

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

09.14.2025 | God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth |  
Acts 17:22–31 | Dr. Clark Fobes, Associate Pastor

You can begin to open your Bibles to Acts chapter 17. That's where we're going to be today to talk about this first part of the Creed, as Pastor Ben mentioned, God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And just as you're turning there, I want to just remind us about a few things that Pastor Ben mentioned last week about the creeds and about especially the apostles' creed. But the creeds were written for two main reasons throughout church history, but especially this one early in church history, that the church would know what they believe about the Christian faith.

And there's two sides of that reason why. On the one hand, the creeds were written to solidify the doctrines of the church. As the church was growing, as the believers were growing and expanding, they needed a unifying doctrine to understand from the scriptures what do we actually believe as the church of Jesus Christ? What are the main core things that we're going to confess as the main doctrines we believe? And so the apostles came together, well not the apostles, but the church, and with the teaching of the apostles created the apostles' creed. But there's another side of this too that Pastor Ben mentioned that the creeds were written so that the church could combat some of the false doctrines that were springing up. So that as the church solidified what they believed, they also knew what they didn't believe and what was outside of good Orthodox Christian belief.

And this creed and all the creeds were based on the belief that God makes Himself known and revealed through the scriptures. That He clearly divulges who He is and wants His people to know who He is and so thus we can identify some basic beliefs of who God is as we're going to see today starting with God the Father, the first person of the Trinity. And that was in direct contrast to the surrounding nations and cultures about what they believed about the gods. All throughout biblical history, the gods other than Yahweh, the God of Israel, were gods that could not be fully known. That's part of the reason why when God shows up to Israel, He reveals Himself in His full name, in His full covenant, and He gives the entire Pentateuch, especially the book of Deuteronomy, so that Israel might know what it is that they should believe about God and who God is, His name and His character. That was not normal in the ancient Near East. It wasn't normal that the gods would reveal all of who they are to their people and neither was that normal, as we see here in the book of Acts 17, for the pagan gods of the Greco-Roman worlds.

The gods were largely unknown and so the reason they were a multitude of gods was because the people were trying to discern who the gods were. They were trying to understand them. This was something that even one of the groups that we're going to see in the book of Acts believed about the gods. A group of philosophers named the Epicureans, whom Paul addresses here at the Areopagites, they were essentially functional atheists. They believed that the gods were out there but they were not really fully known. New Testament scholar Craig Keener, he says this about the Epicureans, he says, "It was foolish to try to discern God's nature. If there was a deity, He would consist completely of mind and so believing in innumerable deities, personifying vices, virtues, and so forth is absurd. Those divide deities into sections so they can worship what they most need." This was from Epicurus in the early second or third century BC. And even they were predecessors to atheists that believed the gods were simply unknowable so to try to understand and know them was a empty endeavor.

But the God of the Bible, as we'll see, reveals Himself so that we might know Him. But in this pantheistic Greco-Roman world, it was up to the diviners, the priests of the temples, the sorcerers to try to understand the hidden knowledge, the secret things of the gods. And they would go into the temples, they would do their divination so that they could reveal some things about the gods. And the more that they could reveal about the gods and their wills, the more the people could amass these multitude of gods for their own power or their own life advancements. That's why there were over thousands of gods in Athens. They could go and find the right god for the right problem. And if they could understand that god's desires or nature to placate or please that god and eventually add that god in to gain power over some area of their life that they needed that god to help them in.

Now we don't have a pantheon of gods like this. We don't have statues and idols to Artemis and the God of Ephesus and many different gods like that today. But I do think we still function in society in a similar pantheistic way. If you think about the way that we go about our lives, much of our life is about trying to amass the right knowledge or power so that

we can better and advance our lives. We live our lives where we try to amass knowledge like gods so that we can advance our own lives. Let me give you some examples. We try to seek out the hidden knowledge and power of academics so that the more we know and understand in the world, the better grades we can get, students, the better schools we can get into, so the better jobs we can attain and gain for our own lives. Or maybe we seek out the knowledge and power of the god of finances. There's some secret hidden knowledge financially and the more we can understand about investments, about financial knowledge and planning, the better we can advance ourselves. You know, it's fascinating to me when I think about this whole movement of financial planning and wise planning. I don't think that's a bad thing, but I think we can sometimes fall into seeing finances as a god and looking at brokers and financial assistance as our diviners.

And the more we seek knowledge from them, we can advance for our own gain, money and investing and increase who have secret knowledge of the economy and markets. We try to tap into their knowledge for our own advancements. We also seek out the knowledge and power of the gods of self-help, personal coaching, fitness, healthcare, therapy. Each one of these categories functions as a small god that we try to understand and know so we can add into our pantheon of gods for our own advancement and betterment. Each one tends to provide some secret knowledge. You do these three dieting tips and you'll live a longer, healthier life. And by the way, you have to pay \$59.99 a month to get that knowledge. If you implement these four fitness practices that I as your fitness coach can help you find, if you just pay \$120 a month, you can be healthier, stronger, have more energy, sleep better at night. If you practice these five mindfulness techniques by paying \$200 a session with some teletherapist, then you can really gain a handle over mental health. See, none of these things are bad in terms of selves, but when we start to look at them as little gods that we're collecting into our small temple of our lives, we think that the more we amass for ourselves, the better our lives will be. Our secular world is quite similar to the pantheistic worlds of the first stage, the first century.

So together, would we look at this in Acts 17, we're going to look at verses 22 to 28 and see how Paul, when we talk about who God is, Paul tries to reveal to this pantheistic Greco-Roman Athenian culture, the true God of the Bible compared to the small gods of the culture. Acts 17 starting in verse 22. So Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you're very religious. For as I pass along and observe the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription to the unknown God. With therefore your worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 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, that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he's actually not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being, as some of your own poets have said, for we are indeed his offspring."

So as Paul reveals to this Greco-Roman Athenian culture, the true God of the world and the Bible over and against the small gods of their culture, what is the clear picture that we need today? The clear picture of, as we declare in the Apostles' Creed, God the Father Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, how does that contrast with the little gods of our culture that we're so often prone to bowing the knee before and worshipping? And who is this God of the Bible that we can clearly see to fully understand this anchor point of the Christian doctrine and faith? And so we're going to look at this in three points of these three descriptions of God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, but we're actually going to do it in reverse because that's the way that Paul reveals it in his passage.

Let's start first with God, Creator of heaven and earth. The first thing that Paul wants to make clear to the Athenians and in their culture is that God is the one that has created everything. He created all things in heaven and on earth. Verse 24, "The God who made the world and everything in it being Lord of heaven and earth." And I think there's two things that Paul wants to reveal about God as Creator of heaven and earth, especially over and against the gods of the Athenian culture. The first one is that if God is the Creator of heaven and earth, then that means he owns and has all resources in his hands. All resources in the world are his and he owns them in his hands. Paul continues in 25, "Nor is he served by human hands as though he's needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."

Now this would have corroborated in some form with the Athenian gods and their belief about the gods. The Greco-Romans did believe the gods created the world and everything in it, but they didn't believe that those gods had full

authority over their creation. There's many different mythologies, Greek mythologies about the creation of the world. One of the most common is that the world was created between battles of the gods and out of their fighting and battles, the world came forth almost accidentally. But these gods were constantly vying and fighting for power over what came forth in creation. But no one deity had ultimate authority or control over that creation. They didn't have the resources at their disposal.

And so just like the Greco-Roman gods, humanity believed, and we can, I think, feel this in somewhat as well, that life is almost like a zero-sum game. There's all these resources in the world that the gods are clamoring and fighting over, and so people as well are clamoring and fighting over, whether that be financial means, whether that be the right people or slaves, whether that be land. There was a vying for this zero-sum game of resources, and life can sometimes feel like that, where we're constantly fighting one another, jockeying for position to gain a leg up over others. There's a set number of spots for those of you students that apply for high schools. Lowell cannot accept everyone in our city. I just say that because I went to Lowell. I'm proud of it. The colleges you're applying for have a limited number of spots, and so you're competing against others for those spots. In your jobs, there's a limited number of promotions, or promotions, and I'm forgetting the term for whatever. But there's a select number of spots that people are often competing for, and life feels like a zero-sum game.

But here's the thing. If God is the one God and only him who created all the heavens and earth, and all things belong to him, then that means he has all resources at his disposal. There is no shortage of resources with God's hands. He holds all the worlds in his hands, and I think that means if God is creator of heaven and earth, we can be at ease knowing that we have a God that can always provide what we need. We may not always feel like God provides what we want or need, but if God does have all resources and he can provide what we need at any moment in time, and he chooses not to, then what we have to believe about God is that when he withholds things that we think we need or want, they're not actually things God believes we need. When God chooses to withhold seemingly good things from us, there must be a reason that they are not as necessary as we think. Just think about the great him, great is thy faithfulness, all I have needed, thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness. If God holds all things in his hands, then we never need to be anxious or worried about God's provision or resources in the world. But that also means because God has created all things, including humanity, then that means we owe all things to God because we are his. We belong to God because he created us and we are his.

This is the second thing that I believe Paul reveals over and against the Greco-Roman gods. You see this in verse 25. Paul continues, he says, "No worries he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined a lot of periods and boundaries of their dwelling place." See, if God is the one that created us, he gives us life and breath and being, and he gives us places to dwell, then that means he has the right to determine who we are and all that we need. He's the one that created us, and he's the one to whom we owe all things. And that's not something that is very popular in our culture. We like to think that we know what's best and we can determine what's best for ourselves. Even if you think about the little "g" gods that we worship or try to amass in our life, none of them have the right or authority to determine what's good and right for us. We try to seek them out because we think we know what's best for ourselves, but they can never determine or decide what is best for us. We use them at our disposal, placing ourselves as the authorities.

This is what many people call radical individualism or the authority of the autonomous self. This is where we've come to our culture where everyone believes they know what's best for themselves and so therefore everyone should do what's right for their own selves and what's right in their own eyes. But you know, this is not something that's only unique to one political side of the spectrum. When we hear that term, we often think that it's only those on the progressive side because they want to determine what's right in their own eyes sexually, ethically, when it comes to their own bodies. But also think about the right. The right side also believes that we should be able to determine our own rights and freedoms and no one person or government should decide what we can or can't have.

See, both sides of the political spectrum both believe in a radical individualism. And I get it. We sometimes, we often don't want to submit to another person's design for us. We don't want to submit to someone else's what they should determine how we should live because we so often see bad design in our lives. Now, I don't like to complain in sermons,

but I'm going to complain this time because last night, my wife and I, we went to a soccer game at Levi's Stadium. And if you work for Levi's or helped plan that stadium, I'm sorry, but come on. I've been to Levi's twice now, and every time I go there, I think this is the worst design stadium I've ever been to. Anyone ever been to a Niners game? Yeah, it takes like two hours just to get into the stadium. The line is longer than Disneyland to get in. You wait in this long line trying to inch your way forward. And when we were waiting in line, one of the attendants came and said, "Everyone, please be patient. The ticketers are overwhelmed." To which I turned to my wife and said, "Yeah, because they didn't hire enough of them. We're standing in line. We're waiting. We're getting stopped up by the tickets." We eventually got in, enjoyed the game, but then I remember just thinking, "We've done this before. We need to try to leave early because getting out is even worse than getting in." There's a long snaking line around all the turnstiles to finally get in the line to get on the tram that then takes about an hour to wait for because they don't have enough trains lining up. So you have to wait for the regular schedule of every 10 minutes. It's a nightmare. My legs were killing me by the end of that night. And the whole time I was thinking, "Whoever designed this stadium, what were they thinking?" And you know what I was also thinking though? I was thinking about the other stadiums I've been to that are very greatly designed. What I was thinking of, there is a stadium in my mind that has great design, and that's Oracle Park. Thank you, Bobby Evans. I love that park. It's easy to get in and out of. They have like 50 million attendance scanning tickets at every entrance. It's never hard to get out and find the bus.

But because we so often experience bad design in our lives, we tend to think that, "Well, no one knows what's best for me but me." But if God is the one that created us, then He's the one that has the best design in mind for us. And I think we see this even in small ways. You think even how God designed our bodies and the small intricacies of who we are, there's nothing that God didn't think of. Can you imagine looking at God and saying, "God, what were you thinking when you made this in the world?" I mean, there is nothing God didn't think of. My older daughter's at the age where her teeth are starting to come out, and the tooth fairy will visit her when those teeth come out. And I often will have this weird thought as, I don't know why, I just have these weird thoughts when the teeth come out and they start to grow in, or even when we're clipping her nails. And I often just think, "Isn't it weird that those things grow out of our skin?" You ever think about that? It's weird that, like, where did the nails come from? I mean, is there just an ever-ending, like, nail manufacturing machine inside my finger? But I think about my daughter, and I think, "Where did those teeth come from?" I'm not a scientist or biologist. My wife always makes fun of me for not knowing anything about biology, so someone smarter than me can explain this. But just imagine with me, with my limited small-minded ability, where did those teeth come from? Were our kids born with those bigger teeth in their tiny jaws? No, they're created somehow, but at just the right age, at just the right developmental place, God saw it fit that somehow, out of thin air it seems, these bigger teeth start growing, push their way up, and when the jaw is big enough, create a new set of teeth for their adulthood.

I mean, that is wild to me. I know, I know, I'm not a biologist, but that is wild to me, seeing it in my own kids. There is nothing God didn't think of. And if He is the good creator and designer of our lives, then we should willingly owe Him everything in our lives and say, "You know what, God? What you're doing, what you're providing, what I have, may not always seem like what I need or want, but if you created the whole world, you have all resources in your hands, then I owe you my life and I have to trust your design and your plan is better than mine." God is the creator that has a plan. He's not just haphazard like the gods of the world, He's actually in control and He has all resources at our hands. So that means even when we feel the boundaries and limits, as Paul says, of our lives, as painful or limiting as they may feel, they're ultimately according to God's good design in creation.

Which leads us also to the second point of who God is according to the Apostles Creed, and that's He is almighty. Because God created all things, He then also has authority over all things. And that means He is unlike any of the other gods in the earth. Paul again brings out this contrast. You look at verse 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. We jump down a little bit further to verse 29, which we did not read, but we'll read here. Paul says, "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 arts and imagination of man." Paul is going after the Athenian belief of the gods and much of the pagan world at the time that believe the gods resided in images that they made and temples that were man-made. They believe that these gods, this was their dedicated dwelling place. The temple was quite literally for you little ones in here. It was just a building that they made that was really beautiful and pretty that they would say the gods lived here. And that's where the gods resided. And so the priests, the sorcerers, the

diviners, their job was to enter those temples, offer sacrifices, try to discern what the gods wanted, but they were confined and limited to that space.

And what Paul is saying is, our God, he's not like these limited small gods that are bound by creation or are created themselves. Even the little gee gods of our secular world of money and finances, of knowledge, of health and wealth and coaching and fitness and diet, they are all created things. They are bound by the created order. But what Paul is saying is, if God doesn't live in man-made temples and he's not like the gods that reside in images that are formed from stone or metals, that means God is far above and beyond all things. The book of Isaiah tells us that the world, the universe is God's temple and the earth is his footstool. That means that God dwells everywhere in creation. He is not bound by his created order. He is above it all, which means then two things. God has authority over our steps.

First thing God Almighty means is that God has authority over our steps. Why we use this specific term is because of what Paul says later. In verse 26, he says, in the second half of that, he says, "He determined allotted periods in the boundaries of their dwelling place." Now what are these periods and boundaries of dwelling place? Well, that could refer to the very personal nature of how God determines where each one of us live and all of our limitations and who we are. God created us, he has authority over us, and he then determines all these little steps. I think most of us, if we've been walking with God for a while, for even a short amount of time, there are moments in our life where we point to situations and we can say, "That only happened because God was orchestrating something with full authority in my life." The only way and reason that happened was by God's determining factors and his sovereignty over my own boundaries and dwelling places.

I've shared before that my wife and I came to San Francisco out of some almost supernatural experiences when a job that was a shoe-in for her at a hospital in Los Angeles, the hiring person over the interview, suddenly died the night before her interview. We didn't get the job because no paperwork was done. That led to us staying to decide to move to San Francisco. But I also think about every time that we've tried to leave the city and doing so in a good conscience, following God's leading and call elsewhere, he's always barred the door from us. He's kept us where we are. Now sometimes I felt frustrated by that because that meant that dreams of serving him overseas were gone, but other times I've looked and marveled and thought, "God has continually done what he's done to keep us here." And that means he has a good purpose in his authority in keeping us here.

See, we can take comfort knowing that God, the creator of the universe, while he is so vast and large over creation, he's also so intricately involved in our own personal decisions. So whatever decisions that we need to make, especially those of you that are young adults looking at the next steps for where to live, where to work, you're going to make rent, where are you going to find a new job or a new promotion? How are you going to find a spouse or to make a family? Those are all things that God has in his control and it's up to him to determine and allot those periods. He will guide and determine our steps. But there's something a bit more fascinating in this statement that Paul says because when he says that God has allotted or determined the allotted periods and boundaries, I don't think he's actually talking about individuals the way we often think about. Because the context of what comes before, Paul says that he made from one man every nation of mankind. See what Paul is saying is God determined not just individual people, but entire nations. And he decides to determine where those nations would live on the face of the earth, the periods they would inhabit, and the boundaries of their kingdoms.

And so the second thing in God being almighty is that God has authority over all kingdoms. That means that God has complete authority over all of the geopolitical kingdoms on the face of the earth for all time. He determines when the Greco-Roman would rise and fall and where its boundaries would be. As we saw in the book of Habakkuk, he determines how God would raise up the Babylonians to take down the Assyrians. He determined all these different kingdoms of the earth according to his plan. This is something that I think is drawn as much as Paul is contrasting with the Athenian culture. This is also drawn from the book of Job. In Job chapter 12 verses 23 to 25, Job, the reason there's correlation, there's a couple things in these verses that Paul borrows language from. Job 12, 23, Job says of God, "He makes nations great," not political leaders. "He destroys them. He enlarges nations and leads them away. He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth and makes them wander in a trackless waste. They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man." God has authority over every single kingdom, and so as much as it may seem at times like our world is in political turmoil, as hard as it is to believe, nothing happens outside of God's

determining of periods and boundary markers. He has authority over all kings and kingdoms, over all nations and rulers, over politicians and plebeians alike. God has all authority over any one nation and kingdom that has come before, that is now and will come after nothing happens outside of his hands.

Now that means that all of our hope for this world can never be in the hands of political leaders or rulers. You see, the moment we start to think that our hope for our nation or the world resides in one elected official or another is the moment we actually lose our grip on God as Almighty and we start to place the Almighty in a person and a human-created being. See the Christian knows that our world or our nation is not doomed if it falls into the hands of the left or the right. We're more honest than that. We know the world is doomed regardless of whose hands it falls into. We know that left to human hands, whatever their policies, we will be doomed. But thanks be to God the Almighty that the world is never outside of his hands. He always has the world in his hands. And so that also means that God will always overcome all evil and injustice in the world. He may not do it in the exact moment we want or the way we seek or desire, but all opposing powers and authorities God will always overcome. If not now, then at the end of time.

God being Almighty means that none can stand against him. Because if all the creation is his and he has authority over all of it, and as Paul said God does not dwell in limited human temples but the earth is his dwelling place, then that means this is God's house. The words of Dekemimah Tumbo, not in my house. What that means then is all evil, all injustice, Satan and his minions, they're just visitors passing through God's house. This is not their dwelling place. This is God's. So that means he is mightier than any injustice or evil or powers committed whether against public figures, schools of children, vulnerable refugees or helpless immigrants. Whatever opposing powers evil or injustice may rise up, God will eventually squash them because he's going to say not in my house. It may not be until the end of time, but that's what it means for God to be Almighty.

We have this promise that all the creation is his, so all authority is his. And we have a promise that God will bring about justice according to his kingdom because he is not just a God that is far off in distance as the Athenians believed. He's a God who's near and cares. And this brings us to our last point, God is Father. The last and final point Paul makes his case against the Athenians about God is that he's a father. Verse 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." You know for the Athenians in their culture, they had ideas that the gods created the earth. They had some ideas that the gods had authority over the earth. But there was always a question of were the gods good. The whole religious basis of seeking through the diviners and priests what the gods will was to placate them through sacrifices, to try to appease them was because it was never clear what the intentions of the gods were.

Perhaps some gods could be benevolent but they could quickly turn to be malevolent. There was always a toss up. Even Stoics believed that the gods controlled everything. They believed in Zeus, the supreme deity that permeated creation. But evil and injustice existed in the world because either of the gods indifference or their outright interaction in human history. So how could we trust that we have a good creator, a god who is good in his almighty power and authority? Paul answers this with two poems that we just read. Two poems that the Athenians would have held as authoritative. Now we don't often think of poets as authoritative for life. Poets tend to be helpless romantics, heads in the clouds. But for them poets saw life as it was and made statements that were authoritative. That's why Homer and his Iliad was one of the most authoritative texts for all of life. It was similar to the prophets for Israel. That's how the poets were seen. And so when Paul quotes these prophets, he's using their own authoritative people to make a couple of cases about God's fatherhood and to show that he really is good.

And the first one is that Paul says God is not just powerful but he desires to be present with his people. God his father means he's not just powerful but he desires to be present with his people. In the first poem he quotes, "In him we live and move and have our being." Yet this would have been consistent with Stoicism in their pantheism that believed that God has permeated all of creation. And yet Paul is showing that there is one God in whom we have all of our being and life and breath and that God is the God creator and almighty of the universe. Paul is showing that God isn't just far off in distance. He's not unknown but he is present and near and he provides all things for life and breath and being. God doesn't toy with humanity just for kicks like the Greco-Roman gods did. God doesn't just see his people as servants the way they did to do his bidding. God gives life and breath and dwells among us because he wants to be near us.

And that's just the most simple thing. If you ever feel that God is distant or maybe he doesn't care or maybe he's not near. Paul is saying as much as it may feel like that, the God of the Bible says and reveals to himself that he's not sitting back waiting in judgment over us. He actually wants to be present and have a relationship with his people. He is drawing near and he cares deeply for us and one of the ways he expresses that is by not just calling us his created beings but he gives us a new name and being called children. And that's the second point that Paul makes of God's fatherhood. God makes us his children and he makes us his children specifically in Christ.

Maybe the second poem that Paul quotes, "For we are indeed his offspring." It's from a famous poet in Greece that gave this poem to show that the people that people descended from the gods, that they were the gods offspring just in the created order. But when Paul uses this phrase, he's reappropriating it not just to say that we are descended from the gods but we are God's offspring, his children. God specifically names us his children and he calls us his father. There's two ways I think that Paul is going to reveal this that we'll look at next week about Jesus and who he is that Pastor Ben's going to touch on but just to briefly touch on how does God call us his offspring and his father?

There's two simple signs that God gives to promise that he is our good father that loves his children and the first is through the incarnation because in the incarnation God shows his promise that he's not just omnipotent, powerful over all created things but he's also imminent. He's near his people. He's not far but desires to draw near as Paul says. He stepped down from heaven to enter human flesh to be with and near his people because he cares to ransom and receive his children back into his belonging and his kingdom. That is the second sign of how God makes us his children in Christ is that God died for humanity. He didn't just step into human flesh to be near us, he died for us that we might once again belong to him and be his. You think about that if God created all things, if we were already his to begin with and yet through sin we were cut off from relationship, God really paid the price twice for us to be his. We were already his to begin with and yet he sacrificed Christ to make and buy us to be his again and in so doing he calls his children and says I am your father. And in God's fatherhood God is not just a powerful God as if he knows what's best but won't give it to us. He's also a present God that knows what's best but also wants to give us what's best for us. God is this perfect father that provides for his children. He knows what's best and he's also able to provide what's best for us.

I think many of us who are fathers in this room, most fathers want what's best for their kids. Most of us do if we're really honest, even if you had a bad father, your father wanted what was best for you. The problem is usually we don't always know what's best or we can't always provide what's best. We're limited in those abilities. We don't always know what's best or we can't always provide what's best. I've experienced this as a father. I've been at a complete loss sometimes where I don't know what's best for my kids. I always think about my oldest child as just one life long trial and error process where I'm just trying to figure out how to do this. I remember especially early on, I didn't know what I was doing and even today I feel like every day is like a pop quiz as a father. You don't know what you're going to get on the test. You don't know which methods to use to solve the problems.

Should I do gentle pairing in this situation? Should I be authoritative in this situation? Which style will be better for my kid will be best? Should I helicopter more or less and back off? If my child falls and scrapes her knee off the jungle gym, should I run in to show the compassion of a good father, scoop her up in my arms and show her I love her? Or is that coddling her and not building resilience in her? So should I just kind of stand back and smile and say she can do it on her own? I mean, it's a big toss up. We often don't know what's best and so we need a greater father that does know what's best. But you know there are other times where I know what's best but I can't personally give that to my kids. There's moments where I know what's best but I'm not able to do what's best. I remember this very clearly as a young father of a newborn child. Anyone with a newborn will feel this where in the middle of the night in the first week or two you're trying to just keep the kid alive by feeding them. Like just eat and don't die. That's the goal of having a kid, right? And I remember those very first days we're trying to get our daughter to breastfeed. We're trying to get her the milk she needs and she just will not take the milk for lack of a better term. She won't feed. We saw the lactation consultants. We knew all the tricks but for whatever reason she would not feed. And I remember just thinking like I know what you need. I know what's best for you right now but I have no idea how to help you get what you need. I couldn't force it on to her. I couldn't figure out how to actually get it to her. I was incapable. But you know I also knew in those moments my own limitations. Where as much as I knew what she needed was milk but I couldn't get it to her. I also knew what she needed was a patient, gentle, loving father. But all I could give her in that moment honestly was a sleep deprived at my wits end

frustrated father. See I even know what knew what she needed in my own being as a dad. But because of my sinful limitations I just couldn't provide that for her.

But again thanks be to God that we have a good father who is creator of heaven and earth. Who has authority as the almighty and who both knows what's best and can do what's best for his children. That doesn't mean he will always do what we want or need but we know we can trust him over against all the gods of the earth, over all the small gee secular items and things in our world that tells us if you amass this God or this wealth or this item then you'll advance your life. We can trust we have a God that guarantees our best in Christ because that best will always be to make us like Christ as he pours that blessing on us as a good father does.