

Relevant Acts

Week 4

Relevant Acts: Pride and the Post-Christian Culture

Introduction:

- The church is God's demonstration field - showcasing His reign and love on earth.
- This series has explored the church as God's family and mission.
- Today we close by looking at the ancient strategy of the enemy and God's answer in the Cross.

1) Name the Strategy: Pride

- Pride is the ancient, subtle strategy of the enemy.
- It places me at the center and desires to be like God. (**Isaiah 14:12–15; Genesis 3:5**)
- The problem with deception is that it's deceiving—it often uses partial truth.

2) Spot the Moment: Post-Christianity

- This is not pre-Christian (no knowledge of God), but post-Christian—moving beyond while still using Christianity's fruit.
- Christianity emptied of content: values without the Source.
- Expressive individualism: the self becomes the highest authority, even in church spaces.

3) The Creed of Post-Christian Culture

1. The highest good is individual freedom, happiness, self-definition, and self-expression.
2. Traditions, religion, received wisdom, regulations, and social ties that restrict freedom must be dismantled or destroyed.
3. The world will inevitably improve as freedom expands, aided by technology. (We forget that limits are not all bad: God told the waters this far you will come and no further. **Job 38:11**)
4. Tolerance of all self-expression is the primary ethic, and dissent must not be tolerated.
5. Humans are inherently good.
6. Institutions and large structures are suspect at best, evil at worst.
7. External authority is rejected; personal authenticity is celebrated.

· Result: Both left and right, conservative and liberal churches, can buy into these values, making them a common creed of the West.

4) “Church Without God”: The Sunday Assembly

- Example: the Sunday Assembly: sermons, songs, kids, justice... but without theology.
- People like the community but not Christ.
- This mirrors currents in worship culture: form without the Center.

5) A History of Post-Christianity

Took shape in the Enlightenment, shaped by rationalism and skepticism.
Emphasized human effort and an “achievable kingdom” through activism.
Cultural Influence:

- By the 19th–20th centuries, this social Christianity dominated mainline denominations.

Outcome:

- Sin is reframed as social dysfunction rather than rebellion against God.
- Salvation is reframed as personal growth and an enlightened attitude

6) Leaving Church in a Post-Christian Age

- Ancient errors keep reappearing in modern culture.
- Gnosticism: salvation by secret knowledge.
- Pelagianism: salvation by human effort.

Modern Gnosticism & Pelagianism: Nothing new under the sun... **Eccl. 1:9**

- Today’s slogans echo the same lies: “Find your inner spark,” “Truth is inside you.”
- When repentance is removed, the church drifts into becoming only a social club.

7) Hell Reframed as Social Exclusion

- Judgment shifts from God to society.
- Hell becomes exclusion or cancellation.
- Augustine: humanity is enslaved by pride, healed only by grace.

Augustine (350 AD–430 AD) combatted Pelagianism:

Augustine: humanity is fundamentally sinful, enslaved by pride, needing grace.

Romans 5:12 (ESV): “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

- Only reconciliation with God can heal disordered desires. **2 Peter 1:4** (divine nature).
- Your human effort cannot save you.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV): "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Post-Christian culture: (David Bentley Hart)

"If we turn from Christ today, we only turn towards the god of absolute will..."

- The opposite of worshiping God is not Satan but the worship of self.

8) Rediscovering Fallenness

1 John 1:8 (ESV): "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

1 John 1:10 (ESV): "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

- We must rediscover the full weight of sin and wrongdoing.
- Only Christ, not programs of self-improvement, can reveal true righteousness.

Problem with Human Effort:

Without God, love and justice become unbalanced—either love without justice or justice without love

9) The Only Answer: The Cross

- Post-Christian revolution: justice without Christ; the enemy is always external.
- Christian revolution: justice through the Cross; God changes the heart first.
- At the Cross: love and justice meet; grace humbles and raises.
- The Cross is exclusive (one way) and inclusive (open to all).

Closing Observations

- A self-worshiping culture does not need the church.
- A me-centered church cannot transform us.
- A culture craving community but clinging to autonomy cannot experience true, healthy, Acts-style church.
- But the true church remains, and the gates of hell will not prevail. **(Matt. 16:18)**