

Sharing Christ in Your Athens

Acts 17:16-33

Introduction:

Everywhere Paul went either a riot or revival occurred and often both took place. He's now in Athens.

First: The Context. 1-9 & 10-15

What circumstances led Paul to Athens?

Berea is 141 miles from Athens

As we saw in the book of Romans, it isn't you, but God people are angry with –

T - **Romans 1:18-32** – The world will 'cancel' anything that does not support its 'debased mind.'

The book of Acts is often called "*The Acts of the Holy Spirit*" because we see how essential the work of the Holy Spirit is to conversion. It does not happen naturally but supernaturally.

Second: A Word about Athens

Athens is the cultural and intellectual center of Paul's Roman world, filled with art, literature, history and philosophy.

It was the native home of Socrates and Plato and became the adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno.

He met:

- a) Sterile orthodoxy – A 'God-less' church produces a godless culture
- b) Superstitious idolatry – 30,000 different gods but when referring to their gods collectively, the people called it simply, 'Mammon' – Matt 6:24
- c) Sophisticated philosophy – love of knowledge

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

As a result, Athens also became the home of intellectualism, scientism, cultural superiority, cynicism, snobbery and the cancel culture of stoning. (It is the New York City of our day out of which most national news programming originates).

Alone in the city, he walked the streets and saw Athens's lostness.

Picture of Parthenon

He saw the pagan temples, heard the false teachers, visited the Acropolis with its Parthenon, dedicated to Athene.

Vs 16-17 - All of this moved Paul to engage both Jews and pagans.

- Epicureans were lovers of pleasure –
- Stoics were pantheists – God is in everything
- They were also fatalists

Third: Paul's Response to Athens 22-31

Pictures of Aeropagus – from *Areios Pagos* (Hill of Ares). Ares had been tried by the gods on the Aeropagus for the murder of Poseidon's son, Halirrothius. The Romans referred to it as Mars Hill, after their Greek god of war.

- Picture 1 = Overview of Mars Hill
- Picture 2 = Plaque with Paul's sermon

Pictures of Bemas

- Picture 3 – Roman Bema in Corinth
- Picture 4 – Greek Bema in Athens

- a) God is known – 23
- b) God is Independent – 24
- c) God is Self-Sufficient – 25
- d) God is Creator - 26
- e) God is Seeking – 27
- f) God is Relevant – 28
- g) God is Self-Existent – 29
- h) God is Merciful yet Exact – 30
- i) God is Judge – 31

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 - *And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Fourth: The Athenian Response to the Gospel. 32-34

- a) Unbelief – 32a
- b) Interest – 32b
- c) Belief – 34

Conclusion:

Because we understand that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, we know that we are not responsible for how people respond to the Gospel. We share Christ with people because we know personally of the benefit the Gospel brings with it. We love God and want his name to be known. And we know the terrible results of dying without Christ.

There is no question that our times are mirroring those of the apostles. But the vastness of the darkness makes the only light all-the-more visible and desirable.

The world is talking about a lot of things. But like Paul's preaching, our sharing must center on Jesus and his resurrection. That changes everything.

Community Groups:

- 1 – Which words – revival or riot – best describe your life? Or perhaps it is a combination of both?
- 2 – According to Romans 1:18-32, why is the world so angry about *everything*?
- 3 – How is Athens like our modern world?
- 4 – How do you personally encounter Athens in your daily life?
- 5 – Discuss the phrase, "A God-less church produces a godless world."
- 6 – What are some of the things we learn about God from Paul's speech in vs 23-31?
- 7 – Of those things, which is personally meaningful to you?
- 8 – In 1 Cor 2:1-5, why does Paul say it is important that our Gospel speaking center on the Jesus?
- 9 – Describe the three reactions to Paul's sermon.
- 10 – What is your most practical take-away from this text?

