

## Series: "Finishing What was Started"

C.R. 11-19-23

### "The Object of Our Worship"

**Text:** Acts 17: 16-34

**Intro:** Having to leave yet another city, Paul makes a very lengthy journey to Athens. Athens had been replaced as the most important political and commercial center in Greece by Corinth, but it was still the philosophical center of the ancient world, and was home to the world's most famous university. It was also a religious center, where almost every god in existence was worshiped. It was once said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man.

Paul is touring Athens and waiting on Silas and Timothy to arrive and as he does his heart is overwhelmed with the lostness of the city. He was not a tourist, he was a missionary.

I remember my first trip to Israel. I watched the different groups touring around us and quickly noticed that for many of them it wasn't about Jesus. They were kissing pictures of Mary, and going through religious rituals, but they had no relationship. I came home with a very heavy heart as I realized that most of this world is lost.

As Paul viewed the monuments around him to god's that didn't exist, he knew that he could not keep quiet. They needed to hear about the true and living God.

We face similar challenges today. Many god's, much lostness. Let's talk about it.

#### 1) The Challenge We Face.

- a. We are moving away from a Christian consensus in America. Increasingly, many Americans believe that Jesus Christ is only one option among many options. This is called pluralism.
- b. We are expected today to accept all religions as equal.

- c. We are even told that tolerance is wrong. We are not supposed to simply tolerate other religions, for that assumes that we don't agree with them. We are expected to go beyond tolerance to acceptance and approval.
- d. If you are a Bible-believing Christian, you will experience challenges to your faith.
- e. We are challenged by multiple philosophies and multiple gods.
- f. The Epicureans and the Stoics still exist. **Epicurean belief:** His philosophy was simply that we really can't make sense out of life and that the search for pure truth by reason is impossible. He believed that you can never find absolute truth, so just enjoy yourself because this is all you have. Lovers of pleasure.
- g. **The Stoic Belief:** Stoicism believed in a form of fatalism; that we have no real choice in the things that are happening to us. Stoics were also pantheists, believing that everything is God and God is everything; therefore, we're just swept up in it, and life has no real, vital meaning. Stoicism is a form of intellectual pride that smirked at those who thought they had the answer.
- h. Pleasure and pride. The challenge we still face today.

## 2) The Conflict We All Have.

- a. Who is God? Who is God to me? When I ask you that question then you are forced to pull up your God. Who is He? What is He like?
- b. **Read v. 23-24.**
- c. Ancient Athens had some 30,000 different gods that they worshipped. In today's society, every major city in America is filled with idolatry; the difference is that we give our idols different names.
- d. **An idol is anything you love more, fear more, serve more or trust more than Almighty God. An idol is whatever is first place in your life. Whatever your heart trusts in, that is your idol.**
- e. We face the god of materialism, the god of sex and pleasure, the god of alcohol and drug, the god of wisdom and knowledge, the god of violence.
- f. **Romans 1: 24-25.** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie,

and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

- g. Paul faced idolatry, and we face idolatry. We have no right to worship anything other than Almighty God.
- h. **Illustrate:** It is so strange how when we need to declutter our life a little how often we start with church things and our service to God.
- i. If you are serving the church, you need to quit. Serve God. He is worth it.
- j. If I can slide God down my list of things, then I have other gods. I have idols, and they must be torn down.
- k. Paul wanted this crowd to know, there is only one God. You have been searching, and I want to show you the One you have been looking for.
- l. Who is God to you? How have you defined Him? Is He the Biblical God?

### 3) The Confidence We Can Have.

- a. You just have to love how Paul worded this. He starts with God. V.24. One God. Not multiple Gods.
- b. God made everything, and He stands above and distinct from creation.
- c. Paul tells the Athenians that you cannot put God in a corner of the temple; He is the God of creation.
- d. Paul said the true God is the Provider V.25, He is the Ruler v.26, and most importantly He is the Savior V.31.
- e. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel. Not in any crowd.
- f. He preached Jesus, and the Resurrected Jesus.

### 4) The Converts We Can Win.

- a. Read v. 32.
- b. Anytime we share the gospel there will be 3 decisions made.
- c. There will be derision. People will mock. The apostle Paul had the equivalent of a triple Ph.D., but he was willing to be thought a fool for Christ's sake.
- d. There Will be delay. We will hear you again on this matter. This at least is better than derision.

- e. One of the devil's favorite ways to send a soul to Hell is through delay. If you intend to give your heart to Jesus, do it now.
- f. There will be decision. There is power in the Gospel, and there is something in the human heart that recognizes the Gospel as the truth; and there will be those who will accept the Gospel as their truth.