**PP Acts: To the End of the Earth**

**Part 48 Acts 17:16-33 *The Confidence to Be a Witness* 9/10-11/2022**

Today we are going to see how the Apostle Paul boldly declared the gospel in an intellectual

center of the ancient world

It’s as if he stepped onto the stage at Yale to debate the chair of the philosophy department

God may call you or I to be His witnesses in a place that would ordinarily terrify us

Yet remember that a witness is simply someone who tells what he knows

We aren’t called to beat our opponent in a debate, or close the deal in someone’s conversion

Just to study God’s Word, know our God, and tell what we know

In **Acts 17:16** we find Paul alone in the city of Athens awaiting Silas and Timothy’s arrival

Of course Paul will not sit idle and instead he tours this Greek city, 50 miles east of Corinth

Athens had reached its peak of glory 500 years before and was now in decline

It was still an amazing city, being the birthplace of democracy with its elected officials

It was the center of literature, arts and as are about to see, of philosophy

Paul, himself educated at the famous university of Taurus, began his tour of the city

The more he saw, the angrier he became as ***‘the city was full of idols’* (17:16)** and his ***“spirit was***

***provoked within him...”* 17:16**

What did he do…he began to reason with anyone who would listen: Jews, religious people

Whoever was in the marketplace, day after day, Paul went up and talked with them

He began to attract the attention of the intellectuals, the philosophers

Some tuned him out, some were curious and we know what Paul was talking with people about:

 ***“he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.”* Acts 17:18**

He had met Jesus, was saved by Jesus, and taught by Jesus…he witnessed to them what he knew

and his form of witness was ***‘preaching’***

Always, an effective witness is one that speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus

Some witness through song, and art, and poetry, and teaching, and writing, but Paul preached

Some of the philosophers ***‘conversed’*** with him and that word meant *to combine*

These people would eagerly listen to all kinds of teaching and then take a thought from one, and

one another, and eventually combine them into a new belief

So they took him to the Areopagus, a 370 foot high rocky hill where the philosophers would

hear Paul’s ideas and judge their merit

He stood before them and said he had noticed in their city **‘*an altar with this inscription: “To***

***the unknown god.*”’ 17:23**

Then he said, *I know this God personally and I can tell you about Him*…and so he did

**PP 1-He is the Creator and Lord of all**

***“The God Who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not***

***live in temples made by man”* 17:24**

In a city full of temples and idols, this was a completely new thought for Greeks believed their

gods lived in these temples and were represented by these idols

But unlike these false gods, the ***Lord of heaven and earth*** made everything there is

Not only is He the Creator of all, He is the rightful owner, the master, the ***Lord***

He can do what He wants with His creation

**PP** **Psalm 24:1, *“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it. The world and all its people***

 ***belong to Him.”* NLT**

He can do with us what He wants as the supreme authority, there are no challenges to His rule

If God takes us home before what we think is our time, He has the right to do that

If God does not answer our pleading prayers, He has that right as well as the right to grant them

He is not obligated to our will, He doesn’t have to explain Himself despite our demands He do so

If we are angry with God, we’re most certainly demanding rights we do not truly have

Now, open your ears to this: **PP** *Worship is the glad acceptance of God’s rightful rule, and the*

*glad willingness to serve our Lord and King no matter what!*

This unknown God assaults our pride, but Paul’s second point indicts our independence

**PP 2-He is the sustainer of all things**

Standing before those intellectuals, Paul declared that this unknown god not only created all

things and is rightful owner of it all, ***“He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath***

***and everything.”* 17:25**

God doesn’t need people, people need God, to live and keep living

God doesn’t need oxygen, or food, or sleep, we need all of that to keep living

Think for a moment that while you slept last night, God did not, but rather watched over you

Though we are inadequate and weak and insufficient, God is more than enough, strong and

always self-sufficient

This may be the most unsettling truth to our independent spirits: *God needs nothing from us*

He is entirely self-sufficient…but what does that even mean?

**PP** God’s self-sufficiency means *He possesses an infinite degree of all His attributes in and of Himself, being complete in Who He is*

He wasn’t struggling with loneliness so He created humanity and dogs

He was lacking joy, or needed something from Amazon to fill the hole in His soul

**PP *“For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of***

***the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. ‘If I were hungry, I would not tell you,***

***for the world and its fullness are mine.’”* Psalm 50:10-12**

God needs nothing, owes us nothing, and His self-sufficiency tells us He is owed by all, something Job in His self-righteous grief had to come to grips with

God asked him, **PP *“Who has first given to Me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under***

***the whole heaven is Mine.”* Job 41:11**

Worship is to gladly proclaim and serve the One to whom we owe everything and faithfully

sustains us

Yet the next point Paul makes undermines our insatiable love for control

**PP 3-He ordains all things according to His will**

***“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,” “that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us”* 17:26-27**

All of human history has been guided and established by God, as all people come from one man

What a blow to racism and prejudice, to those who believe one race is superior to another

The Greeks looked at any non-Greek person as a barbarian, uncultured and uncivilized

But Paul declared that not one Greek, or anyone else, chose when they would be born or where

they would be born

God has ordained this for everyone at all times, for a reason…***“that they should seek God, and***

***perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him.”* 17:27**

When and where you were born and the family you were born into have all been ordained by

God

*Well,* you say, *that can’t be true because God doesn’t see me, He doesn’t even know I exist*

Yet He does, in fact, His complete attention is on you at all times, you are fully known by Him

He is a prayer away from being found by you

But now Paul brings his message home, and says now that I have introduced to the unknown

God, there is a response you must make: ***“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but***

***now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on***

***which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and***

***of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”* 17:30–31**

The *epicureans* believed that at death your body and soul dissolved and spread into infinity

The *stoics* believed that there was no afterlife and at death you mergex with the impersonal *logos*

Paul said, Jesus died, was raised to life, and all who believe in Him will rise to life as well

Christian, when you share the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the necessity

of believing on Him for the forgiveness of your sins, there are 3 responses possible:

**PP** i. Some will mock us having rejected the gospel: ***“Now when they heard of the resurrection***

***of the dead, some mocked.”* 17:32**

**PP** ii. Some will be indifferent, forever curious but never committed: ***“But others said, ‘We will***

***hear you again about this.’”* 17:32**

**PP** iii. Some will believe and God will give them eternal life: ***“But some men joined him and***

***believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named***

***Damaris and others with them.”*** **17:34**

Three different responses to the good news that God has created all there is, sustains His creation

by His mighty power, and ordaining all things in accordance to His will

And this Creator, Sustainer, Ordainer God is near to all, just a prayer away

Paul in effect said: *He is no longer unknown to you, and you can no longer claim ignorance.*

*Now you must repent from your sins and believe on Jesus Who died in our place and was*

*raised to life. Coming is the day of judgment when all who reject the Son of God will be*

*eternally condemned*

Christian, be a witness of what you know of your God, and today you have learned that He is the

Creator and Ruler of all, the Sustainer of His creation, and the One Who ordains all

things to the purpose of His will

Therefore, all people must repent of their sins and unbelief, and believe on the true God Jesus

Pray