
Ministry of the Holy Spirit
Acts 17:16-32
Lesson 32 – Looking For God In All The Wrong Places

Acts 17:16-32 (NIV)

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) ²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' ²⁹ "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an image made by man's design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." ³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

Discussion Questions

1. What does the number of idols in Athens reveal about the spiritual condition of the people?

 Acts 17:16, 22–23

How can having many things we depend on actually reveal that we are still searching for something deeper?

2. The sermon says, "Our idols reveal what our heart is looking for." What do your priorities reveal about what your heart is seeking?

 Acts 17:22–23; Matthew 6:21

What gets the greatest amount of your time, energy, emotion, money, and attention?

3. When does a good thing become an idol?

 Exodus 20:3; Romans 1:25

Consider the sermon's definition: "Anything I ask to give me what ultimately only God can give me is an idol." What good things are Christians sometimes tempted to turn into ultimate things?

4. The sermon asks, "What are you terrified of losing?" Why can that question help expose an idol?

 Matthew 6:19–21, 33

What is the difference between deeply valuing something and allowing it to determine your identity, security, or worth?

5. What does Paul mean when he says that God "is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything"?

 Acts 17:24–25

How does this challenge the idea that God somehow owes us because of what we do for Him?

6. Paul says God gives us "life and breath and everything else." How should recognizing our dependence on God change the way we live?

 Acts 17:25, 28; James 1:17

Where have you seen God sustaining you even during seasons when you were not fully paying attention to Him?

7. What does it mean that God "is not far from any one of us"?

 Acts 17:27–28; Psalm 139:7–10

How can someone be surrounded by evidence of God's presence and provision yet still live without surrendering to Him?

8. The sermon says, "We want a manageable God." What does a "manageable God" look like in practical Christian living?

 Acts 17:29–30; Luke 6:46

Where are we tempted to want God's blessings, comfort, and promises without accepting His correction and commands?

9. What is biblical repentance, and how is it different from simply feeling guilty or sorry?

 Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10

Discuss the sermon's statement: **"Repentance means I don't reshape God to fit my life. God reshapes my life to fit His will."**

10. Why does genuine love from God sometimes confront us instead of comforting us?

 Hebrews 12:5–11; Revelation 3:19

Discuss this statement from the sermon: **"A God who doesn't challenge you can't change you."** Pasted text

11. Why does Paul make the resurrection the climax of his message instead of simply telling the Athenians to become more religious?

 Acts 17:30–32; 1 Corinthians 15:14–20

If Jesus truly rose from the dead, what does that demand from someone who hears the gospel?

12. Acts 17 shows three responses to the message: some mocked, some delayed, and some believed. Which response presents the greatest danger for people who regularly hear God's Word but keep postponing obedience?

 Acts 17:32–34; Hebrews 3:15

The sermon warns, **"Don't let 'later' become your way of saying 'no.'"** What is something God has already shown, convicted, or called you to do that you may be postponing?

Share your major takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon this week.

Commentary

I. Athens, the Great Intellectual and Philosophical City (Part I): The Preacher's Urgency and Various Audiences—Who It Is That Needs the Gospel, [17:16-21](#)

([17:16-21](#)) Introduction: this is an excellent study on different types of people and audiences who sit before the gospel.

1. ([17:16](#)) Minister: there was the messenger Paul in Athens, the great intellectual and cultural center of the world. Paul was alone, and no doubt he did as anyone would do—he toured the city. But note: he was not swept off his feet by the majestic buildings and splendor of the architecture. Contrariwise, what gripped him was the

idolatry. The city was "wholly given to idolatry." The Greek says "full of idols." Ancient writers estimate that the city had thousands and thousands of idols, one or more for every person in the city. The idols sat everywhere, lining the streets and buildings, within and without every home. Seeing such a sight "stirred" (*parōxuneto* [PWS: 3773](#)) the spirit of Paul. The word means aroused, agitated, irritated. Paul was aroused...

- over the abuse of God's glory.
- over the spiritual blindness of man's mind and reason.
- against the devil's enslavement of lives.
- with compassion for the souls of men.

Note what happened: Paul could wait no longer. He had been waiting for Silas and Timothy, but he could not swallow the scene of idolatry anymore. He began to *reason* and *discuss* the gospel with men everywhere. The word "dispute" (*dielegeto* [PWS: 1096](#)) means to reason and discuss. And he proclaimed the gospel *daily*. The idea is twofold.

1. He was zealous, full of fervor and passion, eagerly grasping every moment and opportunity.
2. He knew the stakes were high. The destiny of everyone he passed and saw lay in the balance. They were all lost and doomed unless he could reach them with the gospel. Therefore no matter the cost, he had to do all he could to reach and help them in their search for the truth.

2. (17:17) Religionists— Gospel: the first audience for the gospel was the religionists. The religionists were pictured in the Jews. They...

- were the regular attenders of worship services.
- were familiar with God.
- were familiar with the Scripture and its teachings.
- were the ones usually trying to live moral and just lives.
- were the ones usually seeking truth.

Therefore they were the logical ones to try and reach first. They were the first ones for whom the preacher's heart would ache, for they...

- had been seeking God and had been blinded by institutional religion, by its ceremony and ritual and form.
- were resting in a false security and assurance.
- had been holding the banner of morality and justice high in an evil world.
- had been holding back the flood waters of evil.

Very simply, the religionists were the persons who were more like the preacher than anyone else. The religionists, although lost and blinded to Christ, were concerned with morality and justice. The preacher's heart was bound to ache for the *blind religionists* to know the truth.

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" ([Romans 9:2-3](#)).

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" ([Romans 10:1](#)).

"For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" ([1 Thes. 2:9](#)).

3. ([17:17](#)) Seeking God— Reverence: the second audience for the gospel was God-fearing men and women. The word "devout" (*sebomenois* [PWS:1023](#)) means those who worship or the God-fearing men and women who are not Jews. There were many of these in the ancient world, many who were just sick of the immorality and injustices of their pagan society and polytheistic religions. Therefore, they turned to the Jewish religion, being attracted by the emphasis upon one God and the laws demanding morality and justice for all

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" ([Acts 17:27](#)).

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" ([Deut. 4:29](#)).

4. ([17:17](#)) Gospel— Materialism: the third audience for the gospel was the average person or citizen of the community. These were the people of the community who...

- gave little thought or notice to truth, to what lay behind the world and man, behind behavior and death.
- just fit in and went along with the crowd and society and the world around them, whether just or unjust, moral or immoral.
- were concerned with day to day affairs and practical living.

They were the audience who moved about in the market places and shopping centers of the community, buying and selling, demonstrating concern over...

- appearance and looks• clothes and the latest styles• possessions and things
- body and development• social acceptance and popularity• position and recognition
- money and property

Note: these are the materialists of the world, and materialism always leaves the human heart empty and longing for something that will fill one's life and satisfy. The heart of the honest materialist is a prime audience for the gospel.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" ([Matthew 16:26](#)).

5. ([17:18](#)) Epicureans— Worldliness: the fourth audience for the gospel was the Epicureans or pleasure-seekers. The Epicurean philosophy has been in the world since Adam. However, the basic principles were spelled out by the Greek philosopher Epicurus (B.C. 342-270). The basic beliefs are:

⇒ The world happened by chance, by accident. ⇒ If there are *gods*, they are remote and disinterested in the affairs of men. ⇒ Man is left on his own to discover the truth and pleasure of life. ⇒ There is nothing after death, no heaven or hell, no reward or punishment. Man simply returns to become part of the dust of the earth.

Note how this philosophy centers upon man and his pleasure. It is both humanistic and materialistic, leaving God completely out of the picture. Note also the practical outcome of the Epicurean philosophy. Man is left on his own to discover the truth and his own pleasure. Whatever pleases him, gives him and his society pleasure and happiness, he is free to do. Such a low view of man leads man...

- to do his own thing.
- to indulge self.
- to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow he dies and is no more.
- to take license against others.
- to please self over others.
- to behave for self-interest, selfishly.
- to ignore and deny the rights of others in order to have and build, and to secure one's own happiness and pleasure.

Pleasure-seekers are often left empty and dissatisfied, craving for something to fill and satisfy their lives. They are, therefore, prime prospects for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" ([Luke 8:14](#)).

6. ([17:18](#)) Stoics: the fifth audience for the gospel was the Stoics or the rationalists, the self-controlled and disciplined. The stoic philosophy was formulated by Zeno (B.C. 336-264). The basic beliefs are...

- Pantheism: god exists in everything and in everyone. The *fiery spirit*, the energy of everything and everyone, is god.
- Fatalism: whatever happened occurred because it was supposed to happen. There is no good or evil in the world. Things are the way they are and happen the way they do because they are destined. There is nothing anyone can do about anything.

Note the practical outcome of this philosophy. People—those who believe in a *god* and believe that whatever happens is *of god* and that events cannot be affected by man—slip into one of two responses.

First, some people try to control their destiny. They discipline and control themselves, using all the reasoning powers and energy at their disposal. They try to control their destiny and fate, attempting to make only good things happen. They even deny themselves the simple pleasures and joys of life. They repress all feelings, for emotions and feelings are only signs of weakness. A person tries to be self-sufficient, indifferent to pain and pleasure, and guided by reason alone.

Second, some people reason they can do nothing about their fate; therefore, they just live doing little if anything. They take whatever comes as their destiny and the life they are supposed to live. They make few if any significant contributions to life. Of course, this often leads to complacency and lethargy, laziness and worthlessness.

The disciplined, the self-controlled, and the legalist often ache for release, for a spirit of joy and rejoicing. And they, along with the lethargic, complacent, and fatalist, often ache for the care and interest of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are often a prime audience for the gospel.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" ([Galatians 4:10-11](#)).

"For bodily exercise [discipline] profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" ([1 Tim. 4:8](#)).

7. ([17:18-21](#)) **Philosophers:** the sixth audience of the gospel was the philosophical questioners of Christ. Note several points.

1. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers confronted Paul. Some mocked him to his face, calling him a "babbler." Others took him more seriously, saying that he was presenting a new and *strange god* to the people.

Thought 1. Paul endured the mockery, stood his ground and refused to be dismissed. He wanted the chance to preach the gospel so that some might be saved. What a dynamic example for us—willing to bear mockery in order to try and reach some of the mockers for Christ!

2. It was Jesus and the resurrection that confounded the philosophers. Note: Paul was proclaiming Jesus as *the personal God*...

- the God who is vitally interested in our lives, interested enough to come to earth and live and die for us.
- the God who is so interested in us that He has ordained a day when He will resurrect all of us to face Him and give an account of our lives.

3. The philosophers brought Paul to the Areopagus, which is the Greek for Mars Hill. It is not known whether Paul was asked to share his *god* with a congregation of all the interested philosophers of the city or before the official court of the city. Whatever the case, he would be surrounded by a throng of people who had followed him to Mars Hill. Paul was anxious to preach Christ.

4. The great need of the philosophers is clearly stated by Scripture. They were...

- aimless
- empty
- meaningless
- without profitable purpose

They had searched every philosophy and thought, belief and position in the known world at that time, and they had come short in finding the truth—the one true and living God. They had searched and ended up empty for so long that they found meaning in life only by listening to new and novel ideas. They were hopeless in discovering the one all-embracing Being of truth.

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" ([Romans 1:22](#)).

"For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:19-21).

J. Athens (Part II): Preaching to a Heathen People, [17:22-34](#)

1. ([17:22](#)) **Gospel— Preaching:** Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill ready to preach. He stood where so many of the world's great philosophers had stood, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They had expounded the great thoughts of their philosophies; now Paul was about to proclaim the great truths of God. The official court sat before him and a large crowd of interested philosophers and poets and citizens surrounded him. There they sat and stood, all heathens, completely void of any knowledge of the living and true God. The most momentous moment of their lives was about to take place. They were about to hear the most glorious news ever proclaimed to man: God had revealed Himself and made Himself known to man. He had sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to earth to save man from sin, death, and judgment to come. God was deeply concerned with the welfare of man. Paul's message included eight points.

2. ([17:22](#)) **Man, Seeking God:** God was sought by man. Note the words, *You are very superstitious, very religious* (*hōs deisidaimonesterous* [PWS:3855](#)). The word can be equally translated either way. The fact that man is religious and superstitious reveals he is searching for God. Men worship because they seek God. Their hearts...

- are restless, searching for peace and life with God.
- are hungry, seeking to have God's care and provision.
- are fearful, seeking to have God's protection.

"But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?...And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" ([Job 28:12, 28](#)).

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" ([Jeremiah 8:20](#)).

"Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name" ([Amos 5:8](#)).

3. ([17:23](#)) **God— Idolatry:** God is not hid, not unknown. As Paul had walked throughout the great city of Athens, he had read many of the inscriptions written on the monuments and idols. One in particular had caught his attention: the altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (*agnōstō theō* [PWS:4162](#)). Note several facts.

1. The word "devotions" (*ta sebasmata* [PWS:1020](#)) means the objects of worship such as idols, altars, images.
2. The people acknowledged there was an unknown god, and they worshipped him. But they did not know him.

None of the gods satisfied the people. Their lives and their religions were still empty and missing something. The restlessness and hunger and fear were still in their hearts and minds, especially in lonely moments. None of the religions or gods created by man's imagination satisfied and met their needs. All they could do was worship *an unknown god*; they knew nothing about him, yet they worshipped him.

Note what Paul did: he declared that he knew the unknown God. He personally knew Him and it was He whom Paul declared.

"And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" ([Judges 2:10](#)).

"For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" ([Jeremiah 4:22](#)).

4. ([17:24-25](#)) God, Creator: God is the Creator. Paul declared six significant points about God as Creator.

1. God made the world and all things therein (*kosmos* [PWS: 4434](#), the whole universe). The point is striking. There is only One God, One who...

- is supreme• is absolute• is all powerful• is all encompassing• has created the world (cosmos, universe)
- has created everything in the world• has created man himself (who is part of the universe)

"Thou, even thou, art lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" ([Neh. 9:6](#); cp. [Acts 14:15](#)).

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" ([Hebrews 11:3](#)).

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Genesis 1:1](#)).

Note the point: if there is only One Supreme God, then there are no other gods. All other gods are false. They are only the creation of man's mind and the object of man's desires.

Thought 1. Men of every generation need to heed this point, for men worship many false gods and idols. They put their trust and confidence in the things of this world such as...

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| • money• position | • education• self• property |
| • clothes• religion | • cars• government• mankind |
| • houses• fame | |

Any of these and a host of other things can become the *gods* of present day man, the primary objects of his trust and attention, energy and efforts, hope and confidence. But note the declaration of Paul: there is only One God; only One who can look after and take care of man; only One who created the universe. There is no other God worthy of the trust, worship, time, and energy of man.

2. God is the Lord of heaven and earth. He is the Master, the Ruler over all. The point is clear. As Lord, the Unknown God of man is the One to whom all men owe their allegiance and worship. Men are not to bow before nor serve any other god.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever" ([1 Tim. 1:17](#)).

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" ([Rev. 19:6](#)).

3. God is the Creator, not the created. He does not dwell in temples made with man's hands.

⇒ Man's ideas and imaginations about God are not God. Man cannot create God out of his mind.

⇒ Man's temples built to hold the presence of God cannot contain God. God is above the heavens. He is the Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth.

Thought 1. Men often worship what they have *made with their hands* and minds. It may be a man-made religion or some man-made thing in the world. Whatever it is, it is false. It is only a creation of man himself and cannot do him any good beyond this world. There is only One God, and He is the *Creator* of man, not the *created*.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" ([Genesis 1:1](#)).

"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" ([Neh. 9:6](#)).

"He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" ([Job 26:7](#)).

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands" ([Psalm 102:25](#)).

4. God is the Self-Sufficient One. He needs nothing. Men may think God needs them, their lives, worship, offerings, and service; but God does not need men. He needs nothing that man has. Man cannot help or benefit God at all.

The point is shocking to the mind of man. It means that all man is and has, himself and his world, are *free* gifts of God. God has made man because God is loving and gracious and giving, not because He needs man. Man has nothing to offer God; man does not exist because God needs him. Man exists because God loves and wanted to demonstrate His love to man.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever" ([Matthew 6:13](#)).

"Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou?" ([Job 9:12](#)).

5. God is the Giver of life and breath and all things. He is the sole source of man's existence, the One who gives and sustains life. Note: God is actively involved in *giving* three things to all beings...

• life • breath • all things

Everything that man has and that concerns man comes from God's hands. God is not remote, off in outer space someplace, unreachable. He is actively involved in the life of man, even in the very breath of man and in the giving of *all things*.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" ([James 1:17](#)).

"Thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified" ([Daniel 5:23](#)).

5. ([17:26](#)) God, Sovereignty: God guides the history of all men and nations. This is a phenomenal revelation.

1. All men come from one source, from God Himself. All men have the same blood and nature. No man or nation is above another. All are equal; all stand before God. No one is a favorite of God. God shows no partiality to one person over another: to Jew or Gentile, to religionist or heathen.
2. All men and nations are "appointed a time" to live and are given "bounds" within which to live. God oversees the birth and life of every person and nation. He is actively involved in the world and in the lives of people. Man just needs to acknowledge and reach out to Him and to Him alone; then man will come to know the glorious care and guidance of God's hand.

Thought 1. Note how God is in control of human history, both of nations and of individuals. He rules over all, guiding and directing and keeping everyone within certain bounds. What is so desperately needed is for men to put their trust in God so that they may come to know His personal care in their lives.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" ([Matthew 6:13](#)).

"The lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the lord sitteth King for ever" ([Psalm 29:10](#)).

6. ([17:27-28](#)) Creation— Idolatry: God has a great purpose for creating men—that men might find and know God. Man should never have turned away from God and fallen into idolatry (cp. [Romans 1:18-32](#)). But since man has, he desperately needs to seek God, to do all he can to find God. There are two reasons given as to why man should seek to find God.

1. God is not far off. He is near everyone of us. He can be found. How close is God? It is in God that we live and move and have our being. He and His works are all about us. If we only look, we can see how He gives and sustains our lives and movement. We will find Him, and once we have found Him, we can call upon Him and He will make Himself known to us. Note: men should see God in natural revelation, in the world all about them.
2. Man is the offspring of God ([Acts 17:28-29](#)). Therefore, man is responsible for seeking God. Paul quotes the Grecian poet Aratus (about B.C. 270). The point is forceful:

⇒ If man is the offspring of God, then idols are *less* than man, for idols are made by the mind of man. Man is superior to idols; therefore, to worship idols is to degrade the exalted position God has given man.

⇒ If man is the offspring of God, then something created by man is less than God. God is above everything man makes. Therefore, to exalt the works of man's hand above God is to degrade the exalted position of both God and man.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" ([Deut. 4:29](#)).

"Seek the lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore" ([Psalm 105:4](#)).

"Seek ye the lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" ([Isaiah 55:6](#)).

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" ([Hosea 10:12](#)).

7. ([17:29-30](#)) Repentance: God now demands that all men repent. There are two reasons why man is to repent.

1. Man is to repent because of his sin and idolatry. Man is not to worship idols of any sort, whether invisible or visible, of the mind or of materials, of the imagination or of the world. Note how the exhortation is worded:

"We ought not to think," to imagine that God is like gold, silver, or stone graven by art and man's device. The word "device" (*enthumēseōs* [PWS:1009](#)) means internal thoughts, ideas, imaginations. Every man has a *concept*, a thought about God. But we should not. We should seek and find the *only living and true God*. Every person is personally responsible for forsaking the idols of this world and for finding God. Man is now to repent.

2. Man is to repent because the days of ignorance are over. Before now God winked at (*hyperidōn* [PWS:4355](#)) man's ignorance—not in the sense of closing His eyes or of condoning man's idolatry, but He overlooked man's ignorance until He could prepare man for the coming of His Son. *Now* God's Son has come, and God demands that all men repent

8. ([17:31](#)) Judgment: God has appointed a day to judge the world. The word "appointed" is significant. The day of judgment is set, already determined. Note three points.

1. The judgment concerns righteousness, how men have lived and behaved. Life does not cease at the grave (Epicureans, the pleasure-seekers), nor does life just pass into one large ball of energy with everyone entering into God. Life is purposeful, which means...

- it is planned and guided by love and care.
- it is just and righteous.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" ([Matthew 25:31-32](#)).

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" ([Romans 2:16](#)).

2. The Judge is Jesus Christ, the Man ordained by God (see note, Judgment—[Acts 10:42](#) for discussion).

3. The surety of judgment is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (see notes—[Acts 10:40-42](#) for discussion and verses. Cp. [John 5:27-29](#).)

9. (17:32-34) Gospel— Preaching: the results of the message. Note that Paul was interrupted and stopped from completing his message. The results were both tragic and wonderful.

1. Some mocked. In particular they mocked the resurrection. Most either felt life just ceased at death or else a person passed into some fluffy cloud, some half-slumber and half-conscious state of being.

⇒ The idea that life would be so purposeful that a man would exist forever—that he would literally arise from the dead and live in a perfect state of being—was just beyond their understanding.

2. Some put off making a decision. They were thoughtful, trying to grasp the message and think through the implications, what living a life of righteousness would mean, the great price they would have to pay. They just were not ready to make such a commitment, not yet.

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are" ([Luke 13:25](#)).

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" ([Acts 24:25](#)).

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" ([Jeremiah 8:20](#)).

3. Paul turned away from them. He had done his duty, proclaimed the glorious message of salvation. Now it was up to the audience to repent or not.

4. Some believed. Dionysius was one of the judges of the great court of Athens. Damaris was the name of a woman. Respectable women of Athens would not have been in the market crowd listening to Paul. Therefore, she was probably a woman of immoral character. There were also others who were saved, but they were unnamed.

Thought 1. The gospel has the power to reach all: the high, the low, and the unsaved.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" ([John 1:12](#)).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" ([Romans 10:9-10](#)).

DEEPER STUDY #1

(17:29-30) Repentance: to change; to turn; to change one's mind; to turn one's life. It is a turning away from sin and turning toward God. It is a change of mind, a forsaking of sin. It is putting sin out of one's thoughts and behavior. It is resolving never to think or do a thing again. (Cp. [Matthew 3:2](#); [Luke 13:2-3](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [Acts](#)

[3:19](#); [Acts 8:22](#); [Acts 26:20](#).) The change is turning away from lying, stealing, cheating, immorality, cursing, drunkenness, and the other so-called glaring *sins of the flesh*. But the change is also turning away from *the silent sins of the spirit* such as self-centeredness, selfishness, envy, bitterness, pride, covetousness, anger, evil thoughts, hopelessness, laziness, jealousy, lust.

1. Repentance involves two turns. There is a negative turn away from sin and a positive turn toward God. It is a turning to God away from sin, whether sins of thought or action. (See note, Repentance—[Luke 3:3](#). Cp. [1 Thes. 1:9](#); [Acts 14:15](#).)
2. Repentance is more than sorrow. Sorrow may or may not be involved in repentance. A person may repent simply because he wills and acts to change; or a person may repent because he senses an agonizing sorrow within. But the sense or feeling of sorrow is not repentance. Repentance is both the change of mind and the actual turning of one's life away from sin and toward God.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts.