

Defending the Christian Faith - Acts 17:16-34

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[0 : 0 0] and God-fearing Greeks, as well in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with them.

Some of them asked, what is this babbler trying to say? Others remarked, he seems to be advocating foreign gods. They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Aeropagus where they said to him, may we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?

You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears and we would like to know more what they mean. All of the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Aeropagus and said, people of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription, to an unknown god.

[1 : 1 5] So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands and he is not served by human hands as if he needed anything.

Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations that they should inhabit the whole earth and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.

As some of your own poets have said, we are his offspring. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by human design and skill.

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he is set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.

[2 : 3 4] He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. 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.

At that point, Paul left the council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dioconus, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Demarius, and a number of others.

Well, we don't want to close our Bibles. We want to hear more on this subject, don't we? We want to hear Jonathan come and preach. So, Jonathan, please come.

Thank you. There is a pen going around to this. Where's the box of pens?

If you wouldn't mind. Thank you, Sam. If anybody would like pens, take notes. You can use the back of the sheet to do that. Thanks, Sam. Let's let him do that.

[3 : 4 2] Yes, right. Yep. It will be helpful to keep your Bibles open as we just work through our passage this morning. It's always very helpful when somebody is speaking to be able to open up the word and actually read into it yourself to see, is what the speaker is saying making sense?

Is it right? So, I would encourage you, and we will be pointing out different verses as I speak this morning. Visiting a historic city is a great experience.

This summer, we had the privilege of going to Rome, and anyone who went to Rome would know that it's a beautiful city, and a city with great history. On one of our excursions, we went to the old

port of Rome.

And the old port, we were able to go into an archaeological site and be able to walk down the ruins of buildings for people who lived 2,000 years ago. So, I was quite happily walking along with my audio guide down these little narrow streets looking at where people lived, where they worked, where they went to temples.

There were so many temples in this area, so many altars, so many statues. It was a wonderful experience, and I became engrossed in it. But as I was walking down it, my mind went to this passage of scripture.

[4 : 59] For even though I wanted to know the history of this place, I was so far removed from the runnings of this place, for what I was watching was a pagan society, a people who had buildings and temples who were not following God.

Paul went to a historic city as well, the city of Athens. And for Paul, it was very different. For while I was looking at broken down statues and temples, trying to imagine what it was like, needing somebody in my ear to tell me what it was, Paul was able to open his eyes and see it for real. For as he wandered around Athens, he was able to see people worshipping other gods in their temples and altars. Now, for Paul, who could blame him for spending a few days in Athens? The year was possibly about 20 years after Christ, and it was a very exciting time in the history of Christianity. The message of Christ was moving out from Jerusalem to Samaria, out to the ends of the world, and it was just entering Europe for the first time.

Paul had just recently been in a place called Philippi. In Philippi, he preached the good news of Jesus, but he was put in jail for it. He had to leave Philippi, and he went to Thessalonica.

[6 : 21] There he preached once again, but there was a crowd agitated everyone, and there ended up being a riot, and he had to leave Thessalonica by night. So he rushed off to a nearby town called Berea.

But there again, he was followed. People followed to agitate the crowd, and again he had to leave. But this time, he had to leave without his companions, Silas and Timothy. So by the time we reach our verse in verse 16, Paul was here alone in Athens.

Now, a few days in Athens, waiting for his friends, mightn't be such a bad thing as we look around. After all, Athens was a city of great wealth. It was a city of great learning, and it was a religious city. In fact, in Athens, every public building was dedicated to a god. One pagan writer at the time used to refer to, he used to quip about Athens that it was easier to find a god in Athens than it was a man.

But for Paul, unlike me, doing it as a tourist, Paul was looking around and he was distressed by what he saw. Look at verse 16.

[7 : 32] While Paul was waiting for them, being Silas and Timothy in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see in the city the city was full of idols. And this word, distressed, is a very strong word.

It was meaning provoking to anger. Paul was angry by what he saw. It was the same word that was used when he had a disagreement with a companion of his, Barnabas, when they had a sharp disagreement and they parted their ways.

Paul was downright angry by what he saw. Why was he angry by seeing idols? Why was he angry by seeing people worshipping other gods?

If you know anything about Paul, he had a great heart for the gospel. He had a desire to preach Jesus Christ to all that he met. But instead of seeing a people who were worshipping God, he was seeing a people who were turning away from the living God, who did not know the living God. They were worshipping and putting their time into man-made gods, gods of silver and gold and stone. And this appalled him. Paul was seeing a people who were lost.

[8 : 39] And ultimately, Paul was looking at these people and seeing a people who needed Jesus. He would later write to the Romans and he was talking about idols and people who followed idols and he said, they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like the mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

They swapped worshipping the creator for worshipping something that was created. In a way, this poses a challenge to us.

when we look around in the world and we see people who are not following God, people who are following other ways, they're seeking after wealth and pleasures. Do we get distressed by that?

Do we get provoked to anger? I know for myself, sometimes you can get so busy with life you just move on and you don't think too much about it. But we're surrounded by people who are not following God, people who need Jesus.

And this is where we pick up the story for Paul. Now, Paul wasn't one to sit down and do nothing about it. Paul had a solution to what he saw when he saw people following idols.

[9 : 49] Look at verse 17. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks as well as in the marketplace by day with those who happened to be there. Paul's solution was to share Jesus.

First, he shared Jesus with the Jews. The Jews were his own people. He knew them well. He knew how they thought. And this was his custom. Look back at the start of chapter 17, verse 2, when he went to Thessalonica.

Verse 2 says, As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.

When he went to Berea, look at verse 10. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. And in our chapter, in our few verses, again he went to the synagogue.

He wanted to open up the scriptures to his own people. The scriptures, for them, was the Old Testament. He proved and showed people that the promised Messiah was Jesus.

[10 : 55] He had a heart for his people, a heart for them to hear the good news. But he also wanted to preach to those who were not Jews, Gentiles, those who knew nothing of the Old Testament scriptures.

And what did he do? He went into the marketplace day by day and spoke to those who happened to be there. So you need to pass over certain words in scripture.

At the start of our verse, it says that he reasoned with them and it's a very interesting word. For those who know Greek, they would tell you that it's the word dialogami, from which we get our word dialogue.

What's a dialogue? It's when we have a conversation. Somebody speaks, somebody listens. And we do that. And this was very important for Paul as he spoke with people, as he presented the truth of Christ.

He also accepted them speaking back to him to debate with him. And that's what he did with these people. We often think of Paul just merely standing on a soapbox and preaching and then moving on.

[12 : 00] But instead, he interacted with people. But as he was interacting, he met two groups of people. Look at verse 18. He met a group of philosophers. Philosophy is, strictly speaking, the love or the learning of knowledge.

And he met Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and they began to dispute with them. Who were these people? Well, Athens was a center of learning.

This was where people used to go and spend time and learning about different ideas. The Epicureans were people who loved pleasure. They wanted to avoid pain. They didn't deny there was a god but they were practical atheists because they lived their lives as if there were no gods. Their view of life was, I'll get pleasure and I'll avoid pain. The Stoics, on the other hand, were people who wanted to have self-mastery. They wanted to be immune to emotions.

They didn't believe in any personal god. They didn't believe any creator god and they believed that everything was predetermined by random chance. And these philosophers had contempt for Paul in his message.

[13 : 09] Look at verse 18 again. They said, what is this babblers talking about? The word babbler is an interesting word. It literally means seed picker. Have you ever seen birds pecking at seeds on the ground?

They peck, peck, peck, picking up this bit and that bit. And what they were saying about Paul was that he was like somebody who has picked up a bit of knowledge here, a bit of knowledge there, tried to put it all together and really didn't know what he was talking about.

They also said that his ideas were strange. Look at verse 20. They refer to him bringing them strange ideas. You see, they recognized that what Paul was saying was very different to what they believed.

They also misunderstood what he said and they said in verse 19 that he was one who was advocating foreign gods. What was really happening here was a clash between the Christian message of Paul and the way the world sees life.

The Christian way of looking at things, as you could call it, the Christian worldview or how you see the world, your outlook and world, is very simple for Paul. He saw Christ as the focus. God had created the world.

[14 : 21] Sin entered the world. It needed a solution and that solution was Christ who came to the world and he died and rose again for our salvation. And because of that, we know where we're going because we have the hope of heaven.

And now Paul and us as Christians are living as Jesus did. We want to live as Christ did. But that was very different to what these people who were listening to him, how they lived their lives. Their focus was on pleasure, on material things, on knowledge. They didn't believe in the afterlife. So if they don't believe in the afterlife, well, then there's no judgment.

There's no one to condemn them after they pass into this world because they see life merely as what we have here and now. And this clash between the Christian worldview and the worldview of the world is very much what Paul tries to speak against.

For worldviews, it answers the big questions of life. If you had stood back and thought about life, you'd ask different questions like, where do I come from?

[15 : 26] What's wrong with the world? What's the solution and where am I going? For us as Christians, we see the Christian worldview the way as presented by the Bible is how it explains these questions.

For others, they lived differently. Think about the people that we meet in our lives that we could meet. We meet people who don't believe in God. They believe that somehow we evolved over millions of years.

We happen to end up where we are now. There is no God, so therefore there is no judgment. We meet other people who have a very scientific mind. They might say to us, well, science has disproved Christianity, so I'm not going to believe in Christianity.

Or we might hear people say, well, what you believe, your Christian message is true for you, but it's not true for me. It's a very post-modern way of thinking that really, I'm happy for you to believe it. I'm happy for you to sit there and go to church, do all these things, but for me, I want to do something else. It really doesn't matter to me. And the question is, and the question for Paul was, how was he going to defend the Christian message when people in this world have such an idea about what the world is about?

[16 : 39] Well, Paul's defense starts in verse 19. You see, as he spoke, they asked the question, what are you teaching?

We want to hear more. Now, we could very much get excited and think, isn't this wonderful? Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. These people said, we want to hear you speak about this.

But Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, very clearly in verse 21 would ground us in thinking that they wanted to hear it from a heart point of view. For he tells us that all the Athenians and foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

The Athenians wanted to know about what Paul was saying from a head point of view. It wasn't that their hearts were prodded to hear about the name of Jesus. It was all head knowledge.

And Paul knew this. He wasn't going to be fooled by that. But he was still going to present the gospel to them. So in verse 22 where we pick it up, they brought him to the Oropagus which was like a council or somewhere where they would talk about religion and morals.

[17 : 46] And he stood up and he said, men are people of Athens. I see that in every way you are very religious. I see that in every way, pardon me, for as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription to an unknown God.

Now what you worship as something unknown, I am going to proclaim to you. Now notice that Paul, even though he was angry by their idol worship, by the way they were not following God, he didn't start off in condemnation.

He didn't stand up and say, you're wrong, you're pagans, you're blaspheming God. But instead, he started where they were at. He told them that, he was acknowledging that they were religious.

He wasn't agreeing with them. He wasn't saying they were right. But he saw that they had devotion but it was misplaced. It was in the wrong thing. And they could tell that at least he knew something about them because he said, told them that he'd spent time in their temples looking around and even saw this inscription.

It wasn't that he was disinterested in what they believed. He understood it even though he didn't agree with it. And he used their altar to this unknown God as a starting point to share about God. [18:59] And as we look at verses 24 to 29, observe the attributes of God, the things that Paul tells the Greeks about God that they would have missed.

Bear in mind, a lot of them didn't believe in God at all. Or those who did believe in God thought he was some far off God that had nothing to do with them, completely had nothing to do with the day-to-day lives of people.

Verse 24, Paul starts off, the God who made the world. He starts off by telling them God is creator. For us as Christians, we might think this is quite basic.

We know that God made the world. We love hearing about it. We can probably even think up verses that speak of God as creator. And we take pleasure and delight and it causes us to worship because we know God created.

But it wasn't going to be popular to the Greeks because they had no concept of a creator God. The Stoics who were there thought everything was part of God. So God couldn't create himself.

[19:58] Therefore, he couldn't be creator. And it's not a popular belief now when we tell people that God made the world because so many people no longer believe it.

But Paul goes on to tell them that this God who created was also the Lord of heaven and earth. And as ruler, why would God need somebody to build a temple for him?

He said, and does not live in temples built by hands. After all, if God is creator, why does he need what these people were doing? Building temples.

You might remember in Solomon, King Solomon, when he was building a temple, he even said that God couldn't even be contained in the world and the universe and the heavens.

But Paul also goes on to tell them that God is the giver of life. Look in verse 25. He says, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

[21:00] He was telling the Greeks that look, this God who created, this God who is the ruler, is also the God who gives you life. And if he gave you life, why does he need to be served by human hands?

For it's God is the one who sustains people, not the other way around. And he continues to tell them that your life is in God's hands.

In verse 26, he tells them, it was God who determined or set the times for them and the exact places where they would live. God controls the world, controls everything.

Nothing is out of his control. For some who were listening to him like the Stoics, this was not good because they believed things happen by random chance, not by a God who intervened in the lives of people.

And verse 27, Paul goes on to say, God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him. Why would God, why would Paul say that?

[22:04] What does he mean by God did this? What he was telling them was, look, God is revealed to you. God's providential activity in the world should be obvious to you.

He is creator. He is the ruler. He is the one who gives life. He is the one who controls. If he was speaking merely to a Christian audience, he might have opened up the scriptures and shown it directly from there.

But instead, he does something quite unusual. In verse 28, he goes and quotes two pagan poets to back up his points. He says, for in him we live and move and have our being.

As some of your own poets have said, we are his offspring. Why would he quote pagan poets to prove his point? But he's saying to them, look, God is creator.

He's the ruler. He's the sustainer. Even your own poets have pointed this out, even though it was completely misplaced and they were putting, they were misapplying it to pagan gods. He was saying to the elite, those who are learned in Greeks, you don't have a clue.

[23:13] Here you are, worshipping something you don't know when it should be quite obvious that there is a God. Paul would write to the Romans and he would speak later and he would speak about our consciences, our, the natural revelation of God in the world.

These things point toward God. Paul's logic when he was speaking to them was that, well, if God is creator, then they don't need to create images to worship.

Why would they need to do that? Why do they not worship the creator instead of the images? Look at verse 29. Therefore, since we are God's offspring, bear in mind, their own poets have said this, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver, stone an image made by man's design.

This was ignorant of them. They didn't know any better but Paul was trying to say this is not right, this is not, this is not good. Paul was saying to them, look, look at the power and the glory of God in creation and sustaining and he is the one that you should worship.

He then goes on to say what God's attitude to all this was. In verse 30 he tells them that God overlooked this ignorance because he wants people to repent.

[24 : 41] You see, God is the greatest God and he gives people time to turn away from their sin, turn away from rebelling against God and to turn to him. And Paul is saying to them, look, you have been ignorant, you have not known the true God but I am now presenting this to you and you have the time to turn away from idols and turn to the living God.

And he goes on to tell them that there will be a judgment. Verse 31, he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice. So what they are doing now, they are not going to get away with it because there will be a judgment.

But in that judgment they do have the time to repent. And he goes on to say the proof of all this, the proof of what I am saying to you is that Jesus was raised from the dead.

You see, Johnny read out these verses from 1 Corinthians 15 and when Paul was presenting the case for the resurrection of Jesus, he said, our faith would be useless if Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

And he was saying to them, the proof for you, you Greeks, as you listen to me today is that what I am saying is true because of Jesus, because he rose from the dead.

[25 : 59] It was very personal for Paul, after all, didn't he meet the resurrected Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus? So he already knew and had the comfort and the assurance that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

Now you can imagine the reaction that he is going to get. For often when we speak of Jesus, we get different people's reaction. Some sneered, look at verses 32 to 34, some sneered, they didn't believe in the resurrection.

You see, in the Greek thinking, once the body was dead, that was it. There was no resurrection. Others wanted to hear more and thankfully some understood and accepted the message and some believed.

And as we speak and we share our Christian faith, how we would love people to be in that third category, those who believe. But it doesn't always happen. In fact, when we share the gospel with people, when we share our Christian lives with people, we're often rejected or they often speak and debate with us about different things and say, well, I don't believe that, I don't believe that.

But what do we do when somebody objects to what we're saying? If we presented the gospel similar to what Paul did there, how do we answer people's objections?

[27 : 17] And we can learn a lot from what Paul said in this passage of how when we speak with people, think for a moment of people's objections to Christianity.

Some people might say all religions lead to God. They might say, well, Christianity is just one way that people can follow God. Other religions equally will do like Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism.

They're all going to lead to the same place at the end. What do we say when somebody says that? Or they might say, why do you believe in the Bible? After all, it's been changed so many times. Look, there's so many different versions of it.

It's so old, surely there's a mistake in it because somebody probably has translated it wrong. Or somebody might say, well, your beliefs are mere fairy tales for science would show you that it's quite impossible for the world just to exist in the way you say it is and so many things of what you say can't be proved by science.

And they might tell you, well, I'm happy for you to believe the Bible. You've said your piece, you've shared the gospel with me and that's true for you but it's not for me and I'm going to go away and not take any notice.

[28 : 29] And I'm quite sure we could think up of loads of different things that people would say to us as we share about Jesus to them. What do we do? How do we defend it?

How do we live out our lives day by day when there's people who are happy to reject us or reject the message that we have? Well, we can learn four things, probably more, but I've found four things that we can learn from our passage.

The first one is to be prepared. You might recall in a sermon, I think it was about last year on 1 Peter and one of the verses that we were looking at was that we should always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that we have.

For when we speak with people, we need to know what we believe and to be able to share that with others and we can be prepared in, say, two ways, in our minds and in our hearts.

Think of how Paul preached. When he spoke to the Greeks, everything he said was very logical. It was very clear. It wasn't being misunderstood.

[29 : 36] He was prepared. He knew exactly what he was going to say and for us, it's very important that we know what we believe. If somebody asked you to explain the gospel, would you be able to explain it?

If somebody said, why do you believe in the resurrection? Would you be able to give them reasons why the resurrection is true? It's good for us to be prepared like that so that we will be able to answer people.

We're not going to know everything. People are going to talk about evolution. They're going to talk about science. We're never going to be experts on learning all of these things. We're not going to be people who can give some scientific reason why what they believe is wrong.

But we can be aware of what they say and you might notice when people are speaking to us and raising objections like that and we start asking them questions about what they believe, a lot of people don't really know what they're talking about anyway.

They might hear something on social media and the newspaper and they think, yes, that's what I want to believe. That's how I'm going to live my life. But when you get down to it, they haven't really thought much beyond that. They're quite happy to give you these one-liners to say why Christianity is true, but when you dig into it, they haven't really thought about it.

[30 : 48] And that's good from our point of view because we're not going to have the answer straight away for them, but we do have that truth and we know that truth of the gospel and we can share that with them.

We also need to be prepared in mind. A number of weeks ago, Connor was preaching on the Psalms, on Psalm 119. He was encouraging us to be in God's word daily. And the more we spend in God's word, the more we become assured of the truth and the more we have a desire to share with others.

We can also continue to speak and listen to people. It's very easy to want to give up. You could imagine sharing the gospel or sharing your life, your Christian life with those you love for years upon years, perhaps with a parent, with a husband or a wife or with a child, with a best friend and they just don't want to seem to know anymore.

They don't want to know anymore. But we shouldn't give up. We should continue to want to speak but also to listen because as we listen to people we will learn what they believe.

Think of Paul in our passage. He knew what the Greeks believed. After all, his preaching he tuned it to what they thought. He also was observing what they believed by looking around their temples and seeing their inscriptions.

[32 : 09] We can do that with people. We can ask people, well, why do they believe this? Why do they say that? And it's good for us to listen. We spoke about dialogue earlier.

Paul was reasoning and it's good for us to have conversations with people to actually be willing to speak. At the first sign of somebody having a conflict with us, we shouldn't just close our mouths and change the subject.

It's hard but it's also worthwhile because we might notice when we listen to people, we have an opportunity to hear them say something that will allow us to be able to share the gospel with us. We can also take great comfort from this passage. Sometimes we can begin to get, we can doubt what we believe or we can get confused by people's arguments.

When loved ones reject us, we might feel, well, is what I truly believe, is it true? And we can begin to doubt it. But this passage gives us great hope.

[33 : 13] Look back in verse 31, when Paul was speaking about judgment and repentance and he said that the proof of this was that all men, the proof to all men was because Jesus was raised from the dead.

And we can take great assurance for that, even though we might be confused by what we hear in the world, we might be upset by the way people are not following God, but we can be comforted that what you or I believe is true if we're Christians.

because our truth is based on what Jesus did on the cross and his being resurrected from the dead and being at the right hand of God.

It was Paul's comfort and it's our comfort and it's our comfort when people start to object to what we say or reject us. And finally what we can learn from this passage is that we always need to leave people with hope.

We can have many conversations with people, we can speak with them over many years or we might have short conversations with people maybe down the supermarket or on the bus. But it's always important to leave people with hope.

[34 : 24] Paul was sneered at when he shared the gospel with people, but notice that he still left them with hope. Even those people who rejected what he said out of hand, he still gave them hope.

Look back in verse 30. He told them that God commands all people everywhere to repent. And you see, even though people are rejecting Jesus, rejecting the cross, rejecting our message, we can still give them hope that there is still time to repent.

They can still turn from their way of life and turn to Jesus. People put their hope in all sorts of things in life. They put it in their wealth, in their intellect, perhaps even in their health.

But when things go wrong, where does their hope come from? Because deep down when we speak with people, we might notice they don't have hope.

There is a hope that is missing because what they see in the world, their worldview, does not give them the true hope that comes from Jesus. When we were in Rome and I was looking down at all the temples, one temple caught my eye.

[35 : 34] And on the plaque it said, the temple of hope. And I wondered, why would they have a temple of hope in this place? After all, I'd been to numerous temples in this area.

They had a temple for every god, everything that they could think of, they provided for. Why would they need a temple of hope? After all, wouldn't all these other gods give them hope?

And I thought, no. It didn't give them hope. They still needed hope. And this temple that I saw was still a pagan temple, but it showed me that hope was missing from this pagan worship, this people who had turned and not followed God because there was no hope.

And they wanted to have this temple of hope. But as Christians, we have a hope. Think of what, in 1 Peter, that we have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

we must always remember, when we are speaking to people, to always remember to give them hope. People might reject us, they might not want to talk to us, they might not, they prefer if we did not open the Bible, didn't want to talk about it.

[36 : 47] But we should always remember to leave them hope because that is the hope that we have. We should always know the reason for the hope that we have and prepare to share it with others.

Let us pray. Father, we do thank you for the Christian message. I thank you that we can be sure that it is true.

We thank you for the reminder from this passage that it is true and you have given us proof of it by you, Lord, being raised from the dead, that you are now at the right hand of the Father. We thank you for the gospel.

We thank you that we can know you, Father, as the creator God, as the giver of life, as the sustainer, I thank you that we have so many people in our lives that you have given us to us to love, to be with, and our desires that they would know Jesus.

But so often, Father, that we are hit with rejection or with people who do not want to know, but help us always want to give the reason for the hope that we have, for we have this great hope because of Jesus.

[37 : 54] I pray that we would be prepared, that indeed we be prepared in mind and in heart. that we would be willing to continue to talk with people, not to be quiet, but to have a desire to share you, Lord, with those around us.

And I thank you that we can give them hope and that there's still time for people to repent, to turn from their idols and turn to the living God. Lord, I pray that as we go out and as we spend our lives with people, that we will not become immune to the sin, to the rejection of you, but indeed it would

increase our desire to persevere, to continue to share your name with those around us.
In Jesus' name, Amen. I'm going to finish with a song. We have, there is a hope.
There is a hope that burns within our hearts. And if you're a Christian here today, you have that hope, that hope that we have because of Jesus, that gives me strength for every passing day, because of Jesus, that we can live day by day, and our desire hopefully will be to share that with others.
Let us stand to sing. there is a hope that burns within my heart, that gives me strength for me.