

**"The Second Missionary Journey"**

**Part 15**

**Acts 15:41-18:22**

**Introduction:** It has been almost a month since our last study in Acts so we need a short review to get our minds set for what we are going to look at this evening. We are following Paul and company on their second missionary journey. When we stopped the last time Paul was preaching a sermon on Mars Hill in the city of Athens. This was a city that was deep in idolatry, which helps us to understand just how spiritually dark this city would have been.

**Notice Acts 17:16-21**

Paul went to the synagogue and the marketplace to discuss with the philosophers the Truth of the Gospel. They then took Paul to Mars Hill where he was given a platform to share the Gospel with much of the city. This was a wonderful opportunity for a common Jewish man. As Paul preached, he did not reference the Old Testament because these people were pagans who had no knowledge of the Old Testament.

➤ **Paul's Sermon on Mars Hill**

**Notice Acts 17:22-23**

Paul was not trying to insult his listeners he was saying, "I have taken notice of how religious you are and how much attention you give to your gods." These people were not atheists. They did not deny the existence of a deity. They worshipped many gods and they were fearful that they may have missed one so they made an altar to the unknown god just so they would not offend any god they had missed. Paul would use this altar to introduce them to the True and living God.

**Notice Acts 17:24-25**

Paul started his sermon with creation. He explained that the God that they did not know was the God who has created the world. He explained that God is all sufficient and there is nothing that He needs. He is the God who gives us life, and keeps us alive, and provides for everyone of our needs as we pass through this world.

**Application:**

I need to just stop here and point out something that we often overlook. This is not just true of believers but it is also true of unbelievers. God gives them life and he keeps them alive as well as providing all they need in their lives. The unsaved world experiences the grace of God every day in their lives.

**Matthew 5:43-48**

<sup>43</sup> *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

<sup>44</sup> *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

<sup>45</sup> *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

<sup>46</sup> *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*

<sup>47</sup> *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

<sup>48</sup> *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Paul tells us in Romans the reason why God blesses the unsaved.

**Romans 2:1-4**

*Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

<sup>2</sup> *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

<sup>3</sup> *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

<sup>4</sup> *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

God's blessings upon the unsaved are for the purpose of leading them to repentance. It is not a sign of His approval nor is it the result of man's ability to somehow gain the riches of this life. No man could do anything without God (**he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;**).

This is interesting in the day in which we live when we consider how the elite of this world believe they are above the general public. There are leaders in our own nation that see us

as "deplorables" but little do they know they have their positions and their wealth because God has permitted it. They have no idea that they are no different than the poorest person in our nation. When judgment day comes, the elites will stand on the same level as all the other unbelievers. They will have no advantage.

**Revelation 20:11-12**

*<sup>11</sup> And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

**Notice Acts 17:26**

Here Paul tells his listeners that the entire human race is of one blood and he reveals to them that God is sovereign over the nations and with each nation God has appointed their boundaries. Every nation has a purpose and time carved out of history in which they will exist as well as the geographical area they will inhabit.

**Application:**

This means that even our nation was established by God for His purpose and He has also determined the time frame of how long our nation will exist. Any people worry about what is going to happen to our nation and when we read this verse, we understand that God controls our nation and He has already determined how long the USA will exist. When this nation and all other nations have served the purpose of God then it will be replaced. The only nation that will not come to an end is Israel.

**Jeremiah 31:35-37**

*<sup>35</sup> Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:*

*<sup>36</sup> If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.*

*<sup>37</sup> Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.*

**Jeremiah 33:20-21**

<sup>20</sup> *Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;*

<sup>21</sup> *Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.*

**Notice Acts 17:27-28**

This is where we ended the last time.

Here in verse 28 Paul quotes two of the pagan Greek poets. He first quoted from Epimenides of Crete who lived 600 years earlier. Epimenides had written, "For in thee we live and move and have our being." The quote Paul shared with the Athenians was this: "In Him [in God] we live and move and have our being." Paul also quoted from Aratus of Cilicia. Three hundred years earlier, Aratus said, "For we are also His offspring." Paul was very wise in quoting these poets because he knew it would keep the attention of his unsaved audience. He will now make an application for his listeners.

**Notice Acts 17:29**

Paul brings the point directly to them. Since man is the offspring of God, meaning that man has come from God in that He created man, then how could the idols of gold, silver, stone, and wood be Deity or be God. The idols were made by man's hands and therefore to say they were gods was to say that man created God. The idols could not create anything and they were just dumb idols. The thinking of these great philosophers was completely out of line. When these people lowered deity down to the idols, they were worshipping the creation and not the Creator.

**Application:**

This is still practiced in our world today and even much more. There are people today that do not believe in a Creator but they believe in evolution or they worship an idol made of wood or stone. They worship the creature but not the Creator. Where is the logical thinking in all of this? Why are we seeing people today that worship the earth but not God when common sense tells us that the earth did not create man? Man is far too complex to have just somehow evolved. So, what has happened and what is happening?

What we are seeing today is the result of suppressing the Truth that God has given to all men that He exists. When Truth is rejected, it becomes impossible for man to make moral

decisions. What we are seeing today is just a small glimpse of how depraved man is and how deep into sin he would sink if it were not for God's grace and intervention.

**Romans 1:21-24**

<sup>21</sup> *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

<sup>22</sup> *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,*

<sup>23</sup> *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*

<sup>24</sup> *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:*

**Notice Acts 17:30-31**

Because of the longsuffering and the forbearance of God judgment had not fallen upon mankind. But God's patience will not go on forever but there is a day when judgment will break forth.

**Romans 2:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

<sup>5</sup> *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

<sup>6</sup> *Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

<sup>7</sup> *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:*

<sup>8</sup> *But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,*

<sup>9</sup> *Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;*

God now commands men everywhere to repent. Repentance is necessary for salvation and it goes hand in hand with true salvation. Repentance is a change of mind. It is understanding

that you are on a path of destruction and have the desire to get on a path that leads to eternal life.

**Notice Acts 17:32**

When these people heard of the resurrection, they basically shut Paul out. Notice what Whitcomb reveals about their beliefs.

*"The particular doctrine which the Athenians rejected was Paul's teaching that all men would be raised from the dead (Acts 17:31). If he had merely spoken of the immortality of the soul, this would not have been a problem to most of these Greeks. But they rejected the concept of bodily resurrection. Their belief was this: "Once a man dies and the earth drinks up his blood, there is no resurrection." One of the great poets of Athens, named Aeschylus, five hundred years earlier had said that when we die, we return to dust forever, and there will be no resurrection from the dead. Such was one of the basic understandings of Greek philosophy: "There is no such thing as resurrection; it's impossible!" The people of Athens were programmed and brainwashed against the doctrine of bodily resurrection from the dead."*

**Notice Acts 17:33-34**

There were a handful of people who believed but the sad thing is we never hear of any church starting in Athens so we can assume that there were never many believers within the city. They were given the Truth but to them it was foolishness.

**Conclusion:**

Notice the words of Dave Thomas in closing.

*"Responsibility is measured by privileges. Athens had been highly favoured for ages. Great men had lived and laboured there—men with many a divine thought within them—Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, but Paul was greater than all. He gave more of the divine in thought to them than was found in the combined wisdom of all their philosophers. O Athens, better a thousand times that Paul had never entered thee, than that thou shouldst fail in the new-imposed responsibility! Paul changed the position of Athens in the moral world. Geographically and materially, it remained the same, but in the moral empire of God it was a changed place. The men there would never feel again exactly as they had felt, would never think again exactly as they had thought."*