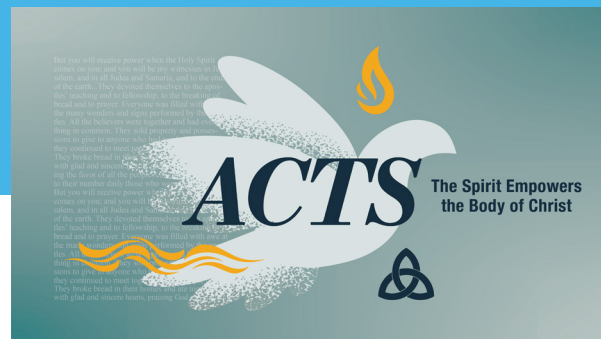


Discussion Questions

February 23, 2025

Acts 17:1-15

Turning the World Right-Side Up



1. Read Acts 17:16-21

Paul is provoked by the sin and idolatry of the city, but yet responds by engaging them and seeking to meet them where they are at, rather than standing in judgment. Discuss what this looks like for us to approach the sinfulness of our society in the same way today. How do we balance a righteous indignation with compassion and love in action?

2. Read Acts 17:22-31

Summarize Paul's approach to reaching the people of Greece in his sermon at Mars Hill? What can we learn from his message?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

Paul's sermon was brilliant, but it wasn't his cleverness that changed hearts - it was the Holy Spirit's power. In what ways do we tend to rely on our own strength and wisdom to change others? What does it look like practically to rely more on the power of the Holy Spirit for us today?

4. What was the appeal of idol worship in the ancient world?

5. James gave a few examples of modern idols Christians wrestle with today: self-sufficiency, approval, comfort, and achievement. What are other examples of idolatry we struggle with today? Share an area you wrestle with.

6. James shared that we can even make God into an idol when we treat him like a divine vending machine to be manipulated or controlled. "if I do this... then you must give me that." In what ways have you fallen prey to that understanding? What does it look like to worship God free of manipulation and control?

Acts 17:16-23 (NLT)

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there. He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, "What's this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he's picked up?" Others said, "He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods." Then they took him to the high council of the city. "Come and tell us about this new teaching," they said. "You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it's all about." (It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.) So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about.

**Epicureanism:**

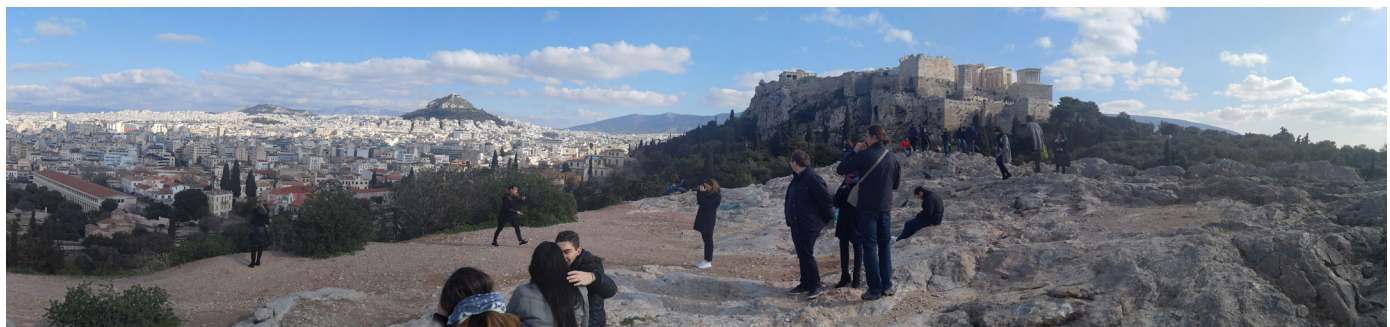
"if gods exist, they don't care about us... therefore seek pleasure above all else."

Similar to modern day materialists & hedonists

Stoicism:

Emphasized humanity's rational abilities and individual self-sufficiency

Similar to modern-day New Age followers, Pantheistic

**The Greek word for "Unknown God"**

"agnostos" (This is the word we get Agnostic from)

1 Corinthians 2:1–5 (NLT)

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness - timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God.

2 Primary Takeaways from Paul's sermon:

We must be regularly being filled with the Holy Spirit

We must share the Gospel

D.L. Moody

It is clear you don't like my way of doing evangelism. You raise some good points. Frankly, I sometimes do not like my way of doing evangelism. But I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it.

Examples of Christian Idolatry Today:

Self-sufficiency

- Trust in our own abilities
- Only trust God as a last resort, after we have failed.

Approval

- Seeking validation from others that eclipses seeking God's approval

Comfort

- Prioritize a life of ease and distraction

Achievement (status)

- Pursuing career, wealth, or recognition as a source of identity.