

Last night we started our look at Acts 17.

Paul had been run out of every other town in Macedonia and so he ended up in Athens where he was "provoked" at the blatant idolatry and immorality that was going on all around him.

- *When he couldn't take it anymore, he started preaching in the synagogue and in the city square.*
- *He was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.*
- *He eventually caught the attention of some of the local philosophers who called him an "idle babbler" and accused him of teaching "strange things".*
- *They took him to the Areopagus where they intended to debate him and humiliate him.*
- *And it was there that Paul began to explain to them who God is.*

We saw the first point of his sermon:

#1 GOD'S DISTINCTION

Acts 17:22-29

Namely what makes the God of the Bible different from the gods in Athens
(And ultimately from every other so-called god in the world.)

1. He is Creator, not created
2. He is Sovereign, not destitute
3. He is Involved, not indifferent
4. He is Living, not dead

In short, He is the highest and preeminent God of the world.

- *There is none other like Him.*
- *He has full power and authority.*
- *He can do whatever He wants.*

Isaiah 43:13 "Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"

**No other god can make such claims.
He alone is the One True God.**

And He is the God the people of Athens KNEW NOTHING ABOUT.

- *That is a testimony to their ignorance*
- *That is a testimony to their apathy*
- *That is a testimony to their wickedness*

**These sinful men had ignored the God who created Him,
They had not sought Him, so they had not found Him,
And they did not know Him.**

THAT IS A SIN.

That is to totally miss the point of why you were created.

But that was Athens.

And so Paul just revealed to them who God is.

God's Distinction

#2 GOD'S DECLARATION

Acts 17:30-31

**Now that you know who this God is,
It is also important to know what this God's message is
For those He has created.**

- *Have you ever wanted a short summary of God's message for you?*
- *Have you ever wondered if God were to open the heavens and give you a tailor-made sermon, what would it be?*

**Well here it is.
REPENT!**

*Now, let's break down what Paul has to say a little more
To make sure we have a good understanding of it.*

There are 4 things we want to talk about here.

1) GOD'S PATIENCE (30a)

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance..."

**That's an interesting statement.
What does Paul mean?**

**Namely that GOD HAS NOT IMMEDIATELY JUDGED MEN
As they deserved to be judged.**

- *The people of Athens have been living in full-blown idolatry.*
- *They have given God's glory to graven images.*
- *They have participated in sexual immorality as they worshiped those gods.*
- *They have failed to honor God or give thanks to Him.*

YET...

He has not destroyed them for it.

Psalms 103:8-10 "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

**They were terribly sinful and idolatrous,
But God understood that they didn't know any better.**

They had been taught wrong.

- *That DOESN'T make their sin OK, but it does explain God's patience.*
- *It DOESN'T mean judgment wouldn't come, but it explains God's patience.*

They were . totally without excuse since they did have creation,
But still God was patient
Understanding that they had been taught wrong all their lives.

Here were people who had grown up in Athens and had been taught since they were children

- That Zeus was a powerful god
- That Eros controlled their love life
- That all these other gods guided their life.

AND BECAUSE THEY WERE IGNORANT,
God had patiently overlooked their sin and allowed them to live.

And God has done that for more people than just the people of Greece.
The **history of humanity** has been one of **continual rebellion** against God.

The very first humans ever created

- Broke the only command they had from God which was to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- And every human since has followed in their path.

Not only do we see the sinfulness of Israel in the Old Testament,
But we are introduced to people like the Amorites or Philistines
Or the Moabites or the people of Jericho.

- People who burned their children in the fire as an offering to the false god Molech.
- People who crammed babies into jars and mortared them into the wall that surrounded Jericho as a sacrifice to the wall gods.
- People who committed acts of sexual immorality and grotesque living.
- People who lied and murdered and stole and blasphemed.

But more than anything **people who failed to give God the glory** He deserved for creating them and sustaining their lives.

History is full of people
Who rebelled against the God who created them.

In fact, the apostle Paul put together A COMPILATION
Of Old Testament passages where God revealed
What He thought about the behavior of humanity.

Romans 3:10-18 "as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN." "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

It is clear that all of humanity has offended God
And deserves His punishment for failing to honor Him
As God and submit to Him as Sovereign,
But God has been patient because He understood they were ignorant.

But **the point** Paul will make is that this patience will not last forever.
God's patience will come to an end.

There are many today who assume that
Because God has not judged that He will not judge
And that is a foolish assumption.

He most certainly will judge those who defy Him.

And based upon that reality Paul has a message for the people of Athens,
(who by the way are no longer ignorant of God)
Since Paul has just told them about Him.

After discussing His Patience

2) HIS TARGET AUDIENCE (30b)

"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere..."

I just want to make sure you are aware who this message of God is for.

- Do you fall under the category of **"all people"**?
- Do you fall under the category of **"everywhere"**?

This is not a message just for the people of Athens.
This is a message for every human being who dwells upon the earth.

And so we move to the 3rd point

3) HIS ADVICE (30c)

"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent"

We all agree that we are **"all people"** and we fall under the category of **"everywhere"**.

The next question is: **WHAT DOES GOD WANT YOU TO DO?**
"REPENT"

Now let me explain that word real quickly.
The Greek word is **METANOEO**
It literally means **"to change one's mind"**

That is, to think differently about your LIFE,
Your CHOICES, your DESIRES, and especially your SIN.

It DOES NOT mean to simply "say you are sorry".

The writer of *Genesis* wrote about **Esau** who despised his birthright in the Old Testament saying:

Hebrews 12:17 "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears."

He cried, but he didn't repent.

Let's give it a relevant analogy.

Let's say a coach had a non-tolerance policy for underage drinking.

- If you get caught drinking, you get kicked off the team.
- And let's say a player gets caught drinking.
- He might cry to the coach...
- He might say I'm sorry...
- He might be willing to run laps, or whatever...
- But all the while still in his mind like drinking alcohol.

He may hate the consequences, but he doesn't hate drinking.

That is not repentance.

That is forced submission due to consequences.

Repentance is a change of mind.

- It is not simply to stop sinning, **but to think differently about the sin.**
- It is not simply to stop offending God, **but hate that you ever offended Him in the first place.**

DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

Paul says that **"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent"**

ARE YOU READY TO BRING IT HOME?

That means that God wants you to do what? Repent

**God's message for you is that
You should change your mind about the way you live.**

Not just say "sorry"...

Not just cry about consequences...

But change your mind.

LET'S BRING IT EVEN FURTHER.

Do you know why God is calling you to repent?

BECAUSE YOU HAVE OFFENDED GOD

- You have *broken His commands.*
- You have *failed to worship Him as He deserves.*
- You, the dirt, created by God for Him have *failed to fulfill the purpose* for which you were created.

**You took the life that He gave you
And used it for your own glory and satisfaction
Instead of using it for His glory and satisfaction.**

You **HAVE NOT DONE** what He has told you to do.
You **HAVE DONE** what He has told you not to do.
You, as the clay, have told the Potter to get lost.

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

Should we consider some examples?

How about perverse speech?

Ephesians 5:4-5 "and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

- The Bible says *not to talk about filthy things.*
- The Bible says *not to talk dirty.*
- This includes *foul language, dirty jokes, sexual innuendo, etc.*

If you have done that, you have deliberately defied the God who created you.

How about sexual immorality?

1 Thessalonians 4:3 "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;"

- We could talk about *pre-marital sex, or looking at pornography, or according to Jesus simply lusting after someone.*
- It could be *flaunting your body so as to attract people sexually to your body.*

If you have done that, you have deliberately defied the God who created you.

How about disobeying or disrespecting your parents?

Ephesians 6:1-3 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH."

- We could talk about the old "eye roll" we give to parents, or *arguing with them,*
- Or *disrespecting them, or breaking their rules, or lying to them.*

If you have done that you have deliberately defied the God who created you.

How about idolatry?

Colossians 3:5-6 "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,"

- We are talking about *anything that becomes more important to you than God.*
- Here it is *loving money, it could be your time, it could be your reputation, it could be pleasure.*

If you have done that, then you have deliberately defied the God of the universe.

How about living the world?

1 John 2:15 "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

- This could be stuff of the world, this could be the pleasures of the world,
- This could be the desires of the world, the mindset of the world, etc.

If you have done that, then you have defied the God of the universe.

How about failing to make God a priority?

Hebrews 10:24-25 "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

- That is simply a command to go to church and fellowship with God's people.
- Skipping church, failing to fellowship, not encouraging other believers.

Do you do what God has commanded there, or do you deliberately defy Him?

Want to see a list of what we're talking about?

Romans 1:28-32 "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

Have you ever done any of the things on that list?
Then you have deliberately defied the sovereign God who created you.

You, as the clay, have risen up in opposition to the potter.

And you may say, "But I didn't realize that in all that sin I was offending God. I didn't know I was defying Him, I just thought I was having a good time."

(30) "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,"

MAYBE YOU WERE JUST IGNORANT.

And even though you sinned, **God did not immediately judge you.**

But you are no longer ignorant.

- Now you have been told.
- And Paul says, you **"should repent"**

You should change your mind about the way you view sin.

Sin is not just a good time, it is not just something everyone does.

- Every sin is a direct act of **insubordination** to the Sovereign God of the universe who created you.
- Every sin is a direct **defiance** of His commands and His authority.

You should change your mind about the way you view it.

Change your mind about dirty jokes, about sexual immorality, About drinking, about disobeying your parents, about skipping church, About greed, or lying, or any other sin.

It is an offense to God.

And by the way, this is NOT AN ISOLATED MESSAGE.

When John the Baptist arrived (the forerunner for Jesus) he said:

Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Jesus came shortly thereafter and His first sermon:

Matthew 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

And throughout His ministry, this was Jesus' message:

Matthew 11:20-21 "Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

Matthew 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Luke 13:2-5 "And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

When Jesus sent the 12 out on mission, He gave them orders of what to preach:

Mark 6:12 "They went out and preached that men should repent."

Luke 24:47 "and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

And the disciples never abandoned that message.

When Peter preached at Pentecost:

Acts 2:38 "Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

During Peter's second sermon in Jerusalem:

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;"

During Peter's third sermon in Jerusalem:

Acts 5:31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

When Paul preached:

Acts 20:21 "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts 26:20 "but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."

And certainly here in Athens.

"God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent"

Let me ask you again: **WHAT IS GOD'S MESSAGE FOR ALL HUMANITY?**
REPENT!

The Sovereign and All Powerful God
Has been offended by the people He created and they must repent.

BUT PAUL ISN'T DONE

The sermon continues and Paul explains why you should repent.

His Patience, His Target Audience, His Advice

4) HIS REASON (31)

"because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Why should you repent?

"Because [God] has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness"

Did you notice that **"fixed a day"** part?

*The Sovereign God, who is in control of all things,
Has already set the day on His calendar.*

You and I don't know when the end will come, but God does.

*He's already picked the day.
We're flying at it at the rate of 60 seconds per minute.
It's coming.*

And He is now warning humanity that the day is coming
And they should get ready for it by repenting.

Paul even makes clear what GOD'S STANDARD of judgment will be.
What criteria will God use to judge the world?

"He will judge the world in _____"

- When judgment comes, God will not grade on the curve.
- When judgment comes, it won't be 70% passing.
- When judgment comes, it won't be more bark than bite.

At the judgment all men will be judged
By God's perfect standard of righteousness.
All of those commands that He gave.

He will measure your life by those commands.

- *Did you obey them all flawlessly? Then you get to go to heaven.*
- *Did you break even one? Then you will be judged as rebel and an enemy.*

God will judge in righteousness.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT PREACHER?

**Because thus far, there has only ever been one human
Who escaped judgment on His own.**

The Bible is clear:

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death..."

If you are deemed a sinner by God then your penalty is death in hell.

So far, in all of history,
There has only been One whom God deemed not guilty.

Do you know who that was?

Jesus

How do you know God declared Him not guilty?

"having furnished proof by raising Him from the dead."

*Why did God raise Jesus?
Because Jesus was sinless.*

Had God done this for anyone else? No (not raised never to die again)

**That means no other man has ever achieved righteousness before God.
Even the best men you can think of.**

So what does that about God's righteous standard of judgment?

*He is strict isn't He?
Perfect or bust.*

Now do you understand why God is telling all men to repent?

**Because through repentance and faith in Jesus
God grants forgiveness of sins.**

IN FACT,

Through repentance and faith in Jesus, God grants JUSTIFICATION.

*That means when sinful men repent and place their faith in Jesus,
God declares them righteous even though they are not.*

To that truth I said:

Romans 4:7-8 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

IT IS CALLED THE GOSPEL.
And it is also the sovereign plan of God.

God determined to send His only begotten Son into the world.

- That His Son *might perfectly obey* all of His commands.
- That His Son might *pay the penalty* for the sin for all those who believe.

It was our main point last year, if you were herE.

2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

*God treated the sinless Jesus as if He had lived my life,
So that He could treat me, the sinner, as though I had lived Jesus' life.*

It's called being "*In Him*" or "*clothed in the righteousness of Christ*"

A WEEK FROM TODAY IS HALLOWEEN.

Kids will take to the streets and they will wear costumes to look like someone else.

I would tell you that you also need a costume.

*You need to be dressed as someone else when you stand before God.
You need to be dressed in the righteousness of Jesus.*

That happens when we repent of our sin and place our faith in Jesus.

EXAMPLE

I've read you several passages from *Isaiah* as we've looked at the sovereignty of God.

*Let me show you the passage where the people of Israel
Heard what Isaiah was saying and repented.*

TURN TO: Isaiah 64:5-8 "You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. Behold, You were angry, for we sinned, We continued in them a long time; And shall we be saved? For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand."

Did you pick up on what they said?

- God, You like a man who rejoices in righteousness.
- That's why You were angry at us, because we sinned.
- We don't deserve salvation.

- Every good thing we've done was actually filthy in Your sight.
- But if You will forgive, **we will submit our lives to You.**

You are the Potter, we are the clay.
We are finished with our rebellion and we want to be forgiven.

- We are sorry for our sin, we hate that we offended You.
- We denounce our own goodness because it wasn't good enough.
- We run to Jesus who alone was good enough.
- And we totally submit all that we are to You, **THE ONLY SOVEREIGN**

The New Testament teaches the same:

Romans 10:9 "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;"

LISTEN TO ME STUDENT.

You must grasp this truth.

- God is Sovereign, He is the Creator of all things.
- And because He is the Creator, He is also the Judge.
- And He will judge all who defy His commands.

**But this Sovereign God, who can do whatever He pleases,
Has determined that He would be first and foremost a Savior.**

Instead of judging sinners, He prefers to save them.

- And so for a time He patiently endures.
- And while He endures He calls for them to repent.
- He tells them to trust in Jesus.

AND IF THEY DO, THEY ARE SAVED.

*IF THEY DO NOT, then there is no other option
But to stand before the Sovereign God whom they have offended.*

This is the message the whole world must hear.
This is the message you must hear.

Today I ask you flat out.

- Have you ever repented of your sin?
- Have you ever told God you were sorry, not just because you got caught, but because you realized you offended Him?
- Have you ever seen that your good deeds are not good enough?
- Have you ever recognized that Jesus is good enough?
- Have you ever placed your faith in Him and submitted to Him as your Lord?

If you have not, I'm asking you to do that tonight.
Grab an adult – go to your small group leader – but run to Jesus!