

The Book of Acts

GROUP CURRICULUM

SERMON **COMPELLED TO WITNESS (ACTS 17:16-34)**

DATE **MAY 10, 2020**

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ 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, ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;

as even some of your own poets have said,

“ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ 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.”

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (ESV)

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1. Take a few moments to search out the meaning to the following terms before you proceed in your study: **Epicurean, Areopagus, Stoic**
2. Where did Paul spend his time sharing the gospel? Where did he begin? Did he stay there? How would you characterize his ministry in Athens?
3. What were the various responses of the Athenians to his preaching? What kinds of comments might we encounter as we preach and teach about the resurrection today?
4. How does Paul begin his message to the philosophers in **Acts 17:22-28**? What important principle can we learn from him for witnessing to those who differ greatly from our beliefs?
5. Consider **Acts 17:29-31**. What seemingly obvious statement does Paul make about idols and God (cf. **Psalm 115:4-8** and **Isaiah 44:9-20**)? Why do people everywhere misunderstand this (see **Romans 1:18-23**)?
6. Some say all religions are the same. What arguments does Paul use to contradict this notion?
7. How did Paul view the Athenian philosophers' "Golden Age of Philosophy" (**Acts 17:30**)? What does Paul say about God's mercy toward them? Do you see any parallels with today's views of the world?
8. Considering three of the points of this weekend's message: There is one true God, This God is near, and Judgment is coming, which of these do you think the world has the most difficulty with today? Why?
9. Close your time meditating on the four questions that closed the sermon this weekend:
 - Is God seeking me personally through this passage today?
 - Am I ready for the return of Christ and his judgment?
 - Does my life prove that I'm ready? My affection, direction, and lifestyle?
 - Do I need to repent and receive forgiveness today?