

Walking Through the New Testament with Paul the Apostle by His Life and Pen

LESSON NO. 16 - Please read Acts 17:1-34. **Theme:** Man, left to himself, can only think sinfully and with corrupted imaginations attempt to secure for themselves what they lost through Adam and Eve in the Garden. Man was designed to worship. Mankind lost the ability to think righteously and fruitlessly spend their energies serving gods of their **own imagination**. He hopes to gain some fleeting happiness in this world and eternal bliss after death. **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**, Him we proclaim to the world.

Fact: The lie of the devil which is still repeated every day to all mankind is found in Genesis 3:4-5 Then the serpent said to the woman, “**You will not surely die**. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.”

Truth: When Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate the fruit they sinned by thinking what God gave them was not enough. Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree **desirable to make one wise**, she **took of its fruit and ate**. She also gave to her husband with her, and **he ate**.

Tragic Result: Instead of becoming “like gods in their knowledge” Adam and Eve lost ALL CAPACITY to know ANYTHING that really matters. What truly matters for all eternity is God's revealed word. Adam and Eve forfeited their ability to understand eternal truth. They could now only think with fallen sin-filled imaginations of their own hearts without God.

- Acts 17:22-23 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 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**.

Truth: Jesus Christ was perfect love in a loveless world; He was perfect purity in an impure world; He was perfect meekness in a harsh and quarrelsome world.

Question: *Do we see in Acts 17 how Paul met his listeners exactly at the place where they could potentially understand the truth that man's Creator became their Redeemer?*

- John 3:16-17 For **God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Context: Let's follow Paul's simple explanation as a parallel track set alongside John 3.

- Acts 17:24-31 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. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things...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. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands all men everywhere to repent, 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**.”

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We recently received a note which strongly put forth that the Bible could not be trusted because "it declared Jesus died for sinners". The writer emphatically stated: "It is not just that one should die for another person's sin."

Our reply was simply: "Yes, to the human mind, you are absolutely correct. What you declared can only be true through sovereign holy God acting simultaneously in perfect Justice and perfect Mercy, Grace and Love.

The bad News of the Gospel is that ALL mankind are sinners by nature and are hopelessly lost and far from God. ALL mankind, through Adam's sin, lost all moral capacity to think and act righteously. This truth is evidenced by sin-filled deeds, words AND the worship of self and creations of the human mind. God has, in perfect Judgment, condemned our sins to death.

The Good News of the Gospel is Jesus took our place in death to pay for our sin and guilt.

The Just died for the Unjust. Because God is Just, He must judge sin. - Ezekiel 18-4, 20.

God would cease to be perfectly holy if He did NOT send sinners to hell.

Sobering truth: God does NOT send SIN to hell, God justly sends SINNERS to hell. With perfect justice and perfect mercy interwoven, God spares the guilty by imputing the life of His perfect Son to those sinners who repent and embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Perfect Love and Perfect Justice of Holy God is on display when He sent Paul to the totally pagan, depraved, lost city of Athens which was completely filled with hopeless sinners. God sent Paul with this message: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 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."

Question: What was the response to Paul's clear presentation of the one true God and Creator? What did the people of Athens do with the clear revelation of their Creator, the Perfect, Just and Loving, Almighty God?

- Acts 17:32-34 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Some people **mocked and scorned** the message and the messenger. But, **some believed**. The few who believed and trusted the message were saved from their blindness and given new hearts that loved Jesus Christ and compelled them to want to follow Him as His disciples.

This reality can be seen as Paul explained it in his letter to the Corinthians.

- 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but **we preach Christ crucified**, to the Jews a **stumbling block** and to the **Greeks foolishness**, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**.

Truth: ALL the Athenians were guilty sinners, just as we are! Some who heard Paul's message rejected Christ and died in their sins and eternal hell became their destiny. BUT some believed in Jesus Christ and received forgiveness for their sins, trusting by faith in the substitutionary

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death of Jesus. They were then credited [imputed] the very righteousness of Christ. These few will spend all eternity with Jesus in heaven.

This is the same wherever and whenever the truth of Jesus Christ is preached in the world. The sobering truth which is brought into the mind of all hearers: What are you going to do about your guilt as you stand before a pure, perfectly righteous Holy God?

All our sins are historically accomplished, written down and recorded in His books. - Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **books** were **opened**. And another book was **opened**, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the **books**..

We cannot change one single sin, nor erase even the smallest part of our guilt. Forgiveness of sins and guilt must be accomplished FOR US.

Our guilt can not be relieved through acts of worship, good deeds, helping the poor, giving or paying money. None of these WORKS can wipe out even one single sin, yet alone wipe out a lifetime of sin-filled days and nights.

Jesus died for sinners as Paul wrote to Timothy.

- 1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinner**s, of whom I am **chief**. This is the truth that delivers Peace to our hearts. Jesus took my place in death. Jesus will take the place of any guilty sinner when they choose to believe Him, love and follow Him.

This is the Greatest Love Story Ever Told!

Jesus took my place! Was it for me? Yes, He died for me. He took my place in death on the cross.

The Holy Spirit comes and reveals Jesus Christ to all humanity.

- Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

How far is the Holy Spirit willing to go to declare the love of Jesus Christ for sin-filled mankind?

- Hebrews 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the **uttermost** those **who come to God through Him** [Jesus], since He always lives to make intercession for them.

To the uttermost! Even if it means sending his messengers across continents to declare the love of Jesus Christ to one woman named Lydia and one nameless man identified only as the Philippian jailer.

Now we see this same truth being declared to the people of Athens where some mocked and some believed. So God's word goes into all the world.

- Romans 10:17-18 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

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None are without excuse!

The Holy Spirit sent Paul across continents to reach individuals, one eternal soul at a time, to tell them the Greatest Love Story Ever Told!

What about us? Are we willing to be sent by the Holy Spirit to declare this Love Story to whomever He has marked out?

Will we answer like Isaiah? - Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “**Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?**” Then I said, “Here am I! **Send me.**”

- John 4:35-36 Jesus said to them, “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

One way we can tell others the incredible sure hope we have in Jesus Christ is to write down the day and events of our salvation just as Paul recorded his own “new-birth” in Acts 9. Please send your Story to us so we may rejoice with you and glorify God’s great work!

We love to receive your questions. Your questions can be sent to write2stm@gmail.com or WasItForMeRom832@gmail.com. All our love to you in Christ - Jon + Philis