I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (2) For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (3) For this is good

and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; (4) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (6) Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

- What is the right interpretation of this passage? "Hearing ye shall hear and not understand.
- What the prophet is saying is that the condition of their hearts is keeping them from seeing and understanding what is very obvious.
- They do not want to see, so even when they do see they do not perceive.
- They do not want to hear, and so they do not want to be converted.

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(28) Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

- Where the jews have had the truth given to them and as a nation have willingly rejected their own Messiah, there will be and has been an opportunity for the gentiles to repent and believe.
- This is exactly what happened.

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(29) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

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(30) And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

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- In context this meant that Paul received both Jew and gentile into his home.
- Paul had certainly made it clear that the Gospel is for everyone.
- Even when he was confined to his house under house arrest, he did everything he could to get the message of the Gospel out.

- This is what he did with everyone that came to his house:

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(31) Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

- Two participles described what he did:
    - Preaching
    - Teaching
- He did this with confidence. No persecution for it at this point.
- And…
- Wait…
- That's it.
- That's the end?
- Did Paul die?
- Did Peter die?
- What happened to Barnabas? John Mark? Silas? Luke? Philipp? The rest of the apostles?
- Certainly, we learn some of what happened beyond the book of Acts from other epistles.
- We learn some from history.
- We are told from history that Paul was beheaded in Rome.
- We are told from history that Peter was crucified, and asked to be crucified upsidedown.
- But the book of Acts just ends. It ends right here with Paul under house arrest in Rome preaching to whoever came by with confidence and without being told to stop.
- That's the end.
- Among the crowd have them look up the end of
    - the Gospels…
    - the Epistles of Paul
    - 1 and 2 Peter
    - Revelation
- What do they all end with? Amen.

- "So be it"
- "You can take everything that was said to the bank"
- This is it in its entirety and it is trustworthy.
- So where is the Amen? Where is the conclusion? Where is the ending?
- We started this journey last year about this time when we started teaching through the book of Luke in December on my first Sunday as Pastor.
- The Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are 2 parts of one large work.
- In the beginning of Luke we read:

Luke 1:1-4

(1) Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

(2) Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

(3) It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

(4) That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

- Luke then takes the time to tell the story of the Gospel.
- He starts out with
    - the foretelling of the John the Baptist
    - the foretelling of Jesus
    - The birth of John
    - The birth of Jesus
- He goes from Jesus birth to adolescence and then begins his ministry in the wilderness and then up in Galilee.
- He tells the story of Jesus's ministry starting in Galilee, and then headed toward Samaria, and then on into Jerusalem for His death, burial, resurrection, commissioning of the church as disciples, and then His ascension to heaven.
- And as we started the book of Acts we saw the verse that hinged the two books as one work:

Acts 1:8

(8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

- And what did we see over the past 25 weeks as we studied the book of Acts?
- The assembly that Jesus assembled were in that upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
- They all received the gift of the Holy Spirit and began to display visible signs of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit- a sign to unbelieving Israel of the Work of God.
- As many as received this word were baptized and the same day were added to the church about 3,000 souls.
- These then continued in the Apostles (Jesus') doctrine, and fellowship (togetherness- assembly), in the breaking of bread (ordinances- along with baptism) and prayers.
- The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.
- People that were saved were baptized. Those that were baptized were discipled.
- How? They met in the temple and from house to house. Large group and small groups.
- On day one of the empowering of Holy Spirit in the believers in the church of Jerusalem you have the essentials of church life:
    - Evangelism
    - Discipleship
    - The two ordinances
    - Fellowship
    - Prayer
- And as persecution came to that Jerusalem church, and as they became obedient to Jesus' command, they did become witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea (James and Peter), in Samaria (Phillip), and then from Antioch to the Uttermost part of the earth (Paul).
- And here we find Paul in Rome, continuing the mission in the uttermost, and there is no conclusion.
- Why?
- Because the mission continued through the ministry of local churches sending their people out to do all of the things that happened at the beginning.

- They made disciples who made disciples.
- Discipleship as Jesus did it always happened in the context of the assembly- the local church.
- Disciples made disciples, and churches sent disciples to start churches.
- And that is how the Gospel got to you.
- Where's the amen?
- It hasn't happened yet, because the mission begun by Jesus described in the Gospel of Luke, and continued by the apostles in the book of acts has been passed along to us.
- It's our job to continue the work of God- the mission of Jesus- handed down to us by the apostles who made disciples until there is an Amen.

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Rev 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Rev 1:18 *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Rev 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Until that time when we are taken to be with Jesus, our mission will be to reach people, teach people, and to send people to minister. Salvation. Discipleship. Service.

And every week I will continue to say to you: Trinity Baptist Church- you are not dismissed. Your sent. Amen.