

frail, but this time now affects and impacts where we will be in the eternal age to come and what our standing unchangeably and forever will be beyond death. Now is the day of salvation, calls out the Bible. *“Harden not your heart through the deceitfulness of sin!”* Sure, if Jesus had remained in the grave, you could laugh at all this and brush it aside as rubbish and some babbler talking on and on about who cares what, but this is the authoritative Word of the living God and of the Saviour Who arose from the dead, as He said, Who is coming back again and then the last judgment day will take place. Be ready for it, people of Athens! Be ready for it now! Are you ready for Christ’s return, ready to meet God, the Holy One?

So Paul spoke and witnessed of the living Saviour, caringly so, boldly so, repeatedly so, tactfully so, earnestly so, and last yet, notice with me it was fruitfully so too. Oh yes, we read there were those who turned away from Paul when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead. Some kept mocking that teaching. Others said they would hear him again on the matter, and they delayed any true response and commitment to the gospel. How many foolishly so respond to God’s Word today too, always saying later they will get serious with it, but later never comes. Beware, if that is what you are doing, dear friends. But having said that, notice with me how the last verse does tell us Paul did speak fruitfully, for even in Athens there was saving fruit on the gospel message about the one true God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen again. Several were saved of whom two are mentioned for us, namely, Dionysius, a leading citizen of Athens, and the woman, Damaris. God always will crown His Word and not have it return to Him empty. God is pleased to use His Word for the salvation of sinners.

The Christian gospel telling of Jesus Christ, the once crucified and now risen and ever exalted Saviour of sinners, based on God’s Word and blessed by the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the greatest power of man here on earth. As Christian church and individual believers, God’s people are called, like Paul, to witness of this gospel caringly so, boldly so, repeatedly so, earnestly so, and trusting it will be fruitfully so too. God forbid that the gospel of Jesus’ resurrection just be dry and dead doctrine and simply another fact for you and me to know. No, rather let us live and die showing and proving as Paul did in his day, our God lives and He is King over all! *“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.”* To Him be the glory now and forevermore, in Athens, yes, and in all the world! Amen!

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



TESTIFYING OF JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION [2]

In this message, we continue our study of Acts 17:16-34 to learn how Paul testified of Jesus as the resurrected Saviour of sinners. We noticed last week from this text passage that Paul went about everywhere proclaiming Jesus as the risen and triumphant Saviour of sinners, and he did so most caringly so, boldly so, and repeatedly so. But there is more to learn yet about Paul’s testimony of Jesus, the once crucified and now risen and exalted Saviour. How else did Paul testify of Jesus and His rising from the dead? From the passage, we know Paul also testified of Jesus as risen Saviour most tactfully so.

Here let us just follow the story about what happened in Athens. We are told how Paul just wouldn’t keep quiet about the gospel message while in that heathen and pagan city. Paul gained a hearing from some in the market place who just loved to discuss new ideas and strange teachings. The text mentions two schools of thought in Athens quite popular in that time, the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans taught basically we should by all means avoid pain and pursue pleasure, and the Stoics taught self-mastery was a great pursuit and accomplishment and we should just grin and bear whatever comes to us in life. For the Epicureans, there were many gods, but none of them are concerned for us here on earth. The Stoics taught whatever gods there may be, you just need to take care of yourself, and whatever will be, will be. These two philosophies of life are quite common and popular today as well. The point now is Paul’s words caught their attention and they invited him to give a major presentation of sorts in a main court center in their city. Paul could be their guest lecturer this time, and they would hear his case, as it were.

We know in general the philosophers of Athens thought little of what all Paul was saying for they call him a babbler, literally a seed picker, like a bird in a barnyard. It wasn’t a very complimentary term. Others described Paul as someone who *“seemed to be a setter forth [proclaimer] of strange gods.”* But now notice how Paul made use of this opportunity. He didn’t get angry at them for not respecting him much; he didn’t blast them for all the idolatry in their city; he didn’t condemn them for the way they wasted their time, as verse 21 states, *“spend[ing] their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing”*. No, he sought to build a bridge of

communication with them where they were at, and then to build from there in communicating to them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul started with speaking to them about that altar in their city to the unknown god and he then tells them how he knew that God and how the true God is the God of creation and the Sovereign God before Whom all people are on the same level and the God in Whom we each and all live and move and have our being. Paul goes on to explain this God is not indifferent to our world, but calls all to repent of sin and trust and obey Him. The Lord is the God Who, in fact, will judge us all, not by our standards but by His standards. The Judge will be the Man, Jesus Christ, Whom God has ordained. This is a matter of absolute certainty with the raising of Christ Jesus from the dead. Paul's preaching to the Greeks here was different from his preaching to the Jews, but in all his preaching he confronted his hearers with the whole gospel message and with the calling to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. A careful study of Paul's address while standing "in the midst of Mars Hill" proves his testimony there was such a tactful witness towards those Athenians.

How true it is today too in presenting the gospel to others, we need to be tactful and build bridges of communication and relations. In that setting, with God's help, we can find opportunities in which to bring the gospel message. Isn't this what we should time and again be praying and working on, how best to present the gospel message to another? Saying this, at the same time here a warning needs to be sounded that we not take up unbiblical means to communicating the gospel, and that we trust more in the world's marketing and technological powers than in the power of God's Word itself. This is a real danger for the Christian church in our times, that out of zeal for the gospel, unholy means are used to spread the gospel. We need to be careful never to corrupt or diminish the gospel message in the bringing of it. Testifying of Jesus and His resurrection tactfully should never mean doing so unfaithfully, without due reverence for God Triune and holy respect for His Word, and hearty trust just in the power of His gospel.

The encouraging point here is as you and I pray and struggle to spread the Christian message as faithfully and tactfully as possible, God will help us to do so, even as surely He helped Paul with this special opportunity he had in Athens. The resurrected Saviour is most interested in the gospel message spreading far and wide, and really and deeply in the hearts and lives of sinners, and He has given His Spirit to prosper His Word wherever and whenever it is brought and told in faithfulness to God and His Word. Paul's strategy in bringing the gospel to others we read of in I Corinthians 9:22 where he states, "*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake...*"

Paul brought the word about Jesus and Him risen again tactfully so, but notice next, he told it also very much earnestly so. That Paul was earnest in bringing the gospel message comes out in his pressing his hearers to repent of sin and trust and follow this God as revealed in the once crucified and now ever living Saviour. Paul didn't leave this matter as an option for them either, but he insisted this was the command of God for them, and that living now in the age after Jesus' death and resurrection, this gospel command was not to be trifled with. Paul being stirred in his heart for the people so caught up in false worship and a pagan view of life also brings out he spoke most seriously with them, urging them to hear what he had to say. What most brings out his being earnest, however, is his telling them of the judgment day to come. The Lord "*has appointed*" says Paul, "*a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He has ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.*"

How earnest the fact of the final and eternal judgment day to come should make us all in regards to the gospel of Jesus Christ for ourselves and for all others. The last judgment that is coming when we all must appear before the Lord for His judgment on our lives affecting us for all eternity, bringing us either to heaven or else to hell, is nothing to scoff at. People can laugh at the idea of the last judgment, but still you cannot laugh it away. In the days of Noah, how many scoffed at the threatened warnings of a world wide flood because of God's righteous judgment, but these people were not scoffing when the rains kept coming. Then they were screaming in terror and dread! The people scorned fire from heaven coming on Sodom and Gomorrah, but there was no more joking when the fire scorched them and all that they had. So today people, maybe even you, just keep discounting and doubting the reality of the last judgment and of a heaven and a hell, but what will you do when suddenly you find out it is all for real? Jesus' resurrection from the dead guarantees there will be also a last judgment when Christ suddenly comes again and we must all appear before Him!

There is reason to be earnest, very earnest even, concerning the things of God and the one only true escape from the eternal judgment and condemnation we all deserve and will have, left to ourselves. The Lord still now offers peace and pardon in and through His once for all sacrifice on the cross and with His resurrection from the dead, but if you refuse to hear Him and will not repent and believe on Him as only Saviour, what then? You can go on in your sin, you can reject Him, and can live your life without Him, but what will you say when you face Him one on one at the last judgment which no one will be able to escape?

Life is so serious here on earth as not only is it so temporary and