

In Him We Live

Acts 17:16-34

4/ 03/ 05

Intro

Paul is now on his second missionary journey. Recently, he was preaching in Thessalonica, but a great uprising occurred there from the Jews, so he went to Berea, who received the gospel well, but some came from Thessalonica and stirred up yet more trouble for Paul. He then went to Athens alone, while Silas and Timothy would come later.

While Paul was in Athens he saw all the idols and temples of the city and his spirit was troubled within him. He then had an opportunity to speak to the people of Athens about Jesus, the resurrected Lord.

It is in the confrontation between the gospel and the philosophies of that day that we gain such important insight. Many of those same approaches to life are still around today and in fact very prevalent in our own country.

These are insights into the importance of knowing that in Him we live.

I. Without God, Man's Ways are Empty

A. Philosophies have no life

- Athens was famous for its philosophers; Pericles, Demosthenes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and Euripides.
- Yet it did them little good and certainly did not bring them to the knowledge of the truth.

- Athens was at this point a city of universities; little needs to be said of this. It's similar to what is happening in universities across the nation.

II Timothy 3:4-5, 7, "...lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

- The Epicureans believed that the aim of philosophy should be happiness and pleasure, usually fine luxuries, the avoidance of pain, and sensual experience. They were atheists and believed that this life is all there is.
- The Stoics believed in fate and that nothing could change it. The best one could do is to accept it without feelings. They were pantheists, believing that everything was God.

Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

B. Religion comes from men

- In Paul's speech to the Areopagus, He recognized that they were religious. But here again, it did little to help them.

Colossians 2:23, "These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion..."

- Men have been using religion as a substitute for God for many years. It makes people feel spiritual without the personal relationship with God and all that that would bring.

Isaiah 29:13, The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.”

II. God Expects Men to Seek Him

Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

A. Because He made the world

- In other words, God is not the one who is made; He is the Maker of all things.
- He is Lord of heaven and earth,
- Therefore, He does not dwell in temples made with human hands.

Illus – There next to them would have been the temple of Athena, and there were many others in the city.

- It’s important that they have a proper understanding of the fact that God is greater than the false things around them.

Isaiah 40:12-26 Do you not know, have you not heard?

B. In Him we have our life and breath

- He *gives* life and breath and all things (verse 25)
- This is why God expects us to seek Him.

Illus –answering Valary’s question in Russia, “Why doesn’t God leave me alone?” “Because we’re breathing His air,” I said.

Illus – What if I made a computer from sand and gave it intelligence and then when I asked it to get a file, it said, “No”?

- The point is that God is the Giver, He needs nothing from us; but he expects us to seek Him.

James 1:17, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

Luke 11:9-13, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

- He gives grace, love, forgiveness, every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies; He makes us His own children, made us co-heirs with Christ...

C. We are made in God's image

- God made us in His image, and that is man's greatest dignity.
- Some say that man is nothing, a mere worm. That is not God's view of man at all.
- But if we are made in God's image, then how insulting it is to God to create something from the "**art and thought of man**" and call it God.

Illus – Greek gods were clearly made in the image of man. They had petty arguments, rivalries, debaucheries, etc.

Romans 1:22-23, 25, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."

III. God Expects All to Turn Around

A. He overlooks times of ignorance

- There was a time in our lives when we were trying to satisfy our lives with things that were less than God.
- God was patient; He did not wipe us out, or reject us. He was patiently waiting for us through the times we were struggling.

Acts 14:16-17, In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

B. But now expects a response

- God expects all men everywhere to repent – the word means to "think again."
- In other words, *you thought that you could follow a god in your image – think again. You thought there would be no judgment – think again.*
- We should repent, Paul says, because God has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness.
- As proof, God raised Jesus from the dead.

Luke 15:10, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Acts 3:19, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;"

C. Believing is the right response to God

- Some mocked... what people do when they have no logical defense.
- Some delayed... not wanting to be accountable to what they had heard, they used a delay tactic.

- Others believed. Even one of the men of the council believed.

Conclusion

God expects us to seek Him even now. In Him we live and move and have our being. We owe Him our very lives because we have His breath within us. We need to think again also and turn back to God.