

PM Acts 17 A Sermon In The Areopagus

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[0 : 00] So Acts chapter 17, and we'll read from the beginning of the chapter.

So Acts 17 and from verse 1, let's hear the word of the Lord. Now, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women.

But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

[1 : 21] And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, These men, who have turned the world upside down, have come here also.

And Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus. And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

And when they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now, these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Many of them, therefore, believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

[2 : 37] Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea. But Silas and Timothy remained there. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens.

And after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. 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.

So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout Persians, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with them.

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.

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, may we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears.

[3 : 45] We wish to know, therefore, what these things mean. Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Men of Athens, I perceived that in every way you are very religious. 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. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

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, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way towards him and find him.

Yet, he is actually not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said.

[5 : 10] For we are indeed his offspring. 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.

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 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. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said, we will hear you again about this.

So Paul went out from their midst, but some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysus the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Amen. And we pray for God's reading again in verse 22 there. So Act 17 verse 22, So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, Men of Athens.

[6 : 25] So with God's help this evening, I want us to look at what is, I think in many ways, quite a unique gospel encounter here, gospel interaction, a unique and a relevant gospel interaction as well to us, as we see Paul here addressing the philosophers and the thinkers of the famous Areopagus.

And I say this is relevant to us because our culture actually now has a lot of similarities to what these Epicurean and Stoic philosophers actually believed in.

Now many people today wouldn't really know anything about Stoic philosophers or Epicurean philosophers, but we do actually believe, as a culture, we do believe a lot of the things that they themselves believed, and we'll look at that a bit later on.

So it's relevant to us, but it's also unique, and the reason I say it's unique is because, see, up until this point, if you're reading through Acts, most of the conversions that take place, up until this point anyway, are the conversions of people who have some kind of background in the Jewish faith.

So you think of Pentecost, obviously many, thousands of Jews converted at that point. Paul himself, or Saul as he was, again someone with some kind of Jewish connection.

[7 : 49] You've got Lydia as well. Even the Ethiopian eunuch as well. I know he's Ethiopian, but he had connections with the Jewish faith. So a lot of these people had some kind of connections with the Jewish faith.

And that meant that when people came with the gospel to these people with a Jewish background, they would make use of their background. That makes sense.

You make use of what someone knows when you're sharing the gospel with them. And when Paul and the others, Peter and the others would address these people from a Jewish background, they would use the Old Testament.

So for example, there'd be lots of Old Testament quotes in their sermons. They would make use of terms like Messiah and things like that. And that's the kind of evangelism, I think, that we are probably historically anyway, that we're familiar with.

We perhaps naturally, we gravitate to sharing the gospel with people who have some kind of a background. Some kind of a background, a Christian background, I mean, whether it's maybe they've been to Sunday school or maybe they've got some kind of loose church connection as well.

[9 : 04] And without a doubt, humanly speaking, on the purely human level, it's much easier to speak to people and to share the gospel with people when they have some kind of understanding of what you're talking about.

Because you're speaking the same language. You know, when you say words like sin, or if you say words like salvation, or if you say words like soul, people who have a background in these things are going to understand what you're saying.

Whether it's people who have no background at all, they might hear some of these terms and they might not know at all what it is that you're talking about. And the reality is that we're surrounded more and more by people who are very much disconnected to the church.

People who perhaps might hear these words and not understand at all what these things actually mean. But we're reminded here in Acts 17 that the gospel, it's not just a gospel for people with some kind of a biblical background.

You know, like I say, maybe I've been wrongly thinking that in the past, aiming at people with a particular kind of background. But the gospel is not for a people who just have some kind of a biblical background.

[10 : 18] The gospel is a gospel for all people. And that's exactly what you see here with Paul and the Athenian philosophers here. And I think we can learn a lot from Paul here. I think we can learn a lot in his approach and how he actually preaches the gospel.

Because he's preaching, maybe not to the same kind of people that we've seen up to this point in Acts. People who don't have that background, who don't have that knowledge. And I think in our day, we can apply some of this ourselves.

The gospel never changes. And we never compromise the gospel. That's true. But the way in which we communicate, it will change depending on who it is we're communicating it to. Understanding the culture, understanding the day that we're in so that we're able to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that others can grasp.

And that's exactly what Paul does here. So what I want to do this evening, very simply, I want to look at two things. Two points. So first of all, Paul in Athens. So we'll look at Paul walking around Athens.

And then secondly, Paul in the Areopagus. So just walking around Athens, first of all, then specifically his sermon in the Areopagus itself. So first of all, let's look at him in this great city of Athens.

[11 : 32] And Athens was a well-known city. It's still a well-known city now. And it was a city of culture back in this particular day.

And it was home to some of the greatest philosophers and some of the greatest thinkers that the world really has ever known. Maybe by the New Testament time here, maybe it wasn't quite as prominent as it had been a few hundred years before then.

But it was still a real city of culture. It was a real city of learning. And when Paul was young, he would have heard about Athens. He would have heard stories about Athens and heard about the sites of Athens.

And no doubt when he was younger, he would have loved to have gone there. You know, similar to like ourselves with London. You know, when you're growing up and you hear about London. You hear about the sites of London and the history in London.

And, you know, it gives you the sense of, you know, wanting to visit this place and see all these sites and to witness all of these things. Well, that's exactly what Paul would have been like here.

[12 : 35] He would have had some kind of excitement to go to Athens. And here he is and he's there. He's in Athens. And not just the fact that he's in Athens. He's got time on his hands. He's got free time.

We read there in verse 16 that Paul was, he was waiting for Timothy and Silas. So he was actually waiting. So Paul is there in the city of culture.

Time off. You would think maybe he would take, he would take a bit of time just to do some sightseeing. This great city, Athens. I'm finally here. You know, take the time off and I'm waiting for the other two to come.

And I'll just kind of see the sites and just to take a bit of time off. Now, that's how, that's maybe how we might respond. But that's not what Paul does. He's walking around and he's in utter disgust and he's horrified when he walks around and when he sees the place.

And he sees the city and it's absolutely covered in idols. Completely covered. So in verse 16, we read there that the city was full of idols. You can't get over it.

[13 : 39] The city is a mass with idols. All of these different idols, all of these different kinds of idols. And in verse 16, you see, you see Paul, he's provoked, provoked to anger.

He's provoked to anger when he sees all this. And when you read the language there in verse 16, it's actually similar language to when God himself was provoked to anger.

Remember when the Israelites produced the golden calf at Sinai? The Lord was provoked to anger there. And here we see Paul, jealous. Jealous for the glory of the Lord himself.

And it hurts him. As it should hurt us as well. It hurts him. And it angers him as well. As he sees this glory going to idols. The glory that ought to be going to the Lord.

And they're giving this glory to these idols here. Now, as usual, Paul, he had this practice. You'll notice this when you're reading through Acts.

[14 : 42] He had a practice of, first of all, going to the Jews. That was always his practice. If there was a synagogue in the place, he'd go there first of all. Go to the Jews. And then to the Gentiles. That's what he does here.

He goes to the Jews, first of all. And then he starts to visit the marketplace. And he goes to the marketplace and he's telling people about the resurrected Christ. He's telling people about salvation.

He's telling people that salvation is to be found in no other place but in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And that must have been a tough crowd to witness to.

When you think about it, you know, the marketplace in Athens. You imagine, well, sometimes you see street preachers in our own towns and cities preaching and perhaps they get a hard time.

And here, there would have been a lot of heckling. In fact, we see some heckling in a moment. We'll look at that. And there's busyness around this marketplace atmosphere. But Paul goes in there.

[15 : 42] He goes in there and he boldly proclaims the word of God. In a culture that is really so alien to Paul.

This is very different to many of the other cultures that he found himself. And I think when we look at it like that, we realize how relevant this is to us today.

Because if we were to walk around the cultural map of our own nation and the cultural map even of the whole western world, we would have to say how alien it is.

How alien it is today to what our forefathers knew. How alien it is to the Christian heritage and the Christian backbone of our nation.

The Christian faith was at the very center of the life of our nation not that long ago. And now culturally things have massively changed. I hope that the events of this last week or so in light of the Queen's passing and the number of church services and even hearing the vows of the king as well.

[16 : 53] He took vows to maintain and to preserve the Protestant religion here in Scotland to protect the Presbyterian church government and worship and all of these things.

And you were hearing some of these words and you were amazed really to hear vows like that being taken and for millions of people to witness, to see. And you wonder what people thought about that.

You wonder what our culture, because our culture is so far removed from that now. What they thought looking on and seeing how these important Christian truths were actually at the very bedrock of our society.

Something that largely culture has forgotten. Our culture, specifically in our nation here in Scotland but also throughout the UK, were losing sight of that Christian heritage.

And we find ourselves instead, like Paul here, surrounded by idols. So losing sight of our heritage, a new kind of culture surrounded by idols on every side.

[17 : 54] And the idols that we see, they're not like those idols of gold and silver and stone. They're different kind of idols. They take a different form. You know, idols like wealth and pleasure and appearance and even ideologies.

People make idols out of ideologies as well. There's so many different kinds of ideologies like that. And people turn to these things, whatever they might be or whoever they might be, and they try and find pleasure.

They try and find peace and happiness in these things. But of course, they don't find it there. And you'll never find that there. You might look for peace and fulfillment in these things.

And you might grapple searching for that peace and fulfillment. But you never do. Because what people need is the gospel. That's what we all need. We need the gospel.

We need Christ. Not as a bolt-on to myriads of other idols that we have in our lives. But as the sole source of life and strength. The sole object object of our worship.

[18 : 59] And saying things like that, you say that to a lot of people. Maybe like the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers here in verse 18. Maybe many today would turn around to you and say, what does this babbling want to say?

You know, a lot of people hear us say things like this about needing Jesus and they think this is nonsense. Because they think, well, the world is dangling all these idols before me.

And I see all these idols through media, through social media, through just the world in general. All these things are offered to me. What makes you think I need Jesus? What makes you think I need the Lord Jesus Christ yet alone for him to be the sole object?

You're telling me I don't just need Christ but I need him as the sole object of my faith and of my worship. And Paul is saying, yeah, that's exactly what you need.

Not all these idols, not these myriads of idols, it's Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what you need. And that's what Paul's going to address in a moment in the Areopagus.

[20 : 07] Now, just a, I just want to touch on the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers I mentioned that what they believe is similar to what we believe.

And the Epicureans, they believed that the world came about by chance. That the world just came about by some random movement of atoms.

That's what they believed. And they didn't believe in a judgment to come. So they had this kind of world view of, you know what, just live for today. Live for today. Enjoy the pleasure of life and indulge in the pleasures of life because there's no judgment to come and we might as well just enjoy things anyway.

And when you think about that, you know, people might not understand the word Epicurean, but, I mean, that's the kind of philosophy that we have in our Western world or many people do.

They believe that we're just to, no judgment, just live for the day, live for pleasure and these things. So, you know, there's nothing new under the sun. We think that's a new culture. It's not. It's that kind of mindset has always been there.

[21 : 12] Now, the Stoics were a wee bit different. They were more sort of pantheistic. So, they had pantheistic, lots of gods. They had a pantheistic world view and they were quite fatalistic as well and they had this kind of idea of living in harmony with nature and reason, that kind of thing.

And again, you know, that's something you hear today as well. I know there's, in one sense, we have to battle with atheism, but, you know, actually, see, when you speak to people, a lot of people, they're more pantheistic.

Again, they might not realise that that's what they are, but a lot of people are. They have this idea of spirituality and being at one with nature. Even in Harris, I meet people and they tell me their church is the beach or the croft and they're at one with nature and all this kind of spiritual conversation.

There's a lot of that. There's a lot of that around. It's not just the kind of the atheist mindset. There's a lot who have this kind of pantheistic kind of world view that the Stoics themselves had. And these philosophers, they're mocking Paul here they're calling him a babbler.

What do you have to say, you babbler? But interestingly, at the same time, this is quite ironic, they're actually interested to hear what he says. So they're making fun of him, mocking him, oh, what nonsense are you talking about?

[22 : 28] But then they actually invite him to the Areopagus. That's interesting. And sometimes, you know, we were speaking about this earlier on today, sometimes you notice that kind of thing.

You might be sharing the gospel with someone and they're against it. And sometimes they can be aggressively against the gospel and show it visibly. And yet, they want to hear more about it.

Some people, they still want to hear more. I remember being like that myself, to be honest, at one point. I would, if you evangelised me, I would have, I would have gone at you.

But at the same time, deep down, I was interested. I was interested in the gospel. The last thing I want to do was to show that. And here, you've got these people, they're mocking the babbling of Paul, but they want to hear more.

They actually want to hear. And they want to bring him to the Areopagus. And they want Paul to deliver a sermon there at the Areopagus. And the Areopagus, that was where the Athenian council met.

[23 : 29] And they met there and they delivered judgments there. But here, when they bring Paul, this isn't really the kind of court proceedings. This isn't them sort of trying Paul for heresy or anything like that.

This is more a kind of a, I suppose, akin to a public inquiry. They want to hear and to assess this man's new teaching or supposed new teaching.

And we see from verse 21 there that the Athenians, they love to spend their time either to tell or to hear some new thing. They love that, hearing the latest things.

I suppose it's kind of like the ancient world equivalent of the internet and going on to social media and hearing the latest thing and hearing new ideas.

Well, if you wanted to hear the latest thing in this culture, you'd go to the Areopagus. You'd go to the Areopagus and hear what's been said there. And that takes us round to the Areopagus itself.

[24 : 28] And that's the second point that I want to look at this evening. Paul addressing or preaching there in the Areopagus. And the sermon there is amazing, really.

Very different to a lot of the other sermons that he's preached. And he begins his sermon there by drawing attention to their idols. He goes straight for it.

Straight for the idols. And he tells them, I've been walking through your streets and I've seen how religious you are. You are very religious. So religious that you have all of these idols.

And not only do you have all of these idols, you've even got an altar here with an inscription on it saying, To the unknown God. In case they missed one. To make sure they didn't miss one out.

They had this altar with this inscription here, To the unknown God. Now to us, that's laughable, really. You know, that's ridiculous in many ways.

[25 : 25] An altar to the unknown God just to cover themselves. To make sure that they've covered all the idols. And Paul says to them here, You're religious, yes, but you're religious to the point of being ridiculous.

And Paul tells them, and he's got a boldness. Imagine saying that in the Areopagus. He's got a boldness here. And he tells them here that they might worship an unknown God, yes. But I'm going to preach to you a God who can be known.

And a God who absolutely reveals himself. And when you look at the sermon there, notice he doesn't jump to Messiah. He doesn't jump to the cross. He doesn't jump straight away to the resurrection.

Like he might do when he was preaching to other groups, especially when he was preaching to the Jewish people. He doesn't do that. What he does here, in a relatively short space, he begins to build up for them a comprehensive theology of God.

And he begins at the beginning. It's a sensible place to begin with. He begins at the beginning. He begins with creation. And he says there in verse 24, he says, I proclaim to you the God who made the world and everything in it.

[26 : 39] That's point number one in this sermon. You know, if Paul was going to have headings in his sermon, that would be his first one. God is the creator of the world. That's what he says to them here.

And people need to understand that. You see, people need to understand the bigger picture. Because if you go to people and if you tell them about Jesus, then for a lot of people, an increasing number of people, actually, in our culture, they'll hear about Jesus and they'll think to themselves, well, that's all good and well, but what does Jesus actually have to do with me?

What link do I have with this Jesus? They don't understand that. They're not going to sort of join the dots back to creation and understand that they've been created by this Lord.

They're not going to understand that. We have to tell them. And we begin with explaining the fact that God is the God of all creation. They need a whole new worldview. Their worldview is so warped that they've lost sight of all of that.

And they need to understand why Jesus or God has got anything to do with them at all. That's what Paul does here. He tells them, God's the creator of everything.

[27 : 50] Not just Israel or this part or that part or the sea. Everything. God is the creator of all things. Point number one. Point number two, he says, God is the sustainer of all things.

So in verse 25, he says, Nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

So he's telling them, the God who created the world, he didn't just create the world and then sort of run off and let it sort of just manage itself.

He didn't create the world and then disappear and hand it over to some kind of mini gods who were going to come and going to look after the world. No, not at all.

No, God is a sustainer. Sustainer. He sustains everything in this world. Everything you have is from him. Whether we realize it or not. And as Paul is speaking to the Areopagus, he's saying, whether you realize it or not, everything you have is from him.

[28 : 51] The very beating of your heart tonight, the very breath in your lungs, all, all of that is because it's sustained by the Lord himself. And when Paul is building up this kind of theological, a whole theological picture of God, very quickly, they would realize that God isn't just someone we can ignore.

This Jesus isn't someone that we can ignore. And actually, he's saying to them, you rely on him. And you rely on him much more than you actually realize.

So, point one, God's a creator. Point two, God is a sustainer. Point three in a sermon, all mankind comes from one man.

See that in verse 26. He says, we have been made from one man. So, everyone comes from the same ultimate source, the same original bloodline.

And what he's saying there is, you know, we don't belong to a whole host of different gods based on where we're from or what our language is or where we were brought up, what part of the world we're from.

[30 : 02] He's saying, no, that's not how it is at all. We're all one family. It doesn't matter where in the world we are one family under one God. We are all from one man ultimately all created by the Lord.

And then, off the back of those three points, he gives us fourth point here and this is an important one. God gives us a purpose in life. You see that in verse 27.

The Lord does everything he has done for us. Why? So that we will seek him. That's a purpose we have. We've been made by him. We have a purpose to seek him.

That means everyone, everyone in this world has that purpose. All of us. We have that purpose to seek the Lord, that purpose to glorify him, that purpose to enjoy him forever.

So, what Paul is doing here, he's telling these people, building up this kind of picture, this theological picture about the God who created all things, the God who sustains all things, and he's telling them here that you have a purpose.

[31 : 08] You've got a reason for living, a purpose in life, a purpose given by the creator himself, but there's a problem. And the problem is we can't actually fulfill that purpose.

So we have this purpose, we've been born for a reason, but the issue is we can't actually do it. We can't seek God. We can't go out and find him because we are at enmity with him because we're sinners.

We are fallen sinners and that means we are by nature opposed to God. And see, the thing is, see when you add those two things together, you think about it. So we've been made with this purpose to worship, this purpose to seek God, but we can't seek him.

So what do we do? We end up, and because of this inbuilt purpose to worship, we end up searching out other things and we end up laying hold of all different kinds of idols to fulfill this God-shaped void that we have in our lives.

And by doing that, it's like we're groping about in the dark. That's what Paul is saying here. He's saying, it's like you're groping about in the dark. Sin blinds us, it blinds us, but we have this purpose to worship, so we just go about and we just lay hold of whatever we can and we end up laying hold of all host of different kinds of idols.

[32 : 27] And he's saying, that's exactly what you have done. And he says there, God is not far from you. He's not far from you. They're blind because of sin, but God is not far from you, he says.

And to prove that, Paul, he does something interesting here. He doesn't quote the Bible. He doesn't quote the Old Testament. He actually quotes people that these philosophers know.

He quotes their own poets, which is quite amazing really. Their poets, they say this, for in him we live and move and have our being.

As some of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring. That's quite something. Paul there, he's using the people's own poets to highlight theological truth.

And you see the wisdom of Paul there. He's engaging with that culture. He knows what they're thinking. And he uses what these people know and what these people read to actually highlight gospel truth and the theology of God himself.

[33 : 33] We are the offspring of God, he's saying. Your own poets say that. The people you read, they say that. We are the offspring of God, but you're ignoring him, he's saying. You're ignoring the Lord, you are ignorant of him.

And then he comes to that fifth and final point there in his sermon, an important one as well. He says, God is merciful. And you see that in verse 30.

You're seeing God in his mercy, he's going to overlook those times of former ignorance if they would repent of their sins.

Repentance. And he tells them, a time is coming when God's going to judge the world. A judge is going to come and who's it going to be that he'll send? The man he has appointed.

And notice he doesn't even mention Jesus' name. But it is Jesus. Because he says that this is the one who was raised from the dead. Doesn't even mention Jesus' name, but this is Jesus he's preaching.

[34 : 33] He's preaching Jesus to them. They need to repent. Yes, you're sinners. Yes, you're blind because of your sin. You're trying to lay hold of all different kinds of idols. But come to the Lord.

He is merciful. Repent. Repent. And he will forgive. And that brings to a conclusion that sermon, an intriguing sermon as well.

And a sermon that's very much tailored to his audience. He takes them back to Genesis. He shows them there's a creator. He shows them the link between themselves and their creator.

That we're all from one man. And he shows them that they have a purpose. A purpose in life. A purpose to seek God. A purpose to glorify him.

And even though they failed because everyone does, Paul says, but God is merciful. God is merciful and he calls them here to repent.

[35 : 32] Paul's presenting the gospel to them and he's not presenting the gospel to them as just another bolt on to all their other idols. That's what a lot of others were doing when they were preaching different false theologies.

A kind of theological message that was just bolted on to their other idols. That's not what Paul is doing here at all. This is a whole new world view he's given them. One that leaves no room for all these idols.

All these idols that they've built their lives on. This new world view that Paul is giving them here. It's one that leaves no room for that. This is one that ultimately leads to them fulfilling that purpose for which they were made.

Where the blindfold is taken off. Where the Lord enables them to see. And where they're finally able to live for the very reason for which they were made to glorify.

To seek the Lord and to enjoy him forever. And how do they respond to that sermon? Well we read here that some of them responded by mocking.

[36 : 37] We're not surprised by that are we? Maybe we experience that kind of response ourselves sometimes when we share the message of Jesus. And to some people this is laughable.

The idea of Jesus being a saviour. The idea of the resurrection. To many people today this is laughable. And that's exactly what many of these people were saying back then.

And others we read others are saying we'll hear you again on this. We'll hear you again on this matter. The procrastinators. And again we've got them as well. Maybe we used to do that ourselves.

I'm interested but I'll hear about this another time. And again you get that response as well. In many churches as well. Procrastinators. People who are putting it off.

And that's a solemn response because the response of a procrastinator as good as it sounds in one way. Because you feel you're not rejecting it out. It is a rejection.

[37 : 36] To procrastinate is a rejection. And who knows how many of those who have procrastinated about these things will enter into a lost eternity. It's a solemn thing to procrastinate over these matters.

But that's what some people are doing here. We'll hear you again. Who knows if that other time ever came. Who knows if that other opportunity ever came. But others in verse 34 believed.

Others believed. Granted not many are mentioned there but there's a few names there and these are people no matter how few they were these are people who turned from their idols in Athens.

And they turned from their idols and they turned to the Lord. They repented. Their whole world view transformed and they're now able to live for the very purpose for which they were made.

They've been grasping for this all their lives and failing to do so with all these idols. Now that the Lord has worked in their hearts they're able to do just that. Able to live and to fulfill that purpose for which they were made.

[38 : 42] And that's true for us as well. We all have a purpose in life and a purpose that is far greater than we can even begin to fully grasp. And when the Lord opens our eyes we're able to do that.

We're able to live for him. And as we do and as we come away from this weekend having had the Lord's Supper earlier on today. My prayer is for you that you will take these encouragements and these blessings and that like Paul that we would all have that boldness and that zeal to make Jesus known.

Even if we are mocked. Paul was mocked. Even if we do hear much rejection. still some may believe. And that's our call.

To go out with this gospel message no matter what the response. No matter what kind of hearts are before us. Again I was talking about this earlier when you're scattering the seed.

Sometimes we are in danger of trying to assess people's hearts. To say oh I think that's a hard ground. I think that's a thorny ground. I think that might be the good ground. I'll aim the seed there. That's not what we're called to do.

[39 : 50] We're not called to make any judgment on anyone's heart. We're just called to scatter the seed. We scatter it everywhere. We scatter it indiscriminately. And we leave the rest up to the Lord.

Because the one that we think might be a hard heart. That might be the very one that the Lord might work in. And might bring forth life itself. You see that with Saul. Saul of Sarsus himself. May we be encouraged.

And may we seek to go out and to make Christ known ourselves by scattering that seed. Amen. May the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let's bow our heads and come before him in prayer.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.