

The Acts of the Apostles, Part 37:
The “R” Word

Key Scripture: Acts 17:16-34

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. 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. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 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.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 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, 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. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 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.’

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. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

❖ Paul in Athens

➤ Paul, Bi-vocational ministry

- Evangelism
- Tentmaking

❖ Idolatry

- His “spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.” (Acts 17:16)

❖ Religious/ Philosophical Groups

➤ The Epicurean

- And

➤ The Stoic

❖ Epicurean

➤ Epicureanism is centered on pleasure as the standard goal of a “good life”.

- Epicureans believe in many gods who exist in a state of tranquility, but reject any views that they are involved in human affairs.

◆ Source materials: Britannica; Thru the Bible Commentary series; Spiritual Naturalist Society

❖ Stoic

➤ This is a philosophy that emphasized virtue, self-control, justice and living in “harmony with nature”.

- Stoics believe in and worship many gods, but reject the “human-shaped” depictions of such gods.

- Source materials: Britannica; Thru the Bible Commentary series; Spiritual Naturalist Society

❖ Epicurean VS Stoicism

- In the end, both of these religions seek “happiness” as their goal through opposing, but physical (natural) rituals and practices.
 - Epicureans seek happiness through pleasure
 - Practice “purging” desires by doing them until they no longer desire them.
 - ◆ Happiness comes through the absence of pain.
 - Stoics seek happiness through virtue and moral living.
 - Practice control
 - ◆ Can control self behavior
 - ◆ Can control reactions to external/ natural forces

❖ VS Christianity

- One True Lord
 - Deeply interested in His creation, especially mankind
 - Revealed Himself to us through Creation, His Presence, His Word, His Holy Spirit
 - Paid our sin penalty to restore what sin has separated.
 - Salvation cannot be earned, but is a gift.

❖ Religion VS Relationship

- Religion - the strict practice of reverence or worship to a deity
- Relationship - the state of being connected

❖ God VS gods

- Religion and false gods
 - Ritualistic devotion, reverence, and worship to...
 - Who
 - What
 - How

- Why

- ❖ Paul and the “R” Word

- “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” (Acts 17:16)
- “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’” (Acts 17:22-23)
- “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30-31)

- ❖ Relationship

- Reflect on your present relationship with God this morning.
 - Are you *truly* in a relationship with Jesus Christ?