



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE BOOK OF ACTS

Sermon Notes

Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Part 6

Paul's Areopagus Address

Acts 17:24-34

January 13, 2008

I. Paul Addresses the Areopagus

a. Who is God?

- i. **Creator** [Verse 24]
- ii. **Transcendent LORD** [Verse 24]
- iii. **Self-Sufficient Sustainer** [Verse 25]
- iv. **Sovereign** [Verse 26]
- v. **Immanent** [Verse 27]
- vi. **Patient Judge** [Verses 30-31]

b. Who is Man?

- i. **Creation** [Verse 26]
- ii. **Dependent** [Verse 25, 28]
- iii. **Limited** [Verse 26]
- iv. **Sinful** [Verses 30-31]

II. The Greeks Respond to Paul's Message



Ancient Athens and the Postmodern Western World

Ancient Athens was certainly the most significant city of the classical world. In its “Golden Age” during the fifth century B.C., its splendor was unrivaled throughout the world. For many modern-day Westerners though, the city of Athens is legendary, if not mythical, and it is difficult to grasp the powerful parallels that exist between our two cultures, as they are separated by over two millennia.

First of all, like modern-day America, Athens was known throughout the world for its wealth. Throughout the city, temples of pure marble and gold stood as monuments to the city’s wealth and grandeur. Secondly, during its Golden Age Athens was the philosophical, intellectual and political center of the Western world. Much of the ideas of the ancient Greek philosophers penetrated even into the East, influencing even the Arabs. Further, the concepts of democracy and republic, which have profoundly influenced Western political structures, find much of their beginnings in the ideas of the ancient Greeks.

Yet, arguably, the clearest parallel between ancient Athens and the postmodern Western world can be seen in the area of religion. Like many modern-day Americans, the Athenians were “very religious in all respects.” In other words, like our post-modern culture today, the problem with the Athenians was **not** that they were atheistic [denied the existence of God]. Rather, they were pluralistic, embracing all “gods.”

For the Athenians, no God was hailed as “the only true God.” Certainly, some gods were more powerful than others; however, within its ever-expanding pantheon of gods, the Athenians associated individual gods with each different aspect of life. Therefore, to proclaim strict monotheism in ancient Athens would have likely been seen as “close-minded,” “uncivilized,” “uncultured” and “foolish.” In fact, to reject the gods of Athens would be perceived as a threat to the stability of the state, as Socrates (470 B.C. – 399 B.C.), himself, discovered in the fourth and fifth centuries, B.C.

So it is today in our own country. We, as Americans, pride ourselves as the greatest country on earth. We call our president “the most powerful man on earth.” We often view our government and economy as superior to every other nation on the planet. Our medical, scientific, and intellectual communities are among the most advanced in the world.

Yet, as the “great melting pot” we have also embraced a pluralistic, even paganistic, view of religion. We, like the Athenians, are not an atheistic people; rather, we are pluralistic, affirming the equality of everyone’s gods. One of the most damaging indictments that one can make of another individual in 21st century America is that he or she is “closed-minded.” We hail Islam as a “wonderful religion.” We embrace New Age ideas as “unifying” and would never even think of declaring Jesus Christ as the **only** way to salvation. Such a “close-minded” and “irresponsible” statement would likely serve to cut short one’s political or professional career.

Therefore, the cultural milieu in which the Apostle Paul finds himself in Acts 17 is quite similar to the post-modern culture of 21st Century America. Thus, we can take his Areopagus address as a powerful model for effectively engaging the ideas in our own day.

It is important to note; however, that unlike the previous speeches of Stephen, Peter, and Paul, the Apostle is **not** addressing Jews, but rather pluralistic pagans. Consequently, as Paul understood his audience, the structure of his speech stands out in the Book of Acts as rather unique.

The reason for this is that when the Apostles, in the Book of Acts, addressed the Jews, they went to great lengths to establish that **Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament**, thus He alone was the long-awaited Messiah. Yet, when speaking to pagans, Paul realized that they did not embrace the Old Testament as God's Word. So rather than beginning with the Old Testament as the "common ground," **the Apostle Paul began with general revelation; that is creation.**

I. Paul Addresses the Areopagus

- ❑ In his Introduction to his Areopagus address, Paul states in verse 23: "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."
- ❑ Thus, Paul spoke of "**what**" they worshiped, not "**who**" they worshipped. In other words, the objects of their worship were: (a.) **impersonal**; and (b.) **plural**. In short, they worshipped "things" ["*what* you worship"] rather than the one, true, living and personal God of the universe.

❑ **Thus, two of the primary objectives of Paul in this speech is to demonstrate that a.) God is One, He is the ONLY God; and b.) God is personal and knowable.**

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- ❑ Not only this, but Paul recognizes the common quest of all mankind to seek answers to life's most significant and profound questions: (1.) What are our origins [where did we come from]; and (2.) What is our purpose in life?
- ❑ Every culture since the dawn of civilization has asked these questions, and sought to answer them through the creation of gods and deities. Yet, it is only in Jesus Christ that we find the true answer to all of life's greatest questions and mysteries.
- ❑ Therefore, just as the Scriptures themselves do, the Apostle Paul begins his speech with God and the doctrine of creation –the act of God which supremely sets Him apart from all of creation is the act of creation itself, and that, out of nothing.

a. Who is God?

- ❑ The first, most significant, and most basic truth in all of creation is the truth that **God exists**.
- ❑ This truth is assumed and presupposed by the Apostle Paul as he begins his speech.

- Furthermore, not only does Paul assume this basic truth as he speaks to the Areopagus, he opens his Epistle to the Romans explaining why such a believe in God is not only logical, but necessary.

Romans 1:18-23

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”

- In other words, Paul’s argument here in Romans 1, is that God has revealed Himself **clearly** through nature and His creation. This revelation of God through creation is often referred to as General or Natural Revelation.
- Therefore, men who reject the one true God are without excuse. Thus, General Revelation is sufficient for condemnation.
- Yet, not only does Paul declare the evidence of God’s existence through creation, but even the ancient Greek philosophers realized that the physical world, and its natural laws, pointed to something beyond that which could be seen.

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- Aristotle, arguably the greatest philosopher of the ancient Western world, articulated an argument for God’s existence, which is often referred to as the **Cosmological Argument** for the Existence of God.

“The ultimate cause of motion, according to Aristotle, must be rooted in pure being...It must be eternal, immaterial [spiritual], and immutable [unchangeable]. The unmoved mover is not merely the first in a series of movers or causes. Aristotle realized that if the unmoved mover were merely the first mover, this would require that something else moved it. Similarly, if the unmoved mover were the first cause, this would require that something else caused it.

“Aristotle understood that, to escape the illogical morass of infinite regress, the ultimate cause of motion must be an uncaused cause or an unmoved mover...This forms the classical root that the notion of “God” is a logically necessary being...Later philosophical theology would add that God...is self sufficient.”
R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas*

- In other words, there cannot be an infinite regress of finite causes, therefore an **uncaused cause** must exist. Another way of looking at this is that if we trace the cause and effect relationships of all things back to its “first cause,” then that “first cause” must be *uncaused*, as it is impossible to go back infinitely, as everything in this physical world is

finite. Thus, this process must stop somewhere. This uncaused cause was Aristotle's "God."

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- ❑ Yet, another argument for God's existence is known as the **Teleological Argument** for the Existence of God. It is the argument used by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1.
- ❑ Simply stated, the Teleological Argument states that God's existence is self-evident as there is such a diverse, yet unified creation in which we lived. In other words, there is clearly a design, therefore there must be a designer. There is a creation, which necessitates a creator. Just as a building in New York City demands a builder, so the creation in which we live [which is greatly more complex than any man-made building] must have had a creator.
- ❑ This truth, that the creation must have a Creator, explains why nearly every civilization throughout the history of the world had some belief in a "higher being."
- ❑ Even modern-day science demonstrates this truth.
- ❑ In his work *Adam and Evolution*, biologist Michael Pitman writes, "Through any but blinkered eyes the biological world shows clear signs of planning and order."
- ❑ Modern-day astrophysicist Hugh Ross states in his book *The Fingerprint of God*: "...the laws of physics, the measured characteristics of the universe and the restrictive realities of life support require that the universe be significantly finite." He continues, "...a finite universe would rule out any atheistic or agnostic interpretation of origins."
- ❑ In 1993, scientists announced that they had decoded the human genome. At a White House press conference, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, Dr. Francis Collins, a Christian himself, said, "We have caught the first glimpses of our instruction book, previously known only to God." Even then-President Bill Clinton, stated, "Today we are learning the language in which God created life."

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- ❑ However, General Revelation, that is God's revelation of Himself through His created order, is **not sufficient for salvation**. Only the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient to save.
- ❑ Thus, the Apostle Paul begins his speech with the common ground of General Revelation, and then progresses to the truth of Special Revelation – the truth that Jesus Christ is the answer to all of life's greatest questions [such as origin and purpose]. Indeed, He is the answer to life's greatest question, "How then shall I be saved?"
- ❑ Finally, the structure of Paul's speech reveals a most powerful truth concerning God. Paul begins "in the beginning" with creation, and ends "at the end" with the Judgment.

This structure reveals that God and God alone is the **Alpha and Omega**, the beginning and the end.

i. Creator [Verse 24]

- Paul begins with the truth that God is **Creator**, in **Verse 24**, saying, “The God who made the world and all things in it...”
 - Although the Greeks embraced a view of “god” or “the gods” as creator/creators, Paul’s declaration of God as absolute Creator stood in contrast to the prevailing Greek philosophical understandings of creation.
 - For example, the Epicureans embraced a belief in the “chance combination of atoms,” believing that matter was essentially coeternal with God. If this was the case, then matter has an equal claim to supremacy with God, as it is coeternal with Him.
 - Furthermore, the Stoics were essentially pantheists, believing that everything is god. This view, held by many even today, originates from a belief that “god” or the impersonal being we call “god” created *out of himself*. If this were the case, then everything in creation would have a “spark” of the divine; thus, everything would be, in a real sense, god.
 - Yet, according to the Scriptures [contrary to all Greek philosophy], God created all things **out of nothing** [*Creatio ex nihilo*], ensuring that eternal, most fundamental distinction between God and man.

Psalm 33:6,9

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host...
For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalm 148:5

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

- ❑ Then, from this most fundamental truth, that God is the supreme CREATOR, Paul describes other aspects of God's divine nature, which necessarily flow from the truth that God created all that is *out of nothing*.

E.P. Siegfried wrote, "Belief in God the Creator of heaven and earth is the theoretical basis of all religious and theological truth, the real foundation underlying all other truths concerning God, and the objective principle whence all other truths proceed."

ii. Transcendent LORD [Verse 24]

- ❑ The Apostle Paul continues, stating in **Verse 24** that "...since He is Lord of heaven and earth, [He] does not dwell in temples made with hands..."
- ❑ As the Apostle Paul speaks, he does so looking up at the magnificent temple of Athena on the Acropolis. Paul's point, then, is quite clear: as the One, True, and Living God created all things *out of nothing*, He Himself is infinite and can never be limited by creation or anything in creation.
- ❑ John Polhill writes, "For them [the Greeks] divinity was to be found *in* the heavens, *in* nature, *in* humanity. The idea of a single supreme being who stood *over* the world, who created all that exists, was totally foreign to them."
- ❑ This truth is powerfully rooted in the Old Testament and the New:

1 Kings 8:27

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"

Isaiah 66:1-2

"This is what the LORD says:

'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
Where is the house you will build for me?
Where will my resting place be?

Has not my hand made all these things,
and so they came into being?'
declares the LORD.

'This is the one I esteem:
he who is humble and contrite in spirit,
and trembles at my word.'

- Note: Stephen quotes from this passage in his speech recorded in Acts 7:47-50.
 - *It is interesting to note, though, that many of the philosophers at the Areopagus may not have argued with Paul's statement concerning God's transcendence. Plato taught a religion that focused on the superiority of "heavenly bodies" in the "Realm of Ideas." Also, based on the belief that spiritual bodies were more important than physical bodies, even Zeno and Seneca despised temples.*
 - *However, as Paul's speech continues, it is abundantly clear that His understanding of God's transcendence was fundamentally different from Plato's understanding of the superiority of spiritual objects.*

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- Therefore, Paul's declaration of God as the Creator and Transcendent LORD lays the foundation for his scathing attack on the idolatry of Athens.
- In other words, a proper biblical view of God reveals the absolute folly and foolishness of idolatry. For, idolatry is, at a most basic level, an attempt to limit or localize the divine nature of the infinite Creator of the universe into something that we can see, touch, feel, and "put our arms around."

iii. Self-Sufficient Sustainer [Verse 25]

- Not only is God the Creator and Transcendent LORD, but He is also the **Self-sufficient Sustainer**. Paul states, in **Verse 25**, "...nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things."
- This is a difficult concept for humans to grasp. **God is in need of nothing!** He does not *need* our praise, **He does not need even our love** [As He is perfectly satisfied *in Himself* and His Triune Nature].
- God did not create because He needed objects to love. In short, God is in *want of* nothing! Yet, He chose to create us for His own glory!
- Read **Psalm 50:7-15**.
- Furthermore, because He is perfectly self-sufficient, and the Transcendent LORD who created all things out of nothing, God is able to give "all people life and breath and all things..."
- Read **Isaiah 42:5**.
- God is **able** to do this, because even life is found **in Himself**. John 1:4 states, "in Him was life..." John 5:26 states, "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself."

- ❑ **Yet, this truth [of God’s complete self-sufficiency] stands in direct contrast to all false gods, to include the gods of the Athenians.** The reason for this is because all false gods are dependent upon *their creators for their very existence!*

- ❑ Once again, the folly of idolatry is revealed. When ancient Athens and later Rome fell, so did their gods. Their gods, regardless of what the people said about them, were absolutely dependent upon their worshippers for their existence and “life.”
- ❑ Yet, God could have chosen never to create and would have still been perfectly “satisfied” in Himself!

iv. Sovereign [Verse 26]

- ❑ Yet, Paul continues: Not only is God the Transcendent, Self-sufficient, Sustaining LORD who Created out of nothing...but He is also SOVEREIGN.
- ❑ In **Verse 26**, Paul states, “...and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.”
 - In other words, it is God who has the ability and authority to determine all the limitations on His creation – their appointed times, boundaries, and habitation.
 - Further, only God is **autonomous**, a “law unto Himself.” As such, He and He alone is the standard for all righteousness. Therefore, God does not even have the ability to sin, as all that He does becomes the standard by which we judge sin.

v. Immanent [Verse 27]

- ❑ In **Verse 27**, the Apostle Paul presents one of the greatest paradoxes in all of Scripture. He states, “He is not far from each of us...”
- ❑ At first glance this statement seems to contradict Paul’s previous statement that “He...does not dwell in temples made with hands...”
- ❑ Yet, the incredible biblical truth is that God is not only **Transcendent** [above His creation]; but, He is also **Immanent** [with His creation]. God is “high and lifted up” and He is “with us.”
- ❑ Yet, even though God is **Immanent**, He is forever **distinct** – for He alone is Holy!
- ❑ This is where the God of the Scriptures is not only unique, with respect to His creation, but unique with respect to all other “gods.”
- ❑ The gods of all other [false] religions are either too “far off,” wholly transcendent, and ultimately unknowable [Islam and Deism]; or they are wholly immanent, that is they are

not only *in* creation, but, according to this view, creation *is* god [pantheism and the New Age movement].

- Yet, **only** the One True God is both Transcendent and Immanent.

vi. Patient Judge [Verses 30-31]

- Finally, Paul ends his speech with the truth of the coming Judgment and the identity of the Judge – Jesus Christ.
- **Verses 30 – 31** state, “Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”
 - Paul’s point here is clear: the Sovereign Creator LORD has a fixed [pre-determined] day in which He will “judge the world.”
 - Thus, God is revealed not as a vindictive judge who takes pleasure in condemning men; but rather, He is a patient judge who judges “in righteousness.”
 - As the **autonomous** Sovereign Creator, God then will judge by **the standard of Himself!**
 - Not only this, God has appointed a **Man** to be the Judge – the Man, Jesus Christ.
 - Read Daniel 7:13-14 and John 5:19-30.
 - All nations came into existence [and fell] through the first Adam; through the second Adam, the Head of the New Creation, the whole world will be judged.
 - Furthermore, Paul’s words indicate that the **proof of Christ’s authority to judge was demonstrated in His resurrection.**

“The resurrection was a universal demonstration and proof of God’s call to Jesus to be Judge.” Darrell Bock

b. Who is Man?

- Not only does Paul answer the question, “Who is God?” but he also answers the question, “Who is Man?”
- Yet, the answer to the second question is impossible before one knows the answer to the first. It is impossible to know the purpose of life apart from an understanding of who God is. This is why theology – the study of God – is so central in the life of a believer.

i. Creation [Verses 26, 29]

- Paul states in **Verse 26**: “...He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...”
 - The reference here is certainly to Adam, the head of the human race.
 - Paul’s point here is multifaceted. First of all, it was God who made all men [and women]. He was their Creator, they were His Creation.
 - Secondly, Paul was noting that all men, regardless of race, share a common ancestry in Adam. Thus, no race of people, no nation, can rightfully claim any type of [ontological] superiority to others.
 - Yet, this is exactly what the Athenians thought, that they were a superior race.

- **Finally, unlike the Athenian “gods,” Paul was not claiming that his God was simply the “local Jewish cult God;” rather, He is the God of all nations, all peoples, indeed all of Creation!**

- The Athenians truly viewed themselves as a superior race. Not only this, but they saw all others as barbarians. The Athenians claimed that they had risen from the soil of their native land of Attica.
- Yet, any form of racism or superiority is destroyed when one realizes our common ancestry in Adam.
- Then, Paul states in **Verses 28-29**: “...even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ Being then the children of God...”
 - As God’s creation, we are all His children. Although it is true that in terms of salvation only those who believe in Jesus Christ are adopted as sons of God, every individual is a child of God in terms of being His creation.
 - Paul even quotes one of the famous Greek poets [from his home in Cilicia] in this assertion. Aratus of Soli [near Paul’s home of Cilicia] (born 310 B.C.) wrote, in *Phainomena*:

“Let us begin with Zeus. Never, O men, let us leave him
Unmentioned. All the ways are full of Zeus,
And all the market-places of human beings. The sea is full of him; so are the harbors. In every way we have all to do with Zeus, for we are truly his offspring.”

- Therefore, Paul demonstrates his understanding of what the Greeks believe in order to show the superiority of the one true God over and against the false gods of the Athenians.

ii. Dependent [Verse 25, 28]

- Next, Paul demonstrates the complete dependence of men upon God, stating in **Verse 25**, “He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things” and in **Verse 28** “...in Him we live and move and exist...”
- In other words, we are completely dependent upon the grace of God for absolutely everything in our lives.
- Yet again, Paul quotes from an ancient Greek poet, Epimenides of Cnossos in Crete (c. 600 B.C.):

“They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one –
The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies! –
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever,
For in thee we live and move and have our being.”

- By quoting from pagan authors, the Apostle Paul is demonstrating that even among the teachings of pagans, there is a hint of truth. This is true because God’s general revelation is given to every man [although it alone is not sufficient for our salvation, that is a personal relationship with the one true and living God through Jesus Christ].
- Not only this, by the phrase “live and move and exist” represents three of the great pursuits of all men throughout all ages. R.C. Sproul writes in *The Consequences of Ideas*, “The three great mysteries of ancient (and contemporary) science are life, motion, and being.”
- In the sixth century, B.C., one of the great philosophers, Thales of Miletus, declared that water was the chief substance, the chief essence of the universe. The reason? Because water is associated with everything that has **life, motion and being**.
- Yet, Paul’s inclusion of the phrase, in **Verse 28**, shows how he is demonstrating that the One True God is the answer to all of life’s questions.

□ In fact, the very name of God, **YHWH** is a verb [“I AM”], from the root “to be” [being]. Furthermore, as the Scriptures state, God has life “in Himself.” Therefore, God and God alone answers the questions pertaining to life, motion, and being.

iii. Limited [Verses 26 – 27]

- Next, man, unlike God, is greatly limited. **Verses 26-27** state, “...He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God...”

- Therefore, God sovereignly established limits for men, including times, seasons, national boundaries, and natural boundaries [ocean and land].
- Yet, the purpose of these limitations was so that we “would seek God...”
- This is the very reason why God has designed limits for mankind. This parallels even the limits in the Old Testament sacrificial system. The insufficiency of the system was to point to the sufficiency of the coming Messiah.
- Thus, it is our own finitude which leads us to the infinite. If we never know this fundamental truth [how very limited we are], we will continually believe in ourselves and never seek Christ.

iv. Sinful [Verses 30-31]

- Finally, Paul declares that every man is sinful.
- The Athenians, according to Paul and the Scriptures, were ignorant of God and His glory. Yet, as is clear in the Book of Leviticus and the sacrificial system, **ignorance is a sin and must be atoned for.**
- Therefore, every man, to include those who are ignorant of God, is called to repent, because all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23).

□ **Furthermore, there could hardly have been a bolder claim than for the Apostle Paul, a Jew, to declare the ignorance of the intellectual and culturally superior Athenians!**

- Yet, it was this ultimate sin of ignorance that led the great sin of idolatry among the Greeks.

“All idolatry, whether ancient or modern, primitive or sophisticated, is inexcusable, whether the images are metal or mental, material objects of worship or unworthy concepts in the mind. For idolatry is the attempt either to localize God, confining him within limits which we impose, whereas he is the Creator of the universe; or to domesticate God, making him dependent on us, taming and taping him, whereas he is the Sustainer of human life; or to alienate God, blaming him for his distance and his silence, whereas he is the Ruler of nations, and not far from any of us; or to dethrone God, demoting him to some image of our own contrivance or craft, whereas he is our Father from whom we derive our being. In brief, all idolatry tries to minimize the gulf between the Creator and his creatures, in order to bring him under our control.”
John Stott

- Yet, also, idolatry is ultimately an attempt to make God how *we* want Him, rather than submitting to Him and embracing Him **as He is**. It is an attempt to make God in our image rather than understanding the true implications of what it means to have been made in His.

II. The Greeks Respond to Paul's Message

- ❑ Luke concludes Chapter 17 in **Verses 32-34**, “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this.’ So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”
- ❑ Ultimately, it was the truth of the resurrection that was the great stumbling block for the Athenians at the Areopagus.
- ❑ Even the ancient Greek poet Homer denied the resurrection. Also, the Greek author Aeschylus writes “Apollo says, ‘When the dust has soaked up the blood of a man, once he has died, there is no resurrection.’” (Eumenides)
- ❑ Further, Cicero in *Tusculanae disputationes* writes, “The Stoics say that souls will endure for a while; they deny they will endure forever.”
- ❑ Yet, while some sneered others said, “We shall hear you again concerning this.”
- ❑ However, some did in fact believe and follow Paul’s teachings. Among these were Dionysius the Areopagite and a women named Damaris and others with them.
- ❑ The church father Eusebius reports, on the authority of a later Dionysius (bishop of Corinth c. A.D. 170), that Dionysius the Areopagite became the first bishop of Athens.

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- ❑ Throughout the past two thousand years, many have said that Paul failed in Athens [at the Areopagus]. We do not see mass conversions or a resulting revival.
- ❑ Yet, the truth is that Paul faithfully and obediently proclaimed the glory of God and salvation through Jesus Christ.
- ❑ We are not to judge Paul’s success by “modern-day church growth standards”; rather, we are to examine his “success” in light of the Scriptures. Therefore, by this standard Paul powerfully and clearly obeyed the commands of His Lord to preach Christ to the nations.
- ❑ Furthermore, this truth frees the modern-day believer to follow Paul’s model as the “successful” model when seeking to effectively and biblically preach the gospel to a lost and dying world. The “ends” do not justify the “means”; rather, the Scriptures should exist as the standard by which we justify all of our “means.”