

In Him We Live, Move, and Have Our Being

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If you will this morning, turn with me to our text. It's right where we ended 2018 when I was up here and that's where we'll begin in 2019 and that's in Acts 17:28a, I should say.

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being;

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father, how glorious thou art. We thank thee, Lord, that thou art so faithful, faithful to bring us to the end of sickness, faithful to bring that sickness, faithful to humble, faithful to be there every hour and, Lord, as you have ordained that you will never leave thy people. O Lord, may this hour now be an hour that you attend, attend with thy power that you would show us thy marvelous light, thy marvelous grace; that you would show us, Lord, what life is in this blessed union that we have in thee that you have ordained before the foundation of the world. O Lord, may we experience it this hour, may we feel it, and may we know, Lord, that thou art our Lord, that thou art the King of kings, that thou art the Savior of thy people, and that, Lord, you are life. For this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being." I could think of no better words to start the year out, to speak about the union that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to rest today in this passage. I want to speak about this time that the Lord led Paul to preach or to speak at Mars Hill. In this text we have today, we have some sober warnings, sober sober warnings, and then we also have a declaration of the sovereignty of God. I think it's good for the people of God every year because, you know, we're bound by time, we measure everything by time, we have calendars, we have watches, we have pages, we measure things by birthdays and monumental days in our lives and things, but our Lord is not measured by time in his sovereignty and I think that that's something that I pray that the Lord impresses upon us in this hour as we do measure everything in increments of when and how the Lord will do this or do that, but I hope what we see today in this passage is that no matter how we measure God, no matter how we look at him, no matter how we view the Son, that they are sovereign, they change not. It's not dependent on how we see the Lord that makes him who he is and that's quite a statement because we walk and we grope in the darkness of this life and we try to attain to a knowledge to learn more about the Lord and sometimes our knowledge mixes with the world's knowledge and we get a false idea of who God is and who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and without the depth of

grace and without the revelation of the mind of Christ, we'll be left there to explore the depth of our depravity, to make the Lord what the people here did, a superstition, something that's just religion. I pray the Lord saves us from that in this hour and also declares his sovereignty in our lives.

So we back up to verse 22 to start today and it says, "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, in Athens. He stood there and as he's contemplating and looking around, he said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." It's interesting, that word "superstitious" here used in the Bible, the Greek word translates "too religious." You're more religious. That's interesting to me. Paul is correcting or exhorting or pointing out the error of the way of man and in this error he said, "I perceive you're too religious, you're too superstitious."

Is there such a way to be too religious? I use that word "religion" to define as what we have in our society today, in our very lives today. I think sometimes it's easy to fall into a rut, a slumber, if you will. We come to Sunday and we think, "Well, this is the Lord's day, it's time to worship," and we'll go and we'll feel good at the end of the day. We're like we did something for the Lord and then maybe a couple of times during the week, or more even, we'll pray and we'll read our Bible and then we'll come right back here again to the Lord's day and the Lord's place that we meet and worship and we can fall into that rut and we can make it a religious experience and it just becomes the same thing that we look to every time and we start to get that puffed up knowledge in our head that we're doing something that God wants us to do or that God is pleased that we're doing. But John 4:24 tells us that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." That right there takes all of man out of it. True worship for the Lord is in his Spirit, it's by the gift of his Spirit and the gift of his truth, and without those two things, we can't worship him no matter what duty tells us, no matter what the day tells us or what time of year it is and how we're supposed to do things.

Paul is sitting here in the middle of this city and he looks around and he says, "I perceive that you're too superstitious." You know, it's a hard thing to believe. I've said that many times from up here. It's a hard thing for a man to believe in anything and if you don't believe that, all you need to do is just go back a month because usually in the month of December we encounter that and society and tv shows and movies, all these things bring to us, "Oh, if man just believed, if he believed in a Christmas miracle, if he believes in the season." God forbid if he believes in a little man with a red suit on to bring things.

As I was on vacation last week, we went to see one of the popular movies out, "Mary Poppins," revisited, I should say, and one of the things that was so prevalent in that movie was this, that man can't believe and he needs to have some kind of mystical experience or magic to bring him to believe, and if he just believes things, he can do many things. And that movie, I don't want to ruin it for anybody, actually ends up with people in the sky holding onto balloons floating around because they can believe. They believe in the sorcery and the magic and all of those things.

Paul is sitting in a place like that at this time and he says, "You know, I'm looking around and my perception, what the Lord has shown me is that you people are too religious and you're too superstitious," and in 23 he says, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions." Mark that. They were devoted to their religious experiences that they went day after day doing and they had no problem doing them. They thought that that was the way to go. They thought that was the way to live, "If we cover all of our bases and we have all of these different gods among us, one of them may be the true God, and if he is, we're covered because we worship him in mouth, we worship him in duty, we worship him in religious ways. We're devoted to this kind of religious experience."

He said, "I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." To the unknown god. Now think about that a minute. They are saying that they don't know of this god but if he exists, we're going to have an idol or a place of worship or a place for you to do a duty towards him, that if he does exist, that your base is covered. You're safe and you're free. I feel like today's religion is a lot like that. The churches are filled with people at the end of the week they're given a place to come, and they've set up an idol to an unknown god, but it's okay if you don't know him. What you're doing is a religious practice and that makes you safe and it makes you secure, and I pray in this room today and those that will hear this message, I pray that that's not the case with you. I pray that it's not a go through the motions, that it is a feeling thing that Paul will say here shortly, that it is something you experience in your soul, that it's not something that you go through the motions of life and, "I was raised this way. I was told this is where to be on Sunday and I was told to say prayers at the end of the night and I was told that it's good for me to start the day reading the Bible." We do these things over and over again but how much is God known? How much do you know of your salvation and your God?

Paul said, "I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship." Paul said, "The God that I don't see set up here as an idol or set up for worship is my God, and you ignorantly try to do a lip-service or you ignorantly try to do a religious devotion to him which will not be accepted."

"Him declare I unto you." So Paul is going to now speak of his Lord and in 23, we see that will-worship rears its head. Man's ability to worship something comes from the fall, it comes from the fall where man has decided that in a man-centered religion we can make God out to be whoever we want him to be, and we can be-bop along in this life and go day by day and live the same way and when we get into a bind or we get sick or we have something that goes really wrong in our life, we can reach up onto the shelf and pull this God down and we can tell him now that we need him, and we can tell him now that it's his time to act in our life.

That's ignorance in worship. It's ignorance. Paul said, "You ignorantly worship an unknown god." Paul tells us in Romans 8:7, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." We cannot get to God, we cannot worship God without him, without him being the first cause, without his Spirit filling our soul and testifying of the finished work that his Son has done because the

Father has sent him to do all things for his children. We can't get there. We ignorantly worship or ignorantly go along in religion to an unknown God, and we may know him by notion and we may know him just because he's in these words, but to truly know him is that union that we read of and Paul is going to get to that, in him we live, in him we move, in him we have our being, that he swallowed up in Christ and the totality of Christ in his life. And if all you have is religion and all you have, what you have is ignorance, ignorance of an unknown God.

Hold your finger there and turn with me, we're only going to go to a couple of places today but one of them is right here in 1 Corinthians 2 where Paul is going to tell us how, once again, that we have any understanding or have any knowledge. Can we ignorantly worship? No, because the Lord must be worshiped in spirit and truth.

We'll just start in verse 12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world," this is the children of God he's speaking of, the church, the body of Christ, we have not received the spirit of the world. What Paul is preaching against on Mars Hill is the spirit of the world. Cover all your bases, be safe and secure in yourself and your elections, what you choose, how you worship. That's the spirit of the world.

Paul said we have not received that, not the spirit of the world, "but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." They are freely given and the only way that we can know them is by him. The only way that we can know God is by God's Spirit.

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Do you see that? Do you see what the Holy Ghost does in the child of God's life? He compares spiritual things with spiritual things. I've heard that a lot in my life. People will speak about being led of the Spirit and then they'll speak about carnal things, "I was led of the Spirit to do this carnal act. I've been led of the Spirit to worship this carnal way. I've been led of the Spirit to walk in this direction," which is a carnal direction. But the Holy Spirit leads and teaches and compares spiritual things with spiritual. That's the difference that separates the child of God from men that are outside of Christ. That's the big difference we have. That's the difference in religion today all over this country. There will be thousands and millions of churches that are open and I'm thankful for that, that we have the freedom to worship, but it saddens me that many of those places, a lot of those places, will be centered around an unknown God today; will be speaking about a being and erect many different idols, many different have-to's and must-do's and gottat-do's of idolatry and how to seek this God.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," he can't, "for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." That's what Paul is telling them, "You worship an unknown God. You don't know who he is but there's a reason for that, he has not been revealed to you."

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things," and that means righteous judgment and the only way to have righteous judgment is by the Holy Spirit's direction. To be spiritual means to be moved and led by the Holy Ghost. It's not a condition. It's not a place, "Oh, I'm spiritual now because I'm a child of God." You don't control that switch. You don't make yourself spiritual, he does by the power of him.

"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." Maybe some of you are in here, "Well, I get a lot of judgment by man every day." That's right but not in God's eyes. Not in the eyes of the one who matters and that's what Paul is saying here. The Lord's judgment on the world is not his judgment on you. You are safe and secure in the Beloved.

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." That's the difference, the mind of Christ is what makes the difference in our text today back in Acts 17:23, "I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Now Paul is going to declare the sovereignty.

Verse 24, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." He just defined for us what spiritual worship is, that it's not having anything to do with man and what man has erected, what man has made. You can't wear a cross around your neck. You can't have a picture sitting in front of you and worship that way. I've told the kids many times as I teach them, I grew up in a Methodist church and right in front of me every Sunday was a big picture of what they thought Jesus Christ looked like and I know you've probably seen it, that it was such a big picture I felt like it was always watching me in the room, and I felt every Sunday that I was there to worship that picture. I really truly believed that as a child, that that was Jesus, and he was watching me.

So when I prayed and when I sang, I looked directly at him and that's how man does it. They'll have beads. They'll have to have helps, something that they can put their sight and something like remember when Moses was up in the mountain and they wanted something to see, they had to have a god to see and they convinced Aaron to make that cow. They had to have something to see because God who wasn't seen, was not good enough and he never has been for man. He never has been for carnal man because we can't attain unto a higher being in and of ourselves and that bothers us and we rebel and we lash out and we start to take things on ourselves in our own knowledge, our own intellect, and then knowledge puffeth up and it's very dangerous.

So he says, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing." You see, that's the whole crux of the matter there, is Paul sees all this idolatry that's going on in the city and he says that's how man has said, "This is how I'm going to worship God. I don't have to know them all. If I have a temple made to one or something to worship at that's unknown, I've covered my bases. I've made sure that I'm safe in religion." But Paul says something here, God needs

nothing from us. I've said a long time ago, when Jesus said in Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many," he destroyed all what we call today as Arminianism. He destroyed all of will-worship. He destroyed all of man-centered religion in saying that one thing, "I came not to be ministered to. Man cannot add anything to me. I am self-sufficient. I am sufficient. I am El Shaddai who is God all-sufficient." That's what that means. He is El Shaddai. He is the sufficient one over all of his children's lives. That's where we're headed in 28, "in him we live, in him we move, and in him we have our being." He is life. He is the sufficiency of life. He came not to be ministered to but to minister. He comes and he ministers grace. He comes and ministers of his faith. He comes and gives of his peace. He comes and gives of his love and we are receiving vessels if truly truly we are recipients of grace. We are receiving vessels.

"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." There is nothing outside of that. He has it all in his storehouse. He has everything the child of God will ever need and he did that and secured that in his perfect obedience, in his perfect life, in his perfect birth, and his perfect death and resurrection and now as ascended on the right hand of the Father, his storehouses are open for all of the children of God to feed them daily, to lead them daily, to be their life that we may live upon him.

Verse 26 says, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." Do you know what that is? That's sovereignty. He has appointed all times, he's appointed all places, he's appointed all things, he's appointed all things after the counsel of his own will. I don't know, I know that scares a lot of people but that gives me a lot of comfort, that he has gone before me and he has gone before and prepared a life for me and everything in that life, he has made sure that I lack nothing because he is my great Shepherd.

Isaiah said in Isaiah 46:10, "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Paul just said the same things. He does all his pleasure. He's determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation. He has determined the ones in every nation that he will gather together unto him. Every nation. He's done it. He has his elect in all the corners of the world. He has his elect in every place today or city or denomination and he will call them unto him. He is sovereign to do so. That's what I said, Paul's message to those who said, "We know this unknown God," Paul said, "Let me declare him to you. Let me declare his sovereignty. Let me declare who he is today and who he is in eternity and who he is in all of time." He has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation.

Then look at 27, such a passionate plea, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him." That's why I said knowing Christ is not a head-knowledge, it's not a going through religion. It's what Paul said, "You're too religious. You're too dutiful. You're too much into what you think pleases man." This is what Jesus upbraided the

Pharisees for. They sat around in a closed temple, made law, enacted, "This is who God says he is. This is who we say he is. You're too religious. You've forgotten Christ." How do you know Christ? You must feel him and not only, "if haply they might feel after him, and find him." He said, "Ask and seek and knock and he will be there," and he is for all of his people. He is faithful when we're not and he is faithful as the faithful one.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him." You see, what he just did, he just said to them, "All of that man-centered religion is false. All of that will-worship will not get you in communion or union with God, a relationship with him. You must feel it in the soul." He certainly wasn't talking about them walking up and feeling this statue or whatever it was for the unknown God, he's talking soul work now, to feel the Lord's presence in his soul. To feel the Lord's presence, to know that he's with you. To have that assurance. We'll talk about that assurance here at the end.

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." He is a present help in time of need. He is God omnipresent. He is with his people wherever we go, even to the end of the age.

Then our text, "For in him," in this union, this eternal vital union that we have in Christ, vital because there is no life without it, eternal because it was done before the foundation of the world, "in him we live, and move, and have our being." In him. I thought about that and to me in the word of God, the best place to go for this union is Ephesians 1, so if you'll turn with me over there real quick, I'd like to highlight on a couple of verses beginning in verse 3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." In Christ, that's where our union is. That's where our blessings are. It's in our Joseph with his storehouses. Everything is in him.

Verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." That takes care of our salvation. That takes care of our election. He has made us accepted in him. That's where that union is, eternal. He has made us accepted in him.

Verse 7, "In whom," in this union, in Christ, "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." We have forgiveness of sins. No other people have that, just the people of God have forgiveness of sins; have those sins blotted out, taken away as far as the east is from the west. Paid for. Blood-covered sins. All by the riches of his grace.

Verse 11, "In whom," again in this union, "also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." That's what we've been talking about, his decreed will, his will for his people is this union, for them to live and move and breathe and have their being in him in this union.

Then we turn to 17 and finish the chapter out. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Remember that's what we talked about, the knowledge at the beginning. They had a knowledge, an ignorant knowledge, if you will, just a knowledge of an unknown God, we're going to ignorantly worship. We go through the process, we go through the process without the Lord's Spirit, without the anointing, we will go through the process every day and every week. We need him to come. We need him to bless our souls with his presence that we may haply feel after him.

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling," it's the only way to know, the hope of his calling is when he opens your eyes and, "and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power." That's how we believe, according to his power, that same power that raised him from the dead, which he says in 20.

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." I told you at the beginning of this message, it's hard to believe. It's impossible for man to believe. Man in this life will tell you it's in your ability to do it, it's in mysticism, it's in magic, it's in just do it, but the Bible clearly speaks of all things and all knowledge and all understanding being given by him and him alone.

"Raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places," and there he is reigning, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." That's that union. That's what Paul is talking about, for in him we live. We have everything in him because of his life, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. What he has done on behalf, it is finished.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being." Then he says something peculiar, he says, "as certain also of your own poets have said." Your own poets that you have in this town, they've even written about him, but yet you still have this whatever it is to the unknown God.

Now we see because he is written about, because he is spoken about, what natural revelation can get you. You can write. You can speak. You can speak what you don't know of. I think about that when the Lord met the lady at the well and she told him that, all of her religion. She said, "We have worshiped the Lord here in this mountain all of our lives," and Jesus' answer to her was, "You worship you know not what." All your life you can go and religiously do duties and worship God, a god, but until he reveals himself to you, there will be no felt union, no assurance of salvation, no glorying in the Lord.

"For we are also his offspring." We, as the church, Paul said, we that are in Christ, we that have our life and moving and our being in him, we are the offspring of him. We are born out of him. He is our head. He is our father.

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God," verse 29, "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." No, we ought not to think that Christ and God and the Holy Spirit can be found in will-worship, the worshiping of our hands, the worshiping of things, the worshiping of whatever it is, whether it's job or education, to think that God is there, to think that God is pleased. No, he's pleased in his Son, the union we have in his Son, and everything he blesses the child of God with in this life must flow from and through the Son, and whatever it is that he blesses and whatever crumbs fall from his table for the soul and the body, the Lord does that out of his will and for his good pleasure for his people.

Look at verse 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now," there's no winking anymore. He sent his Son now. "Now commandeth all men every where to repent." You know, repentance is the only way back to his feet. It's the only way. We lose our direction many times. We know that salvation and rest in this life and the life to come is at his feet. We know hearing his voice is where salvation is, where rest is, where peace is, but we wander into different pastures. We wander in the lust of the flesh. We wander in the pride of life. We wander in the lust of the eyes. And we need to be brought back to his feet and he does that through one way and that is the gift of repentance.

Luke 5:32 says, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Acts 5:31 says, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." He gives repentance out of the storehouse of his grace. He brings that repentance in the soul of the child of God to say, "You have sinned against me, but my blood has covered your sins."

2 Corinthians 7:10, he says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Put a delineation between two types of repentance, the Esau repentance who sought it carefully with tears, and the repentance of the Lord Jesus Christ. The repentance of man will bring nothing but sorrow. The repentance of Christ brings the peaceable fruits of righteousness, brings Christ into the soul, sees Christ as your sufficiency, sees Christ as your all-in-all, sees Christ as the one who has covered your sins. That is the blessedness of repentance.

Then we end today with these sober words in 31, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." He has ordained the Lord Jesus Christ the righteous Judge who will judge the world, who will judge all men for we know that when we pass from death, then is the judgment. Our soul will be where the Lord has ordained it to be, with him or in hell. Every man will pass through this judgment. There will be a final day where everything is finished. I don't know that day, you don't know that day, but he does, and when there is no more, that righteous Judge... That's a sober thought. It's really sober. I think the hardness of our hearts, the unbelief and the indifference, the living year after year, the calendar that keeps

going and going and we keep saying, "Maybe he's not coming again. Maybe that's not going to happen. Maybe there isn't going to be any?" But one thing is for sure, there is an appointed end for every one of us.

He is the righteous Judge. It doesn't matter if we're judged by our peers, it doesn't matter if we're judged by one another. There is one righteous Judge who knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. He has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man "by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance," that's what I was talking about earlier, the assurance we have of this, the assurance we have of Christ, that being in him we live and move and have our being, the assurance we have of this union, the assurance that everything that has been provided has been provided for us by Christ is in this, "in that he hath raised him from the dead." The resurrection of Christ has assured us eternal life in him. The resurrection and ascension of Christ and reigning upon his throne today has assured and secured eternal redemption, eternal salvation, eternal assurance for the child of God.

Our text one more time, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." May the Lord impress that upon us this year, this day and this hour for the glory of him.

Dear heavenly Father, may you add thy power and thy clarity as only thou canst, and may you reveal to thy children that, Lord, in you and only you we live and move and have any being whatsoever. Lord, impress that upon us that we may haply feel it at this hour and the hours to come. Then Lord, as we glory, may our glory be only in thee. For this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.