

If you remember, last week we considered Paul the disciples ministry in Berea. This was cut short because Jews from Thessalonica came to stir up the crowds (v13). This led the Berean brethren to send Paul away, by way of the sea, to Athens. There at Athens, as we waits for Silas and Timothy, Paul encourages in ministry in the synagogue and marketplace. And it's the latter of these two that becomes important, as it was in the marketplace Paul encounters certain Greek philosophers who leads him to gather with them in the meeting place, and from vv22-31 gives one the most famous sermons in the entire Bible.

I. Paul Enters the Areopagus (vv16-21)

II. Paul Speaks in the Areopagus (vv22-34)

I. Paul Enters the Areopagus (vv16-21)

1. While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the idolatry of the city.
2. Athens was a massive city known for its cultural advancement—it in many ways represented the wisdom of man.
3. It was known for its library, study of philosophy, and rich history of a number of Greek philosophers.
4. John Stott—"Athens had been the foremost Greek city-state since the fifth century BC. Even after its incorporation into the Roman Empire, it retained a proud intellectual independence and also became a free city. It boasted of its rich philosophical tradition inherited from Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, of its literature and art, and of its notable achievements in the cause of human liberty."
5. V16—"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols."
6. Bruce Milne—"As Paul is alone in Athens, waiting for his colleagues to rejoin him, he takes the opportunity to view the city. Whatever was his reaction to its cultural legacy is not indicated in the text at this point. What is made clear is his being greatly distressed at the pervasive, in-your-face, idolatry of the city."
7. V17—"Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there."
8. As was his custom, Paul first went to the synagogue where he (no doubt) reasoned from the OT Scriptures.
9. But in addition to this, he also went to the marketplace and there he daily reasoned with those who were there.
10. In other words, Paul went to the places where the people were—he went with the express to reason with them.
11. V18—"Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him (while he was reasoning in the marketplace)."
12. These were two groups of philosophers, who followed different but similar Greek philosophers who lives a few hundred years before.
13. John Stott—"The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were contemporary but rival systems. The Epicureans emphasized chance, escape and the enjoyment of pleasure, and the Stoics emphasized fatalism, submission and endurance of pain."

14. V18—"And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,' because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection."
15. Luke tells us that Paul "preached to them Jesus and the resurrection" which led to a mixture of reactions.
16. V19—"And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak.'"
17. The word Areopagus is a compound word that literally means "the hill of Ares"—Ares being the Greek god of war.
18. The KJV renders the word "Mars Hill" in v22, as Mars is merely the Latin form of the Greek word for Ares.
19. This was a rocky hill within Athens where philosophers and thinkers came to discuss a number of topics.
20. It was also the place where the leaders of the city met to discuss laws, policies, and even render judgments.
21. V20—"For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."
22. V21—"For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing."

II. Paul Speaks in the Areopagus (vv22-34)

1. From v22 through v31, Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and gave a tremendous sermon, which is likely summarized by Luke.
2. Verses 22-23 serve as an introduction to the sermon that follows—"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you."
3. As Paul walked through the city, he found various temples (with altars) of all the pagan and Greek gods.
4. In addition to these, he even found an altar with the inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD—that is, to any other gods not known to them.
5. If you remember the Greeks were polytheistic which means, they worshipped many (or numerous) gods.
6. Thus, Paul is saying—"the One whom you worship without knowing"—that is, you admit He's unknown to you.
7. He's not saying, they actually worshipped Him, but the stress is upon their ignorance of the true God.
8. They knew all about their pagan gods (who were in fact not gods), but they were ignorant of the true God.
9. Thus Paul actually used their acknowledgement of ignorance, as a connecting point between them and God.
10. The God that you admit you know nothing about (as evidenced in constructing a temple to the unknown God)—"Him I proclaim to you."
11. And so, Paul then provides a wonderfully God-centered sermon where he describes God as Creator, Governor, and Judge.

12. (1) Creator (vv24-25)—"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things."
13. Now only does Paul begin with God as Creator, he then describes His independence from all created things.
14. Because God is the Creator of all things, He's separate from creation and isn't dependent upon it for anything.
15. God is self-existent and self-content—He doesn't need creation to fulfill Him or to in anyway add to Him.
16. This of course is very different to creation, which is dependent upon God for life, breath, and all things.
17. As the Lord of heaven and earth God doesn't dwell in temples made with hands, but He fills heaven and earth.
18. God is not only the Creator of all things, but He's also the Sustainer of all things—He creates and upholds.
19. (2) Governor (vv26-29)—"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings."
20. In other words, "every nation" or ethnicity, comes from the same man, regardless of where and when they live.
21. The Greek word rendered "nation" is *ethnos* from which we get our English word "ethnicity"—from one comes every ethnicity.
22. While there is only one race of people (called the human race) there are many "nations or ethnicities."
23. And ultimately speaking, it's God who determines which ethnicity, time, and place each person lives.
24. V27—"so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."
25. The word rendered "grope" (NKJV) "feel" (KJV) literally refers to a person finding their way in darkness.
26. The imagery of a person who is sees in part and is left to grope about and they attempt to find their way.
27. Here's the point—through general revelation and providence God draws near Adam's fallen human race.
28. And while this was intended for man to seek the Lord and find Him, man by nature suppresses the truth.
29. John Dick—"Although it was the will of God, that men should seek after Him, yet the Gentiles had not found Him. They had embraced the illusions of fancy for truth and had adored the creature in the room of the Creator. God had left them to the wonderings of their van minds."
30. V28—"for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"
31. This is how close God is to all men—He's as close as their next breath—He's as close as their own existence.
32. Paul then quotes one of the Stoic philosophers—"For we are also His offspring"—that is, God's offspring.

33. Here Paul affirms the fact that the philosophers got some things right—there's truth in this particular statement.
34. He's not saying everything they said was right, but he's simply using their own teaching to rebuke them.
35. Paul—"Even one of your own philosophers has rightly said, we are God's offspring, which confirms what I am saying."
36. V29—"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising."
37. The fact that all men are created in God's image (we are His offspring), says something about the nature of God.
38. None of the pagan gods of the Greeks have offspring, as they are merely shaped by art and man's devising.
39. In other words, Paul is making a contrast between the nature of the true God and that of the false gods.
40. God's nature is spiritual, self-existent, and self-content—it's the source of all creation and thus all life.
41. The nature of the Greek gods are but paintings, carvings, and statutes, all created and devised by man.
42. In short, the true God created all things (including man), whereas all false gods are created (made) by man.
43. (3) Judge (vv30-31)—"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent."
44. That is, in times past, God has left the pagan nations to themselves to live and perish in their ignorance.
45. But now He's sending the message of the gospel into every tribe and nation, confronting them with the truth.
46. To repent is to agree with what God says and return to Him—remember, repentance and faith go together.
47. V31—"because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained."
48. There's coming a future day wherein every person who ever lived will be judged by Christ in righteousness.
49. V31b—"He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead"—by raising Christ from the dead.
50. The resurrection of Christ was a verification of His true identity—all that He said about Himself, salvation, and judgment is true.
51. Thus, His resurrection is "assurance" or "proof" that God has appointed a day on which Christ will judge the world.
52. Verses 32-34 describe the varied response of his hearers—some scoffed, some questioned, and others believed.
53. (a) Some scoffed, v32a—"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked"—they ridiculed the notion that dead people can live.
54. (b) Some questioned, v32b—"while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter'—they were at present uncertain.

55. (c) Some believed, v34—"However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."
56. Dionysius was a leader within the Areopagus, which is contrasted with Damaris merely identified as a woman.
57. I believe Luke is doing as he's done before, and that's underscoring the diversity of people who believed.

III. Some Lessons About Evangelism

1. As great as Paul's sermon was, he must not forget the historical context in which this sermon was given.
2. We have to remember, these words were originally given in a Greek philosophy club, to pagan philosophers.
3. As such, it provides us with a number of practical helps or tips on to how to present the truth to others (four lessons about evangelism).
4. But before I come to this, I want to say something by way of clarification—while evangelism is the work of every Christian, that work will be carried out differently (obviously, not every person is called to foreign missions as like Paul and Silas).
5. But every Christian is called to share their faith and provide a defense of the hope that's in them (1Pet.3:15).
6. Now, there's basically two types of evangelism—what we might call friendship and formal evangelism.
7. By "friendship evangelism" I refer to that kind of evangelism that targets those around us we befriend.
8. Our neighbors, co-workers, and extended family members—these are people we will know for years.
9. By "formal evangelism" I refer to that kind of evangelism that goes out to targets people we don't know.
10. And so, while these practical lessons will apply to formal evangelism, most of them have some application to all forms of evangelism.
11. (1) Go where the people are—this is what Paul did—he went both to the synagogue and the marketplace.
12. Why? Because this was where the people were—there were religious people in the synagogue and pagan people in marketplace.
13. Brethren, it makes sense, if you're going to go fishing, you would go to that place where there was fish.
14. Thus, when we as a church organizes a formal outreach, we target places where there will be an audience.
15. For example, two of our men went this past Thursday to preach the gospel to the ladies at the City Mission.
16. Furthermore, we are in the process of planning an outreach in downtown Canton, on the first Friday of October.
17. Why? Well because, it's a First Friday, and as you know, on First Fridays, there will be hundreds of people gathered downtown.
18. (2) Be mindful of your audience—that is, be mindful of the type (or kind) of people you are addressing.

19. When Paul went to the synagogue he reasoned from the Scripture, and when he went to the marketplace he reasoned from general revelation.
20. In other words, in speaking to religious people he started with Scripture, assuming they believed in God.
21. But in speaking to pagans he started with creation, and the fact that creation demands an all-wise, powerful, and benevolent Creator.
22. You see, brethren, according to the Scripture all men by nature, know something about God from creation.
23. Fifty years ago in our country the average person had a basic knowledge about God and the Scriptures.
24. But that's changed, so that now we have to view people more like pagans in the marketplace than Jews in the synagogue.
25. (3) Focus on God and the gospel—irrespective of your audience, you basically have the same message.
26. Yes, you may start at different places, but friends, we have to get to the same place—God and the gospel.
27. In fact, there's wisdom in starting in this order—first, talk about God as Creator, Governor, Judge, and then the gospel.
28. This takes us back to something I said in SS—the law needs to be preached in preparation to the gospel.
29. Nobody will ever come to Christ until they know they need Christ—only sinners need a Savior (Mk.2:17).
30. The law has to be preached to expose sin and reveal wrath; the gospel needs to be preached to reveal love and grace.
31. Well, preaching the character of God covers both the law and gospel, as we preach about His holiness and love.
32. Preaching the holiness of God is the same thing as preaching the law, and preaching the love of God is preaching the gospel.
33. Both need to be proclaimed if the whole counsel of God is to be made known—the law and the gospel.
34. Remember, the law is the moral reflection of God's character, and nowhere is His love more evident than in the gospel.
35. Thus, if we preach the whole character of God, we are actually preaching the law and the gospel—His holiness and His grace.
36. Yes, tell sinners about the holiness and justice of God, but be sure you also get to Christ and His resurrection.
37. You say, but shouldn't we preach the crucifixion? Well, of course, the resurrection means nothing apart from the crucifixion.
38. The resurrection is the public vindication that the sacrifice Christ offered was acceptable and pleasing to God.
39. (4) Leave the results with God—that is, tell the truth in love, and leave the ultimate results with God Himself.
40. Some will scoff, others will show a measure of interest, and by God's grace people of every type will believe (this way, while we can't take the credit if people believe, neither can we be blamed if they don't).