

SERMON HIGHLIGHTS

VERY RELIGIOUS, YET VERY WRONG

Acts 17:16

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.

Acts 17:21

21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Acts 17:18-20

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.”

Acts 17:22-31

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.”

“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.”

Some have hearts that are hard and impenetrable, while others have hearts like good soil, and they hear the word and understand it and believe it.

1. Like Paul, we have to be prepared to speak the truth courageously and confidently in the face of overwhelming odds.

Ephesians 6:19-20

19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

2. Like Paul, we've got to offer a compelling contrast against the gods who can never be known by proclaiming the living God Who can be known.

Colossians 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

3. Like Paul, we can't compromise the unpopular, but true message of coming judgment and the need for repentance.

To remain silent would mean the church has compromised the very thing that distinguishes it from the world!

The God of love is also the God of justice.

The life of discipleship with Jesus is counter-cultural!