

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time***

### **The God of Resurrection**

Scripture: Acts 17:16-34

Code: 80-237

Those of us who live in the city of Los Angeles have been very much aware over the last number of weeks that we have been having an election for the mayor of our city...and, as of last week, there were about a dozen candidates who were vying for that position. And I was listening, as I...I am sure you were, to the various campaign promises and pledges and perspectives that came out from these various candidates. Each of them endeavored to select a message that might somehow resonate with the citizens of our city and get them elected. I suppose they were wanting to bring to the city what the city most wanted to hear. Some of them talked about better schools. Some of them talked about better transportation. Some of them talked about better power systems. Some of them talked about a better delivery of welfare, better policing, greater safety in the city, better roads, more jobs. You heard it all. So did I.

But when it was all said, not one of them offered to bring this great city what it most desperately needs...I'm still looking for the right candidate who would do that. Digging back a little bit in history, I think I found the man. He was a man who brought to a great city exactly what that great city needed. His message to that great city 2,000 years ago is relevant today and is the most needful message in our city and, for that matter, in every city on the planet. That man's name was Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ. What a mayor he would make. An amazing man. A prolific man. First of all, he was a Jew. He was expert in the law, expert in tradition. He knew very well and observed very carefully, the rituals of Judaism. He was a Pharisee, which meant that he took the matters of his religion as seriously as they could be taken. He was a student of his religion. He was a teacher. He was a leader.

At the same time, he was also a Roman citizen. He was skilled in secular matters, as he was skilled in religious ones. He was knowledgeable about the military. He was knowledgeable about politics. He was even knowledgeable about athletics. He had been mentored by the greatest of Jewish scholars, a man named Gamaliel. He had also been saturated with Hellenistic or Greek culture and philosophy while growing up in his hometown of Tarsus. He possessed a brilliant intellect. He possessed intense single-minded commitment to causes he believed in. He had immense integrity. He tirelessly pursued his goals. He thought in a linear fashion. Had an amazing ability to write with profundity and clarity, and to speak in the same way. He demonstrated fearless courage, even in the face of death. He was well read. He was well traveled.

This remarkable man, however, would not stoop to be the mayor, and he wouldn't stoop to be the king, because he had been chosen, personally, by the resurrected Jesus Christ to be one of His official representatives, and to proclaim the Gospel of the cross and the resurrection. He came one day to the most celebrated city in the ancient world, and that city was the city of Athens. Athens, at that time, was the home of literature. It was the home of art, and had been so for a long time. You could say it was the philosophical center of the world. It was the religious center of the world. It was the political center of the world. It was the university of the world. It was the city of ideas. And, although in the first century Athens was under Roman rule, it may have yielded up its political independence, but it hadn't yielded up its intellectual independence. It was the most religious place in the world. In fact, Athens offered a home to almost every god that had been invented in the pagan pantheon. And nearly every public building, along with many temples and shrines, nearly every public building in Athens was also a shrine or a temple to a god. For example, the Hall of Records was also a temple to the mother of the gods. The Council House, where the city council met, was a temple to Apollo and Jupiter. The theater was a temple consecrated to the god of indulgence, by the name of Bacchus. And there, at the very heart of the city, was a place called the Acropolis. The high place of the city, the focal point of the city, and there was a collection of sculptures of many, many deities.

The importance of Athens could hardly be exaggerated. It was the city not only of many, many gods, therefore, very religious, it was the city, also, of many philosophers. It was the city of Socrates. It was the city of Plato. It was the adopted home of Aristotle and Epicurus and Zeno and on and on. And some historians tell us that the oratory, the literature, and the sculpture of fifth and fourth century B.C. Athens has been and never will be...has never been and never will be equaled in the world's history. The place was breathtaking.

To visit, as I have on a number of occasions, and see the ruins is to get a bit of a glimpse of what it must have been like. Breathtakingly blending together architectural design, natural spectacle provided by the mountains and the nearby sea. Artistic genius. It was a city splendorous in the combination of marble and gold with which its amazing buildings were constructed. It was, in every sense, in terms of what could be done with man's hand and with man's mind, the epitome in the world of human achievement...

And to that great city came Paul, alone, hated, hunted, pursued. He came to Athens. He really came there on the lam, on the run, from those who wanted to take his life. He came to Athens. At first, to kinda get lost in the crowd and find some breathing room, to be inconspicuous, so that he could rest from his pursuers. But the city had an immediate impact upon him, which led to his impact on the city. Turn in the Bible to the 17th chapter of Acts. Lemme take you to this event.

Acts chapter 17. The book of Acts records the story of the spread of the Gospel of the resurrection. The predominant figure in the first half of the book of Acts is Peter, the apostle. The predominant

figure in the second half of Acts is Paul, the apostle. Both of them, eyewitnesses of the risen Christ who were given the responsibility to preach the resurrection. In his preaching, Paul finds himself in Athens. Verse 16, "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens...and you'll see back in verse 15, he was waiting for his two friends, Silas and Timothy, to join him. They had sent him ahead to get away from the heat...while he was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols."

Bricklayer visits a city, he sees the bricks. Street cleaner visits the city, sees the streets. Policeman visits the city, he sees the criminals. Architect visits the city, he sees the buildings. Environmentalist visits the city, he sees the pollution. A man of the Gospel visits the city, he sees the souls of the people. That's what he saw. Doesn't say that he went into Athens and was wowed by the marble and the gold. It says he was provoked by the idols. I suppose in this eclectic kind of synchronistic tolerant environment in which we live today, we might assume that that's sort of the wrong reaction. Here is, after all, a religious man, a man who has given himself to religion. First, the first half of his life to Judaism, and the latter half of his life to the completion of true Judaism, Christianity, and he's a very religious man. He certainly should be pleased and encouraged to come to this great city and find it full of religion. I mean isn't that the idea? Don't religious people get excited when they see religious places?

But the widespread religion of that city moved his emotions in a very negative way. He burned on the inside with emotions. That's what the text is saying to us when it says he was provoked within himself. He was stirred up emotionally. And that stirring was very much like Henry Martin experienced. Henry Martin was one of the great missionaries sent from England to India. And when he went to India, he went into a Hindu temple when he first arrived. And he saw something there that horrified him...in a Hindu temple. He saw a picture of Muhammad, and bowing down and worshiping Muhammad in the picture was Jesus Christ. Somebody might assume that's gotta be the ideal religious place. There are the Hindus acknowledging Muhammad and acknowledging Christ. Isn't that the idea? Don't we applaud all of that religion?

Henry Martin wrote this in this diary. "This picture excited more horror in me than I can well express. I was cut to the soul at this blasphemy. I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified. It would be hell to me if He were to be always thus dishonored." And when he was asked why he felt like that, he replied, "If anyone plucks out your eyes, there is no saying why there is pain. It is feeling, and it is because I am one with Christ that I am thus dreadfully wounded." End quote. Henry Martin was having an experience like Paul had.

Any man of God who looks at a city and sees the soul of that city given over to idols, sees the lostness of that city, the emptiness, the false religion, and is grieved. There was Paul, who came for a rest and might have taken a little tour and enjoyed the architecture and the magnificent scenery. But, instead, seeing only the souls of those captive to false religious systems. Verse 17 then says,

"He was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles." Immediately, he went to the synagogue where he found the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles were Gentiles who had literally adopted Judaism. They had become proselytes to Judaism. And he went there, and he began to reason with them. That is, he began to communicate with them. And we know what it was that he always presented. He always presented Christ. He said, in 1 Corinthians, he was "determined to know nothing but Christ in Him crucified." So he went there and he preached the truth. He preached the Gospel of the cross and the resurrection.

And not only did he do that in the synagogues, but verse 17 says he did it in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present...present. This is an indefatigable preacher. This is a man who can't be silenced. This is a man who doesn't understand a day off. This is a man who doesn't understand respite or vacation. This is a man who is so moved in his heart as to be driven to proclaim the truth. There he was in the synagogue, and there he was in the agora, the marketplace, and he was reasoning as says in the book of Acts elsewhere, "Reasoning out the Scriptures." Explaining the truth in this melee of false religion.

The reaction, obviously, would come rather quickly, because Paul's ministry was very public. And in verse 18, we get a reaction from the Gentiles, from the Athenians. "Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some...some of them...were saying, 'What would this idle babbling wish to say?'" Now, this is interesting that the Lord has determined that Luke, the writer of this book, should tell us about the Epicureans and the Stoics, because they play an important part in our understanding of this event.

Epicurus, the philosopher, was born in 342 B.C. That's a long time before this. 400 years. But his philosophy had taken root. Here we are, 400 years later, and there are Epicureans around. A very famous Athenian philosopher was Epicurus, and he believed that everything happened by chance. Nobody was in charge of anything. Everything happened by chance. He believed there might be deities, but those deities were indifferent, apathetic, couldn't care less, and couldn't do anything about it anyway. Epicurus also taught that death was the end of life. There was no afterlife. There was no eternity. There was no resurrection. His philosophy had lasted a long time. It still is around today.

In fact, there was an English writer by the name of Swinburne, A.C. Swinburne, who wrote a poem that is essentially Epicurean philosophy. This is what he wrote. "From too much love of living, from hope and fear set free, we thank with brief thanksgiving whatever gods may be, that no life lives forever, that dead men rise up never." That's Epicureanism. We make a brief thanks to whatever gods there are that we die at the end of this life, and there is no afterlife. Because what that does is remove all consequences. And so, for the Epicureans, pleasure was the chief end of life. And there was no consequence. So they lived as immorally as they wanted to live.

The other group that were there that...on that occasion were the Stoics. They basically were a group of people who followed the teachings of a man named Zeno. Zeno had been born in 340, about the same time as Epicurus, and so his philosophy had been around for a long time, as well. Nobody had successfully undone the philosophy of Epicurus and Zeno, and it was still there. Where did it get the name Stoic? There's a Greek word, stoa. It's the word porch. And apparently Epicurus used to stand on some porch and espouse his philosophy, and the people who went up on the porch to hear him became known as the porchers, and that's Stoics.

He, too, was an Athenian. He believed that everything was God. He was God, and you were God, and they were God, and God is everything, and that's Pantheism. And everything is determined by...by fate. By fate. Everything is just sort of luck. And you somehow gotta grip on your life, and you're the only person who can take control of your life. There isn't anybody out there to help you. And, again, there isn't any future.

There is a classic poem written by another Englishman named Henley. Famous poem called Invictus, and it is the Stoic philosophy. "Out of the night that covers me, black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance my head is bloody but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade, and, yet, the menace of the years finds, and shall find me, unafraid." And the menace of the years is death, and after that there's nothing, so I don't fear it. Then he closes, "It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Stoics have no use for resurrection, afterlife, morality, or God. They were the only god there was, and so how did they view Paul? Some of them were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say? What does he think he has to say to us?" And they used this interesting little phrase "idle babbler." Idle has the idea of insignificant, meaningless, pointless, nonsensical. And the word babbler is really fascinating. When I looked up that word, I found out that in the Greek, it means a seed picker. A seed picker. And it was a term used to describe, initially, gutter sparrows...who fly around...marketplaces...for obvious reasons. They're picking stuff outta their gutter. Flying around eating crumbs here and seeds there, and...that was the seed picker.

It came to refer, metaphorically, to poor people, to bag ladies, in the modern vernacular. To grocery basket cart guys who have all their belongings hanging in plastic bags off grocery carts. They live by their wits. They're at the lowest level of the social ladder, and they scrounge the garbage cans. They are the seed pickers. They hang around the marketplace and spic up...pick up the crumbs. It was used of a parasite who lived at the lowest level by his cleverness. It was a term of real disdain and derision. Their derision implied that Paul was not an astute philosopher. Or, for that matter, theologian. He was nothing but a seed picker. He was nothing but a sort of a philosophical bum...scrounging around, picking up things that we would throw away. Scraps and bits of ideas, and

putting them together in some nonsensical fashion. They mocked him. They disdained him. They looked down on him. They demeaned him...He was in the gutter of intelligence...an uneducated seed picker trying to pass off cheap philosophical ideas, as if they were legitimate...Hum, sounds familiar. Typical reaction to preachers of the Gospel today by philosophers and university professors.

Some thought a little better of him. Verse 18 says, "Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities.'" Obviously, the Epicureans and the Stoics hated him, because he said, in proclaiming his message, obviously, that God was who He was, and that God was incarnate in only one man. And he also, as we will find out at the end of verse 18, preached Jesus as God in human flesh and the resurrection. They didn't believe in that at all, and so he was going against the grain of their philosophy. That's why they treated him with such...disdain. but others, at least, conceded that he was a proclaimer of strange deities. They'd never heard about a man who was God. They had never heard about this man who was God incarnate, who died on a cross and rose again from the grave, and paid the penalty for sin on the cross and rose again...in order that His resurrection might provide for us eternal life. They never heard of that. What was the nature of this strange God?

End of verse 18, "This Jesus and the resurrection." You know, and here is this...this amazing Paul, and he has exactly the message that that city needed to hear. They needed to hear the message of the resurrection. That's what they needed. They needed the eternal life that comes only through Christ. They needed to understand that God incarnate...God became a man. The man is Jesus who lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death. Paid the penalty for your sins and mine. Rose from the dead that He might provide for us eternal life, having conquered sin and death and Satan and hell. That's what they needed to hear. And that's what Paul brought them.

Well...there was an appropriate process, by the way, to follow. You didn't just show up in town and announce a new deity and start espousing a new philosophy without proper approval. So, tells us in verse 19, "That these people who were to some degree interested in what Paul was saying, took him and brought him to the Areopagus." Now why did they bring him to the Areopagus? Well, the Areopagus, or the Hill of Ares or Mars, the god Mars, it's today called Mars Hill. It's still there. I've stood on that hill. In fact, I stood on that hill and taught this chapter right here. I rehearsed Paul's message 2,000 years later on the same spot.

But at the Areopagus, this hill in the middle of the city of Athens, not far from the great Parthenon that sits up on the highest hill there, in that place convened the supreme court of Athens. Thirty members to the supreme court of Athens, and they met on that hill. This, by the way, was the very court that tried and condemned Socrates centuries before. And, at one time, was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. The court took care of civil issues and criminal issues. It took care of civil issues having to do with philosophy and religion. It took care of criminal issues having to do with murder and insurrection and all other crimes. It also had a positive...responsibility. it rewarded virtuous citizens.

And so this was the high court of this great city. They also had an interesting assignment. As part of their civil responsibility, they had the assignment to protect existing religions from blasphemy. And so when any new philosophy or religion came that have posed the threat of blaspheming an already approved religion, they demanded a hearing for that new religion in the court. And so this is not an unofficial visit on Paul's part. This is a very official visit. He is a new teacher in town. The Epicureans and the Stoics hate everything he says. They don't agree with it. They don't believe God is who He says He is. They don't believe Jesus is God. They don't believe in a resurrection. They think he's nothing more than a lowlife seed picker.

But there are others who are curious about what he is saying. And the reason for that is given in verse 21. "(Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)" This is something new. And the reason that they always wanted something new is very simple. They were never satisfied with what they had.

I don't know about you, but, as a Christian who has received the Gospel, I don't need anything new. Do you? This is it. This is the end of the search. I'm free from the search. Not interested in any new religion. But that's because the Gospel is the truth that satisfies the soul forever. They had not experienced that. What they had experienced brought no fulfillment, no satisfaction, and no ultimate answers. They had all these gods and all these religions and still empty hearts. And so they were open to anything and everything that was new.

And so this kind of group took the Apostle Paul to the court. Go back, if you will, to verse 19. "They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?'" The court wants to know what are you talking about. You're in the synagogues. You're every day in the marketplace. What are you talking about? "For you...verse 20...are bringing some strange things to our ears. We wanna know, therefore, what these things mean."

Now Paul has a great opportunity. He is there with the elite of the city, the philosophers, the leaders, the judges, the authorities, and they are asking him to tell them what he believes. He can't resist that kind of an opportunity. He didn't have an advance committee. He didn't have anybody to plan the strategy. He just walked into the city all by himself, took every single opportunity to converse about the Gospel and eventually ended up in the highest place, speaking to the most powerful people in the city...What he's gonna tell 'em basically is three things. It's a three-point sermon. It's very simple. "You wanna know what my religion is? You wanna know what my message is? Here it is. I'm not here to defend another personal philosophy. I'm not here to add another imaginary deity to your pantheon of gods. I am here to introduce you to the one true, living God.

Interestingly enough, that, in effect, would cancel out or...blaspheme all other gods. He has three points. Point one: This God is knowable. I read you a couple of poems a minute ago, and both of them referred to whatever gods might be. This is the agony of agnosticism. The agony of agnosticism is you don't know. You don't know. You hope, and so you have more gods and more gods and more gods, and maybe...maybe eventually you'll land on the right one. But you just don't know. And Paul says here, "I'm gonna tell you, folks. God, the true and living God, is knowable." Verse 22, "Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus...I love his boldness...and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.'"

Petronius said it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. They were very religious. "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.'" How interesting. "To an unknown god." What is the point? And that is the agony of agnosticism. You don't know. You know where those things came from? There were many shrines, many statues to an unknown god. You know where they came from? Six hundred years before Paul, there was a terrible pestilence in Athens. One of those kinds of pestilences that just destroys the population. Nothing could stop it. And so, obviously, they were trying to figure out how they could stop the pestilence, and they believed that it had come upon them because some god had been offended, but they didn't know what god. And since they didn't know God, they didn't know how to connect with God. They didn't even know who was God, and that's why they kept adding more and more and more and more gods, hoping that they would land on a god who would respond to them.

So here was a great idea. A Cretan poet by the name of Epaminondas came in and said he had a plan. Here was his plan: "Take a huge flock of sheep, mixed of black and white, and we'll bring 'em to the Areopagus and, at a precise moment, we'll let 'em go, and we'll let 'em run all through the city. And wherever they lie down, eventually, when they get tired, wherever they lie down...right on that spot you kill them and offer them as a sacrifice to the nearest idol. And that way, we'll kinda catch all the idols. And that way, we can let the gods kind of direct the sheep. And they said, "If they lie down, and it's not near any idol, we will erect a marker to the unknown god, and then we'll sacrifice to the unknown god."

So there were a number of those all around the city. The unknown god. This was one of those that Paul had seen. You don't even know who you're worshipping. You've got gods and gods and gods. None of them satisfy you, and you've even got gods that you don't even know who they are, let alone know them. And so he says to them, "I am here for this purpose. What, therefore...verse 23...you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you, 'Let me introduce you to the one true God. The one true God.'"

In 1 Thessalonians 4 in verse 5, Paul said, "The Gentiles know not God." In Galatians 4:8, Paul also said, "When you did not know God, you were slaves to those who were, by nature, no gods. When

you don't know the true God, you wind up worshiping no gods." And that...that is, you invent idols that aren't God. That's what people do. So you're groping around...in ignorance. Paul says, "I'm here to tell you about this God. What you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." Even Einstein is quoted to have said, of course, when he asked if there's a Creator. "Of course there is a cosmic power. Not to believe that is foolish, but we can never know Him." That's sad. Einstein is wrong. God doesn't need to be the unknown god. God is knowable, and I am going to introduce Him to you.

Second point, God is knowable, and God is the Eternal Spirit. That's what he tells them, and He defines the character of God. In verses 24 to 29, this is just marvelous. First of all, he introduces the true God to them as the Creator. He says in verse 24, "The God who made the world and all things in it. He's the Creator." Epicureans, by the way, denied Creation. They believed that matter was eternal, and Stoics, as I said, were pantheists. They believed that God was matter, and matter was God. And Paul shoots all of that down and says, "Matter is not eternal, and you're not God. God is God, and He made everything, including you. God is the God of Creation. God is the God of time and matter." God is not, as the Mormons say, a perfected man who was once a creature just like us and kept getting better until He finally became God. God is the Creator.

Secondly, he says, "God is the owner of everything He created. He is Lord of Heaven and earth. He is the Lord of everything." The earth is the Lord's...Psalm 24:1 says...and the fullness thereof the world and those who dwell in it."

Thirdly, he says, "God, Who is the Creator and is the owner of all His creation, does not dwell in temples made with hands." That is, He is transcendent. This is a very important point. He doesn't live in these temples. He doesn't live in these shrines. He is beyond the bounds of the physical. He is that Eternal Spirit. "You can't make God...he says...because God made you. God is not the God you made with your hands. God made you. He is the Creator. You are not the possessor and owner of your private gods. He is the possessor and owner of everything He created, including you. He is not confined to your idol. He is not confined to your shrine. He is not confined to your temple. He does not dwell in temples made with hands. He is beyond time and beyond space. He is transcendent."

That is why the Second Commandment in the Ten Commandment says, "Make no graven image." Do not diminish God and confine God to some form. Psalm 139 says, "God is everywhere. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend to Heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me. Thy right hand will lay hold of me." I can't get away from You. You are everywhere, omnipresent and transcendent, beyond and above and outside of the created universe.

"He is also...says Paul...the giver of life and the sustainer of life. Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things." You don't give to God anything. He gives to you everything. He gives to you everything. Life and breath and everything. He is the sustainer. He doesn't need anything from you. He is the giver. Romans 11 asks, "Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?...answer...For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

God doesn't need anything from us. God gives us everything we have. Everything we have. And then Paul says in verse 26, "He is the governor. He made from one...from Adam...every nation. Out of Adam came Eve. Out of that couple came Cain and Abel, and out of them, of course, came all of humanity down to Noah and his family at the flood. And then out of them the rest of humanity. "He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth." And it was God Who determined their appointed times, and God Who determined the boundaries of their habitation. It was God who decided their place in history and their place on the map. And, you know, this is striking right at the Athenians' pride, because the Athenians viewed themselves as a self-made people. They viewed themselves as being unique, sort of springing out of the soil of their native Attica. And they despised the uncultured and illiterate barbarians, as they were called. But they hadn't made themselves. They were what they were because of God. God had appointed them as a nation. God had appointed them at that place at that time of history. God was the sovereign over history.

As Deuteronomy 32:8 says, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of men, He set the boundaries of the peoples." This is God. He is the Creator. He is the Owner. He is transcendent to His creation. And, yet, He is the Governor of His creation, the Sustainer of His creation. And then in verse 27 and 28, this is where he brings it down. He said, "God is immanent." The doctrine of immanence is a wonderful doctrine. I M M A N E N C E. And here's what it means. It's defined here. Verse 27, "That they should seek God, all of these nations that God has identified, should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He's not far from each one of us." That's the doctrine of immanence. Yes, He's transcendent. He's outside time and space. He's out above and beyond the created universe. But, at the same time that He is transcendent, He is also immanent. That is, He is near. He is not far from each one of us. You can know Him. God is knowable. He is that Eternal Spirit Who created, Who sustains, Who governs, Who is before and beyond creation, and, yet, is immanent in creation. He's made Himself visible by creation. Romans 1 says that the...the...the things of God can be clearly seen through the world that He has made. He is near.

In fact, verse 28 says, "In Him we live and move and exist." He holds us together. The universe doesn't operate on fixed laws just at random. It operates on fixed laws because God is the operator. He is near. Not far from each of us. In Him, we live and move and exist, so he's telling these...these beleaguered religionists, "You've been looking all your lives. You've been looking for centuries. You've been looking for the God who satisfies your heart. The God you can know. And you

obviously aren't satisfied with the gods you do identify, 'cause you have a lotta gods you can't identify, and you're still looking. Lemme introduce you to the only God there is. The One true Living God. And I'm happy to tell you, He's...He's not out there somewhere so far away that you can never know Him. He is immanent. He is near. He is near every one of us."

Psalm 145:18 says, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth, who all who honestly call upon Him. He's near." So what is he saying? God is knowable. You can know God as Creator, Owner, Governor, Sustainer of Life, the Transcendent One, Who's also immanent. He's beyond and above creation, not limited to the physical world, but he's present in His created world, and you can know him.

And then Paul even adds in verse 28, "As some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'" And he's referring to Epimenides and a man named Aradus, who had both written about the fact that there was a God Who had created man, and that God would have to be personal, and He'd have to be rational, because that's what man is. And he's saying, "There are some of you who have taken the Creation and made the right conclusion. There is a God Who made it all, Who made it, Who has power to make a design, Who has complexity that has manifested His Creation, Who also has personality, because we are persons. Who has rationality, because we are rational." Etc. Some of their poets could see God in His Creation.

And, thus, with one wallop does Paul destroy all the idols. Wipes them out. There's only one God. You can't make Him, because He made you. And you don't need to live in the agony of agnosticism. He's not out there never to be known. He's right here to be known.

Then he makes his third point. God is knowable. God is the Eternal Spirit. Third point, God has spoken. The information in points one and two is enough to damn you, but not enough to save you. And I'm sure there were some people along with those two poets who had concluded that God might be knowable, because they had concluded in His Creation certain things about Him. That we were His offspring. That He was the Creator. That He was powerful, obviously, and rational and personal. But that's not enough to save you. God has also spoken. Natural revelation, we say, is enough to damn you. You need special, specific, verbal revelation to save you.

And so Paul comes to his third point, God has spoken. Very quickly, verse 30, "God is now declaring to men." God is speaking, and what's He saying? He has overlooked the times of ignorance in the past. God has been very patient throughout human history since the flood, when He destroyed the whole world. God has been very patient, and He hasn't destroyed humanity. Sixteen-hundred-and-fifty years after the Creation, you remember, he drowned the whole world except Noah and his family. But it's been 2500 years until this event in Athens. Twenty-five hundred years, and God hasn't destroyed the world. And here we are, 2,000 years later, 4500 years, and He still hasn't destroyed the world since the flood. And he is saying, "God has overlooked these times of ignorance and

rebellion. This time of agnosticism. This time of idolatry. God has been very, very patient. But God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent. It's time to repent from your sin. It's time to repent from your idolatry. It's time to turn to the true God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, Who lived and died and rose again for your salvation. The One and Only true God. It's time to repent."

Why? Because, verse 31, "He...God...has fixed a day." Hundred and twenty years before the flood, Genesis says, God came to Noah, and He said, "I'm gonna drown the whole world 120 years from now." And God fixed a day. One week before the flood came, He said, "Get in the boat. I'm gonna shut the door, because in seven days the flood will come." God fixed the day. Well, He fixed another day. "He's fixed a day in which He will judge the world." This time, by fire and judgment, "He will judge it righteousness. He will judge it justly and rightly. He will judge sin as it should be judged." And He's not only fixed a day, He's chosen a man whom He has appointed. This is the time now, folks. The judgment day has been declared. The day is fixed and the judge is appointed. Who is the judge? He chose a man, and He furnished proof to all men of that judgment by what?...by what?...raising him from the dead. Do you understand He raised Jesus on the one hand to be our Savior. He raised Him on the other hand to be judge. Jesus then came out of the grave for two purposes. To save those who repent and embrace in the Savior. To judge those who don't.

The resurrection has critical implications. Christ lives to be your Savior or your judge. Pretty powerful message, huh? It's amazing they didn't persecute him. What happened? Verse 32, "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead"...by the way, he must have gone on to describe the resurrection of the dead that will occur at the judgment...when all the dead of all the ages will be brought before God and Christ will judge them according to their deeds, and they'll descend into the Lake of Fire. He preached all of that. "Some began to sneer." That's the first group. They mocked. "Other said, 'We'll hear you again concerning this.'" They postponed. "So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him...he started a movement...and believed...which is the same as repenting...among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite...one of the court members...and a woman named Damaris and others with them."

So what's your response? What's your response? Mock the resurrection? Sneer or maybe your reaction is to say, "I'd like to hear more about this some other time." But we can only hope and pray that your reaction is to believe, to repent, to embrace Christ the Savior, so He will not be judge.

Let's stand for closing prayer. Father, we thank You for this great man, faithful, the great message that he preached. The message that our city needs to hear, that every city, that every soul in the world needs to hear. There is a true and living God Who came into this world, Who died for sinners and rose again to be Savior of those who believe, and judge of those who don't. Father, may we be like those who believed and followed, not like those who postponed or mocked. May You bring resurrection life to hearts, even today. For Your glory, Amen.

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