

Acts Ch. 17 (DDC) – February 22, 2009

- In Chapter 1 of Acts the resurrected Jesus is talking to the disciples.
- And he tells them... “The Holy Spirit is going to come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem... then in Judea and Samaria... and then unto the ends of the earth.”
- As we’ve talked about... Acts follows that outline.
 - Ch. 1-7 – the spread of the Gospel centralized around Jerusalem
 - Ch. 8-12 – the spread of the gospel has moved beyond Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria
 - And then with the commissioning of Paul to take the Gospel to the gentiles...
 - Ch. 13-28 – cover the beginning of the spread of the gospel to ends of the earth

(pause)

- Last week Kevin covered Chapter 16, tonight we will be covering Chapter 17.
- So we are in part 3 of that outline - the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth

(pause)

- In Chapter 16 Paul begins his 2nd of 3 missionary journeys.
- And on this journey Paul makes it all the way up into Europe.
- Well we leave off at the end of Acts Ch.16 with Paul... leaving the city of Philippi
- And he begins making a 100 mile trek from Philippi to Thessalonica

(pause)

- On that journey Paul passes through two city Amphipolis and Apollonia
- Which were kind of hick towns
- Nothing is recorded.. he just passed right through them on his way to Thessalonica.

(pause)

- The Apostle Paul had a very distinct missional strategy.
- Paul’s strategy was... if we can impact and affect the major population centers they will in due time send out their own “native” missionary’s into the more remote areas
- He wanted to go to for the juggler (if you will)
- So we see... Paul follows this philosophy here and he passes through those area’s quickly... and nothing is recorded.

(pause)

- So... we begin in Verse 1 with Paul on his journey to Thessalonica:

Act 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

Act 17:3 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."

- So Paul makes his way to Thessalonica.
 - Which was the capitol of Massadonia -- a major City of the time.
 - And it says “as was Paul’s custom” he heads straight for the synagogue.
 - We see this time and again with Paul.
 - Whenever he would get to a major metro area the first thing he would do is head for a synagogue
- (pause)

- And when Paul would enter those places it was obvious he was a Rabbi
 - From the way he carried himself, to the style of speech he used... it was clear he was a learned scholar.
 - So the leader of the synagogue (as was the custom of those days) would turn over a part of the meeting time for that Sabbath day to a visiting rabbi of Paul’s stature
- (pause)

- And so Paul goes to Thessalonica goes into their synagogue and it says he begins to reason with them... out of the scriptures...
 - I like that.
 - It doesn’t say he just start telling them how it is... and what they should do.
 - But rather he opens the word to them and begins reasoning with them.
 - And he begins pointing that it was necessary for the Jewish Messiah to have suffered, died and to have risen.
- (pause)

- Now when we read that... it’s important to understand the mind set of the people that Paul is talking to.
 - The devout Jews at that time new there were passages like Isaiah 53 (and Psalms 22, Zechariah 12) which graphically talk about the Messiah suffering horribly and dying
 - Being despised rejected of men
 - Beaten
 - Suffering brutally
- (pause)

- But the scriptures are also filled with prophesies about the messiah sitting on the throne ruling with a rod of iron.
 - And this was a difficult thing for the Jewish theologian
 - How could this be?
- (pause)

- Well the Rabbinical scalars of that time... concluded there must be two messiah’s
 - That’s the only explanation they could come up with.
- (pause)

- So for the prophecies referring to the messiah as the ruling king... that separate messiah was called:
- Messiah ben David... Messiah son of David
- David was Israel's strongest greatest king
- So... Messiah Ben David.

(pause)

- And then for the prophecies referring to this suffering servant... they had a separate name
- Messiah ben Joseph
- Joseph (if you recall) suffered wrongly at the hands of his brothers in the old testament

(pause)

- So they had two Messiah's
 - Messiah ben David – the ruling king
 - Messiah ben Joseph – the suffering servant

(pause)

- That was how they could reconcile these prophecies in the scriptures
- How the Messiah is described as both ruling and also suffering

(pause)

- You can just see Paul setting up the situation.
- Points out both sets of prophecies
- And then.... Reasons with them... on how these are both fulfilled in one person
- Jesus Christ

(pause)

- He came as the suffering servant... but after 3 days he rose again from the dead to rule and reign forever

(pause)

- What a bible study that would have been to listen to Paul over those 3 weeks.
- Explaining carefully detail how all the prophecies of the messiah dovetail into the person of Jesus

(pasue)

- And... it's also interesting how when we look at Jesus
- He was the son of David in that his lineage was through David as the Gospel of Matthew points out.
- But he was also the adopted son of Joseph
- Messiah ben David... Messiah ben Joseph
- Ironically both of their terms were fulfilled in Jesus Christ

(pause)

Story about the more I study the Bible the more amazed I am at how every thing is linked to Jesus.

- As you start to look at Jesus as the center of all things biblical...
- all the prophecy, all the rituals, all the sacrifices... they begin to make sense.
- They become real and purposeful and rich... in helping us understand who Jesus is and what he's done for us.

(pause)

- In Luke chapter 24...after Jesus had been crucified
- The disciples who are walking on the road to Emmaus ... on that first Easter Sunday
- A stranger comes up and walks beside them
- They didn't understand or recognize that it was Jesus

(pause)

- And this stranger begins to talk to them....
- And it says this stranger (who is Jesus) began explaining to them...
- And in verse 27...

Luk 24:27 ...beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

- You see that...
- And then it goes on to say.... In verse 31....

Luk 24:31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

Luk 24:32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

- I like that picture... their hearts burned within them...
- The whole thing made sense to them
- It all came together biblically.... When Jesus... opened the scriptures as it related to himself

(pause)

- So what am I getting at here?
- I think there is something we need to learn from Jesus' example
- And from Paul example in here in chapter 17 of Acts.

(pause)

- As we share the word with people...
- If you're leading devotions...
- If you're sharing the word with your kids... or neighbor... or co worker

(pause)

- THE KEY to opening the scriptures
- The key to having the Bible make sense.... is always looking for.. and talking about.. and focusing in on... the person of Jesus Christ
- It's NOT A PHILOSOPHY... It's PERSON
(pause)
- And that's what Paul does here
- Paul opens the scriptures and reasons (not generally or philosophically)
- Rather he reasons with them from the scriptures... concerning Jesus

And the result it says in Verse 4 was:

Act 17:4 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.

- So after hearing Paul teaching those 3 weeks... reasoning with them out of the scriptures
- You can picture people starting to get it
- And it doesn't say it was because of Paul's excellency of speech... or his intellect
(pause)
- Paul... just opened the word and explained to the people how the scriptures related to the person of Jesus Christ
- That's going to be our theme for tonight.

And it says they began to believe...

Act 17:5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob...

- So these Jews in Thesolonica become Jealous.
- And it says they went grabbed rough characters...
- Basically went down to the local bar and grabbed a bunch of the rough guys..
- KJV calls them "Lewd fellows of the baser sort"
(pause)
- They it says... this mob:

Act 17:5 ... set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason *[presumably where Paul and Silas are staying]*, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

Act 17:6 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,

Act 17:7 and Jason has received them...

- Now this is not the first time this has happened to Paul and Silas have incited an angry mob
- Same thing happened in
 - Pisidian Antioch
 - Iconium
 - Lystry
- So this has happened before... and it's happening again.

(pause)

- And this mob takes Paul and Silas to the authorities and accuses them of turning the world upside
- Which if you think about it... in this world... that is the charge a Christian wants brought on them.
- This world needs to be turned upside down.

(pause)

EXAMPLE ABOUT WORLD BEING UP SIDE DOWN. –story about TV show I saw on plastic surgery

- So they accuse Paul and Silas of turning the world upside down...
- They accuse Jason of receiving Paul and Silas
- And then in there Jealousy they bring even further accusation against them

They go on to say in Verse 7 and say on top of turning the world upside down...

Act 17:7 ... they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

Act 17:8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

- Their final charge against Paul and Silas is... "they are going around saying there is another king!!"
- They are claiming that Jesus is king.
- It was against the law to say that anyone was king but Caesar.

(pause)

- Church historians tell us 6 million Christians were killed in those first 2.5 centuries... because they would not say... Caesar is lord...
- Rather they would say Jesus is lord... and it cost them their lives..

Think about that....

Verse 9 goes on:

Act 17:9 And when they **[the town authorities]** had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

- So the Mob is making these accusations...the town officials are disturbed...
- Evidently a deal went down.
- Jason and the rest gave basically a bond
- In other words... give us a set amount of money... and we will allow them to go free.
(pause)
- Now it says Jason and the rest paid the money.

I'm not convinced that was the wisest thing... but I understand his heart

- Well it goes on to say:

Act 17:10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea [**which was about 30 miles away**], and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

- First thing they do is head for the synagogue...
- Personally I would get tired of this
- But Paul... he keeps going back to the synagogues in each town

Act 17:11 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.

- So after fleeing Thessalonica... Paul is in the synagogue in Berea... teaching them.
- And it says they received the word with all eagerness.
- But more than that... they examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.
(pause)
- You wanted to be noble... be a Berean.
- Examine the scriptures...

Discussion regarding how I'm amazed how blindly people believe things...

- The Bereans were more noble because they didn't just take Paul's word for it.
- They searched the scriptures to see if what he was saying was true.

Verse 12... :

Act 17:12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

- Lots of them believed.
- That is the power in the scriptures... that's where it is... not in dialog.
- If only people would read their bible's daily... I wonder how many of our problems would be solved...

(pause)

Rom 10:17 ... faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God.

- Not by encounter sessions... or therapy
- But by people who are in the Word... daily... intelligently
- It affects our life... it affects our mind...
- Those of you that know me... know that I think the most important thing you can do daily is read the word and pray.

(pause)

Story about how my days are just better....

Well as the word of God spreads in Berea... it says in verse 13:

Act 17:13 ...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.

Act 17:14 Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

- So the Jews from Thessalonica come to Berea... stirring up trouble...
- So they send Paul off... and it says...

Act 17:15 Those who conducted [**or escorted**] 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.

- So these men take Paul to Athens.
- And then Paul tells them to bring Silas and Timothy to him as soon as possible.
- After he tells them this... they depart back to Berea... Paul is left in Athens alone.

(pause)

- Now Athens was really the intellectual capitol of all of history.
- It was the city of Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Euripides.
- It was philosophically astute it was educationally oriented

(pause)

- The Architecture in city (even to this day) is overwhelming
- The Parthenon... one of the many impressive structures in the City... is incredibly sophisticated
- The roof was actually designed and construed concave so the roof lines appear straight from a given vantage point
- Columns slightly tilted and spaced differentially so they look straight from a given distance
- It's brilliantly done.

- To this day it is an architectural and mathematical marvel
(pause)

- Athens was a place of great culture and sophistication!!
- And most scholars believe Paul had not been to Athens before.
- When I was preparing for tonight... I stopped and just imagined what it would be like to be in that great city.... Alone.
- It had to have been a bit intimidating.
(pause)

- But Paul's response as he walks through the streets of Athens is interesting:
- It says in verse 16:

Act 17:16 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.

- King James says:

Act 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

- As he was waiting for Timothy and Silas (vs.15)
- His spirit is stirred... or broken... when he see this city wholly given to idolatry
- This is interesting...
(pause)

- Here was this intellectual center.... this philosophical capitol
- And he looks around... walks through the streets
- And he sees... every one here is into idolatry
(pause)

- Historians say at this time there were over 3000 alters, or idols, or temples built to different gods.
- So basically every where you looked there was some idol or temple dedicated to some god.
- In fact... The Greek historian Pausanias says that there were more idols in Athens than in all the rest of Greece combined.
(pause)

- And as Paul looks around.... it says his heart was broken...
- Lets consider this for a second.
(pause)

- We are all worshipers.
- Its one of the things that makes us different than the animals

- And here we have this great intellectual society... concluding... Man has a need to worship.

- Man is made to worship!!
- And they had over 3,000 idols.

(pause)

- And Paul looks around... and his heart breaks!!
- Because he can see what these people are worshiping.

(pause)

- For example... as he looks up on the Areopagus he sees a temple dedicated to the goddess of Aphrodite...
- And as the prostitutes come out of that temple every night... and he sees men coming to worship at that temple.
- He could see men coming to satisfy their sexual lusts.
- That is why they came to worship Aphrodite.

(pause)

- And for the people in that day who were into drinking... they would worship at the temple of Baccus.
- And they would have their drunken parties.
- They would satisfy their lust to drink... by worshiping Baccas

(pause)

- Or if you were into savagery you might justify your savagery by worshiping at the temple of Zeus.
- And people would worship at one temple one day and another the next.
- Sleeping with a prostitute at the temple of Aphrodite one night... and having a drunken party at temple of Baccas another.

(pause)

- And Paul could see... whether it is worshiping Aphrodite... or Zeus or Baccas... or others.
- Really what it came down to is each one of these gods represented a philosophy of life.

(pause)

- And I was thinking about this... we still do this today!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- It easy to image these people in this ancient culture as so much less intelligent than us.
- We would never worship an idol.
- Wrong.

(pause)

- When you see someone with rearview mirror Playboy bunny

- You know they are not into animal husbandry
- That bunny stands for something!!

(pause)

- It stands for a Philosophy
- A justification of what's ok
- A glorification of what's important
- Right?... it's an idol

(pause)

- And so each of these idols represented a Philosophy... a lifestyle...
- And there was every kind imaginable ... 3000
- I could build my own god my own temple to justify what I want to do... and fulfilling that need in me to be worshiping!!

(pause)

- But in reality it was just a justification of sin
- Their worshiping demons as Paul later concludes in 1 Corinthians
- And Paul's heart was broken

(pause)

- As I was considering this the question kept popping into my head...
- What happens to my heart with you have to pass through say... Las Vegas... or even down town Spokane...
- Does my heart break?

(long pause)

- So Paul's heart breaks when he sees these idols.
- But what does Paul do now?
- Does he mobilized people politically... to get these idols removed?
- Does he assemble a protest?

(pause)

- In light of his heart being stirred... it says in vs 17:

Act 17:17 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.

Act 17:18a Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. ...

- So... what did Paul do?
- He talked to them.
- He reasoned with them.
- Our Goal (as Paul shows here) is not to crusade against the idols
- But to introduce people to Jesus

(pause)

- And as Paul is talking to the people of Athens it says:
- Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers came and began talking with him.
- So he must have been making enough of an impact that proponents of two highly prevalent philosophy's of the day came up and began conversing with him.
 - The Epicurean Philosophers
 - The Stoic Philosophers

(pause)

- These were two big philosophies of the time...
- And two philosophies which are popular even today... although under different name.

(pause)

- The epicureans (on one hand) basically pursued pleasure as the chief purpose in life.
- They valued most of all the pleasure of a peaceful simple life.
- It's kind of the transcendental out look... the more possessions we have the more complex our lives become the we have to worry about taking care of them
- They rejected worry... pain... fear... superstition... etc.
- Pleasure ... that was the key to the epicurean philosophy

(pause)

- The epicurean philosophy was really embodied in the Roman orgies of the time.
- Everything from perusing sexual pleasure to the extent
- To pursuing the pleasure of eating...

They would have huge feasts... and they would eat the first course...and the would go outside and vomit up...

- The stoics on the other hand... said the chief good was virtue (what we can become).
- But they believed a man cannot know virtue who is emotionally involved.
- Therefore, they believed you are to void your self of emotion, and they sought to become totally unfeeling.
- To not feel pain, not feel grief, not feel joy, not feel anything, to just be stoic about everything... Because that's the route to virtue... and knowledge

. (pause)

- As I was reading up on this... it's interesting the degrading of the Epicurean philosophy over time ended in pantheism, the worship of anything and everything.
- The degrading the stoic philosophy on the other had lead to the worship of nothing.... Atheism.
- Two views widely held today.

In fact if you look at society to day you can pretty much divide it between these two philosophies... you have the couch potato... and you have the aerobic over achiever...

- And these are the two philosophies that Paul encountered in Athens.
(pause)

- Well as Paul converses with these epicurean and stoic philosophers... they weren't really getting it.
- It explains in verse 18:

Act 17:18 some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" [The word babbler in Greek is seed picker or cotton picker.]

Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"--because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

- So Paul as he walks through the City... he is talking... conversing... reasoning with the Athenians about Jesus... and the resurrection.
- And some of them just aren't getting it.
- The stoics and the Epicureans didn't believe in the resurrection... which Paul was preaching... they believed in the here and the now.
- But he must have made a big enough impact because he says...

Act 17:19 ... they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

Act 17:20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

Act 17:21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

- So as Paul is walking through the streets of Athens telling them about Jesus...
- Some of them take hold of him and bring him to the Areopagus... to Mars Hill.
(pause)

- Now when you picture Athens think about it like this.
- Athens is really a City adjacent to a large hill (or small mountain if you will).
- There were kind of three notable sections of Athens at this time.
(pause)

- First you had the Agura.
- This was the main city and market area... located around the base of this large hill.
- This made up the majority of the city.
(pause)

- As you moved up this large hill... at top you had the Acropolis.
- The Acropolis overlooked the city.
- This is where the Parthenon and the main temples were located.
- And lastly you had the Areopagus (which is where they took Paul).
- The Areopagus was located between the Acropolis and the Agura about two thirds of the way up this hill.

- There was outcropping of rock known the stone of impudence... and this huge outcropping of rock was the Areopagus.

(pause)

- This is where men would go to espouse their philosophies and all their ideas.
- And the Grecians and Athenians would sit around in their robes (the Parthenon above them and the Agura below them) and they would philosophize and debate and discuss.
- From Plato to Aristotlie... this is where great minds and sat and discussed and debated...

(pause)

- And so picture this... Paul is sitting on this stone of impudence.
- He has the Gospel... what does he say to these people...?
- And you can kind of picture these men saying... "Ok... give your spiel."

(pause)

- Well beginning in verse 22 Paul begins preaching to the Athenians.
- And he beings this sermon that most people view as Paul's his most impressive and skilled sermon.
- It's studied in seminaries and Bible colleges
- Many view it as the perfect example of a culturally relevant sermon.

(pause)

- Paul begins by saying:

Act 17:22 ..."Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

Act 17:23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.'

- Now we talked about the fact that they had over 3,000 idols and objects of worship.
- And Paul begins his sermon... by saying I have observed that are very religious.
- And next Paul points specifically at one of their altars...
- An alter to 'The Unknown god'.

(pause)

- It interesting... two hundred years later a historian passed through Athens.
- And in his book documenting his journey he speaks of 3 of these giant altar to the unknown god.

(pause)

- There are several conjectures regarding who the unknown God is.
- Some speculate the Athenians were afraid of missing a god and in doing so offending that god.

- Others speculate that they wanted to make sure travels had a place to worship in case there wasn't a temple to their God.

(pause)

- So Paul says to them... in reference to the altar to the Unknown God...

Act 17:23 ... What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

- So Paul begins this sermon.... right where they are.
- "I've observed that you're very religious people. "
- "And I've passed by your altar to the unknown God...."
- And he goes on to say.... "What worship as unknown... this I proclaim to you."

(pause)

- And in verse 24 he explains:

Act 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

Act 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

- Paul starts by defining God.
 - When you said God to the Athenians... they would picture god (little g) lots of them
- (pause)

- He says the God I'm talking about made the world and everything in it.
 - He doesn't have locality that he dwells in temples made by your hands
 - He fills the universe.
 - He is vastly superior to the gods that you are worshipping,
- (pause)

- And then Paul says something interesting.
 - He says... whatever you can make with your hands... God doesn't need
 - You have nothing God needs. – *we need to remember this....*
 - He's the one that gave you life and breath and everything
- (pause)

- Remember as Paul says this... directly above him... looming over him on Mars' Hill is the Parthenon... that impressive temple to the Goddess Athena
- And below him in the Agora are numerous beautiful temples to various gods.
- And Paul is saying... God doesn't dwell in these temples.

We are all guilty of think God in terms of locality... from time to time...

- We all need to hear Paul's words.
- The vastness of God is something we can never understand.

- He fills the universe...
- (pause)

- Paul begins by defining God...
- Then he goes on to describe the beginning of mankind.

Act 17:26 And he made from one man [**referring to Adam**] every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Act 17:27a that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. ...

- The picture Paul is painting is that God created man...
- And God hopes that man would feel their way towards him and find him.
- And when he says feel their way towards Him...
- It's implied from the syntax of the Greek that its like someone who is feeling in the dark... trying to find their way.

(pause)

- Paul sets that picture up... then goes on...

Act 17:27b ... Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

- God's not far from any of us... even these idolatrous Athenens!!
- And to hammer that point home...he quotes two of their poets.

Act 17:28 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.'

- Paul... says... God's closer to you than you think.
- And quotes 2 separate Greek poets about 300-600 years prior.
- This is one of those sections where Paul is praised for being culturally relevant.

(pause)

Then he goes on...

Act 17:29 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.

- So he links back to what he was saying previously.
- God is not a creation of man.
- God is the creator of man and all things.

- Now there is kind of a shift in Paul's sermon.

Act 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

- Paul says... you've worshiped God ignorantly up to this point.
- But that's over now... God's calling people to repent.

Act 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed **[this is Paul's first reference to Jesus in his sermon]**; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

- He tells them...
 - You are called to repent.
 - There is a day coming when you will be judged.
 - But there is a provision... if you repent...
 - And the assurance you know this is true... is that God raised this man from the dead.

(pause)

- When ever Paul would talk about Jesus he would almost always reference the resurrection...
- Why do you suppose that is?

(pause)

- And Paul knew that is our sign.... That is our assurance that what we are saying is true.... we are not asked to blindly believe
- I would love to talk all night about the logical assurance we because of the resurrection.
- People wants signs... we have a sign.

(pause)

Story about people being comfortable talking about the morals in Christianity... but they become very uncomfortable when you tell them that I really believe Jesus was raised on the 3 day.

- It's tough because people have to make a decision whether to accept it or not.
- Well the Athenians had a hard time with it.
- And it 32 it appears they cut Paul's sermon short as people begin to mock...

Act 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

- So some mocked... and some procrastinated.
- These are the two common responses to hearing the Gospel.

(pause)

- Well.... it says in verse 33....

Act 17:33 So Paul went out from their midst.

- I was listening to Chuck Smith and he noted....

It's interesting where Paul was persecuted, thrown in jail, beat, etc.
He was ready to go right back there and continue preaching.
But to this noncommittal attitude of, "Well... interesting I'll think about it..."
Paul had no further words to say.
He wasn't going to cast the pearls before swine.
He would merely say "I've given you the message. I've borne witness; that's it."

- Verse 34 says:

Act 17:34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- So there were a few conversions.
- As church history goes... eventually there was a church established in Athens.
- But Paul established no real work in Athens on this visit.
(pause)
- I spent a lot of time thinking and reading regarding whether Paul's visit to Athens was a failure.
- There are people who make compelling points on each side.
(pause)
- It's interesting to me how much emphasis the Christian community puts on this sermon by Paul.
- And yet no real work was established.
- I thought about talking about that a bit... as I have some opinions of my own.
- But... I figured it would be a good place to begin the discussion.
(pause)
- From here Paul leaves Athens and travels about 50 miles to Corinth as we will read about in Ch. 18 next week.

Closing Prayer