

10.30.11 / Acts 19:8-10;18-20 and Revelation 2:1-7

Passage Guide

The book of Acts reveals how Jesus built His church through the power of the Holy Spirit using normal men and women like us. Specifically, Jesus built the church of Ephesus using men and women who sacrificially brought the unending joy of the gospel to their large city. We too desire to have Jesus build His church in our city by bringing the unending joy of the gospel as we utilize the gifts and talents He has given us.

Desiring to build the kingdom of God in our city and sharing the gospel of Jesus can be weighty goals when we place the results solely on our shoulders. Many of us will never have the same capacity as those believers who are gifted with eloquent speech and flawless rhetoric. Thankfully, we are not called to be like these men and women gifted with such speech. Rather, we are called to utilize our own individual gifts and ultimately to rely on the Holy Spirit (not ourselves – not our gifts) for the results. None of the pressure is on us. Jesus is the only one who can save people, and He is the only one who can change people. This truth should set us free in reaching our city for God's glory, knowing He alone saves and uses us to bring unending joy to those He has placed us around.

Historically, confession has been the catalyst of bringing about revival and redemption to large populations throughout the history of the church. Confession is one characteristic that marked the new converts to the church of Ephesus. It reads, "Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices." Often, we think the act of confession is a one-time act which takes place at conversion. However, Christians are to practice the discipline of confession on a daily basis. James 5:16 states, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Our lives as believers should be marked by confession to one another acknowledging our desperate need for Jesus. As we struggle with sin other believers will pray and remind us of the grace found in the gospel pointing us back to Jesus.

Unfortunately, confession is somewhat foreign to our churches today because it can be an intimidating aspect of the Christian life. The underlying truth to this may be pride in our lives and a fear of people finding out our struggles. We may fear that confessing our sin will remove a status we have obtained or prevent us from possible opportunities to serve in the future. Ultimately, masquerading as a person who has it all together is a lie. The Scriptures clearly communicate our brokenness. Romans 3:10 reveals that "none is righteous, no, not one." We understand that every single person on earth is broken and unrighteous apart from Jesus. Therefore, we should rely on Jesus for our righteousness. He is what forgives our sin and cleanses us from guilt (2 Corinthians 5:21). And there's something remarkably practical and beautiful in our admission of weakness and struggle. 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that the power of our Lord is made perfect in our weakness, so we can boast in this weakness, openly confessing it to trusted others in the body of Christ, that we may then pray and receive healing and the power of our Lord. God's opinion is the one we are to be concerned with and not the opinion of other people, and if we are in Christ, there is no condemnation for us, and our righteousness is HIS righteousness. So, thankfully, with Jesus we stand justified in right standing before the Father. Praise be to God.

This gospel truth frees us to be open and honest with one another about our struggles. Let it begin this week in our Community Groups as we confess with one another knowing that God has forgiven us much. Let us become a confessing church that reminds one another of the gospel in our times of struggle and need. Let our confessions of brokenness and utter need for Jesus be the catalyst that God uses to begin a beautiful work in our lives, our Community Groups and our city.

Application Questions

- Where have we struggled as a Community Group with the act of confession? Why are we not comfortable confessing sin with those in our group?
- How does not confessing our struggles with sin impact our Community Group individually and collectively?
- What would it look like for our Community Group to be a confessing people? How would it help us in reaching our city?
- How does our Community Group love Jesus?

Prayer

- That God would help us get past our insecurities and fears allowing us to be honest and confessional with those in our Community Group
- That our confession will lead us back to the unending grace and joy only found in Jesus and prompt us to bring the gospel to our city
- We would humble ourselves, acknowledging our desperate need for Jesus