

Abide in Me

John 15:4

*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



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The Week of October 30, 2022

Telling the Truth
Setting the Record Straight
Acts 17:16-34

The Apostle Paul's sermon preached before the Areopagus in Athens, Greece is one of the most famous addresses in history. The Gospel is proclaimed for the first time in the classical context of intellectual sophistication. Paul's sermon is unlike any other sermon in Acts because of its location and audience. Among its many important features, the sermon illustrates the inescapable necessity of understanding one's context, establishing points of contact, unfolding the plotline of history, and telling the truth of the Gospel by declaring the utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

READING PAUL'S SERMON

- Circle the word *marketplace*, draw a line from it to the right margin and write *Agora*.
- Draw a line from *foreign divinities* (v. 18) to *strange things* (v. 20).
- Place a bracket around the word *because* (v. 18) and double underline the rest of the sentence.
- Above the word Areopagus (v. 22) write *a Council and a place*.
- Place a Δ over every occurrence of *God* and associated pronoun.
- Place a † over every occurrence of *Jesus*, associated reference, and pronoun.
- In the left margin of verse 28 write *Cretica by Epimenides*.
- In the left margin of verse 28 write *Phaenomena by Aratus*.
- In the left margin of verse 24 write *Creation*.
- In the left margin of verse 30 write *Fall*.
- In the left margin of verses 18 and 31 write *Redemption*. Next, draw a line that connects the two verses.
- In the left margin of verse 31 write *Consummation*.
- In verses 32-34 place parenthesis around the three different responses to Paul's sermon.

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.

EXPLORING PAUL’S SERMON TOGETHER

1. **Read Acts 17:16-21.** What happened to Paul inwardly when he surveyed the landscape of Athens? What do you see in our culture today that is akin to ancient Athens and also provokes a similar reaction?

2. Paul was not ashamed of sounding *strange* (v. 20) to the people of Athens. What about the Gospel sounds strange to people today?

3. The Areopagus was a small Council of Athenian aristocrats as well as a location. Based on Sunday’s message, why did the Council want to hear what Paul had to say?

4. **Read Acts 17:22-31.** How did Paul re-direct his inward irritation at the idolatry of Athens and use it as a platform to preach the Gospel?

5. How can we use cultural issues or circumstances to build bridges for communicating the Gospel? Give some examples.

6. Paul's sermon was profoundly God-centered. Discuss all the ways that he described God and His attributes. In any given culture, why is this emphasis so powerful? How does it help someone better understand who they are?

7. Paul quoted two classical poets whose words were originally used in a pagan context. For instance, Epimenides wrote his poem to Zeus. How would Paul justify the use of such quotations and how did he use them to point to God?

8. How did Paul prove that God was not just another god/idol to be included in the Parthenon of Greece?

9. Using the classic grid of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation, summarize how Paul preached the Gospel.

10. **Read Acts 17:32-34.** Identify the three responses to Paul's message. How does the variety of responses encourage you to share the Gospel when given the opportunity?

