

Acts 17:13-34 Paul in Athens - *The Upside of Having a Burden!*

Message to Conversation Guide

Acts 17:13-34

13 When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. 14 The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. 15 The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, **he was greatly distressed to see** that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27 God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

29 "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone — an image made by man's design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to

repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. NIV

Discussion Questions

1. When Paul was in Athens he "saw" how the city was infested with idols and the people were led astray. What do you see when you see the towns and the people in our towns in our community?

Acts 17:16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

2. Discuss the principle **"you see what your heart cares about."** Also discuss the principle **"the degree of your burden for something directly corresponds with the love you have for that particular thing."**
3. Burdens are not designed to make us feel bad but they are designed to propel us into action. What did Paul do as a result of his burden?

Acts 17:17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.

4. What were the unique features and beliefs of the Epicureans that are stated in the definition below?

Greek philosophers who belonged to a school founded by Epicurus about 306 B.C. The Epicureans were concerned with the practical results of philosophy in everyday life. Their chief aim in life was pleasure. They believed they could find happiness by seeking that which brought physical and mental pleasure, and by avoiding that which brought pain. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

5. What were the unique features and beliefs of the Stoics?

The doctrine of the Stoics, a Greek school of philosophy which taught that human beings should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law, calmly accepting all things as the result of divine will. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

6. Discuss the main points in Paul's message found in **Acts 17:22-31**.