

Acts 17:16-34 The Up Close God

We are in the midst of Paul's 2nd missionary journey – Traveling with Silas and Timothy – Been a tough yet great one thus far.

A) Beaten and imprisoned in Philippi – left a Church was established –

B) Thessalonica – Chased out of town – many believed – Berea – Bible lovers – another Church was born – Jews from Thessalonica – traveled 50 miles – ran him out

C) Paul left Berea and made the 200-mile trip down to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy behind.

He was alone in Athens the place were Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno. The famous Philosophers had hung out discussing the deep things of life.

A) Though it had been some 400 years since the golden age of Philosophers, Paul found **the city's glory and prestige intact. Architecture – Parthenon/ Aeropagus**

B) Athens **was the intellectual center** of the world (much like Oxford in the nineteenth century), and scholars from all over the world made her their adopted home.

1) **But something was deeply wrong there.**

“Despite all her glory, Athens was empty because she was living on the memories of the past. In philosophy she simply repeated the echoes of men long gone. Her art was no longer innate overflow but a lingering reflex. It was to such a city that the apostle came—proud, glorious to the eye, but dead.” Kent Hughes

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

Paul came to Athens and saw all the idols – it provoked him – He was stirred his heart – the city given over to idols –

A) Idols were literally everywhere – a god for everything.

B) Pausanius, the Grecian geographer who visited Athens fifty years later, said it was easier to meet a god or goddess on the main street of Athens than to meet a man.

C) This was statistically true because the population was about 10,000, Athens was home to 30,000 statues of gods.

1) there were over 3,000 temples built to different deities.

D) Paul could appreciate the city's beauty and Architectural greatness

1) But his heart was stirred over the lost condition of the people – bondage – fear – control

Your response – Ball game – Mall – Fair – Concert –

A) Jesus saw the People with compassion – Sheep with out a shepherd.

B) Empathy feels a persons hurt or lost –

C) Compassion feels it and seeks to do something about it!

D) Jesus had compassion – Did something about

1) Paul was provoked and did something about it!

E) Reminder: Effective evangelism begins with a burden!

Paul could not be indifferent or detached. So he jumped right in, Provoked in his heart V.17 He reasoned with them – he dialogued with them about these things.

A) In the Synagogue and in the marketplace – we have got to get the gospel out of the Church. - Holy Huddle – go out into the world – play the game –

B) Paul saw all of this emphasis on these false God's and wanted desperately to share with them about the true and living God -

C) One of the most important truths that Paul wanted them to know was this: God is close, but He wants to be closer.

D) Main Pt The up close God wants you to get close to Him if you are willing.

I. Getting Close to God Requires More than BEING RELIGIOUS

II. Getting close to God Requires knowing the truth about God.

III. Getting close to God Requires repentance.

I. Getting Close to God Requires More than BEING RELIGIOUS!

It is not ok to just believe in something – you need to believe the right thing. – Athens was a great example of being in something – A god for every occasion

A) So Paul was out in the market place one day when

V.18 certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbling man want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

Aa) There were two main groups of intellectual philosopher-types in Athens - called the Epicureans and the Stoics. •

B) The Epicureans believed that everything happens by chance, and death is the end —extinction with no afterlife.

1) They believed there are gods, but those gods have nothing to do with the world.

C) They were practical agnostics who believed pleasure is the chief end of man and that a simple lifestyle is the most pleasurable.

D)The Stoics were pantheists, believing that everything is god and that whatever happened to them was their destiny.

1)Consequently, they sought to live with apathy and detachment—fatalistic resignation.

E)Together, these two philosophies represented the popular pagan alternatives for dealing with the plight of humanity apart from Christ.

Some people have suggested that Paul tried to be too clever in his teaching in Athens – too culturally relevant – quotes their philosophers and so forth.

A)But this I think makes it very clear that he didn't shrink back from preaching the gospel – He preached Jesus to them –

1)Paul was talking about Christ – Who He was, God in Human flesh, why He came – to Pay the price for sin, - His death – Cross – and His Resurrection,

B)It was this talk about the resurrection that really challenged them.

1) Neither Stoic nor Epicurean believed in eternal life. Therefore, Paul's talk about the resurrection captured the attention of both.

C)So they brought Paul to the big boys at the Areopagus

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

A) The Areopagus—Mars Hill—was three hundred and thirty-seven feet in elevation and located in the center of Athens.

B)It was the place where philosophers hung out and where the council of education and religion met daily.

C)The Athenians were religious – they were open to spiritual things – so open

they were also itching to hear some new thing.

D) Paul is given an audience with the BIG BOYS while the crowds looked on.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

II. Getting Close to God Requires Believing the Truth about Him.

A). His message made brilliant application, for he pointed directly to the problem.

B) The word translated “•unknown•” is the root from which we get *agnosticism*, which means “•without knowledge.•”

C) The Athenians were supposed to know everything, and they did, almost. But on the most important truth they came up short—they did not know God.

D) In his message Paul is going to present 5 important truths about God

1. He Created Everything V.24

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

A) “The Unknown God is the God who made everything,”

B) “He’s too big for any singular temple or any carved altar no matter how beautiful or impressive it might appear.”

C) The Temple was just a tangible place to meet with God – every part of the worship experience pointed to Jesus – God became man – THE CROSS

God is the creator of all things! –He is not created

A)In every country in the World including in most Universities across the USA – Professors who doubt the existence of God –

B)Yet they are forced to wrestle with him – constantly trying to refute his existence by explaining away Creation

C)Weird if I wrestled with someone I claimed didn't exist?

Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”

D)Creation points to a Creator – Design – a designer

2. He is totally Self-Sufficient V.25

25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

A)God needs nothing from mankind.

B)The gods of man based religions have needs – they need man's efforts, his time, his money.

C)The God of the Bible – the true and living God needs nothing from Man

D)God is complete! He is totally self-sufficient and does not need anything from man. 1)Does He love us? Absolutely! Does He need us? Absolutely not!

E)God needs us like you need your 3yr old to help you mow the lawn

1)2 yr old to help you clean the house.

So everything that God asks of us is for our benefit not His!

A) He asks us to worship Him – because He knows that worship of God keeps us centered, focused – puts all of life in the right perspective.

B) He asks us to give – to tithe – because God is a giver and He knows that we are naturally selfish. Giving makes us more like Him – dependent on Him

1) Our money is a confidence – He wants us to be confident in Him.

C) God asks us to serve – so we have the opportunity to experience the Joy of the Power of His spirit working thru our lives!

1) A privilege that He gives to us – to be involved in his work – to be his instruments

So man cannot meet any of God's needs, But God is certainly the source for man's needs.

A) He gives life, breath, and everything else to mankind.

B) Your very life and breath are in his hands -

3. He is not far from us. V.26-28

And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

A) Many pp believe today like the Epicureans – God is far off – we are left to figure things out on our own.

B) The Bible teaches the exact opposite: Describes God as being very near – and very interested in every part of our lives.

1)Provision: Jesus said Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.
24 Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? 25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?

His Thoughts for us Precious and out number the sand - Psalm 139:17-18

Jeremiah 29:11 **Thoughts of good not evil to give us a future and a hope.**

Matthew 10:30 **Every hair – is numbered.**

Isaiah 55:6 “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.”

He is not far from anyone here today. All that is needed is a heart that will start looking for Him, and you will find Him.

4. He is much more than man’s grandest idea of Him.

29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

A)They made gods of silver and gold in their image.

B)Their gods had human tendencies – selfish– thru temper tantrums – always walking on egg shells.

C)We have a tendency to do the same- We tend to put God in a box

1)Tension between Predestination and free will – Bible teaches both – man wants to explain – it – we can’t see how the two fit together – the tension

D) Believe Both – God is bigger than us

We have trouble forgiving and forgetting – Can't believe that God does

A) Choses to put it out of his memory – Daily choice for us – not dwell

B) God gives grace – Undeserved favor – we wrestle with that

C) Your kids – spanking ice cream – teen shopping

1) Don't deserve this- but I love you.

D) To have a right view of God we need a change of mind

III. Getting Close to God requires Repentance.

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

A) Repent means to change our mind!

B) God is near – He is interested – Why He came down

1) Freely give us all things

C) Change our mind – Need to earn His favor –{ What Jesus did was not enough

D) Walk in grace accepted in the beloved.

E) Change of mind - God needs me and my gifts {Put away my pride that I am something –

1) See the incredible privilege to serve him

F) Change Mind: God is all sufficient

Final truth

5. God will judge the world one day by the Man He raised from the dead V.31

31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

One day stand – Judged on works –
Judge on did we believe

Response:

" 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 A few men became followers of Paul and believed.

A)Some Mocked

B)Other tomorrow – JESUS SAID TODAY

C)Some believed