



### ***He Commands All People Everywhere to Repent***

Acts 17:16-34

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**Overview:** Paul's address before the Areopagus is one of the most remarkable evangelistic messages ever delivered. Standing in the intellectual center of the first-century world, Paul is so emotionally moved by the display of empty religious devotion that he engages various people in conversation about Jesus and the resurrection. Having piqued their interest, Paul is given an opportunity to address the crowd more formally. He acknowledges their religious impulses while asserting that they have missed their ultimate aim. The essence of Paul's message is that God deserves to be worshipped by all people, but cannot be worshipped as God if He is brought down to our level. He, therefore, calls upon his listeners to repent from their idolatry and believe in Jesus Christ. Their reaction ranges from mockery, open-mindedness, and genuine belief.

**01. Before we can share the gospel as we should, we must see the world as we ought—lost without God even in the midst of religious devotion.**

**02. Before we can share the gospel as we should, we must see God as we ought—greater than we can imagine and better than we can conceive.**

**03. When we share the gospel as we should, we must expose idols of the heart while exalting Christ as judge over all humanity and savior of all who believe.**

This Promise is for You and for All

1. Do you feel the same provocation as Paul (verse 16) when you consider the world's religions apart from Christianity? If not, read the following texts and note the longing that occurs over lost people: 1 Samuel 15:35; Psalm 119:136; Ezekiel 33:11; Luke 19:41-44; and Romans 9:1-5. Pray that you too will have similar longings for lost people to know the Lord.

2. Notice the language Luke uses regarding Paul's evangelistic strategy in verses 2-3, 17. What should we make of the fact that Paul "reasoned," "explained," and was "proving" these points about Jesus and the resurrection? In light of these verses, how would you respond to someone who says that faith is not rational but rather unintelligent and ultimately subjective?

3. Luke describes the city of Athens as "full of idols." What idols do you see in the marketplace and on the streets of your city? Church buildings are not idolatrous, but their presence does communicate something about a world beyond this world. What impact do you think a church building can have on people who live or drive on a street where there are few or no religious structures or symbols?

4. What can we learn about Paul's evangelistic strategy when he cites poetry as a means of highlighting his point (verse 28)? Why didn't he simply cite Scripture to this audience as he did earlier (verse 2)? What ways can you think of to connect with non-believers who have little or no knowledge of the biblical story?

5. Paul doesn't convince everyone that his message is true, but he does speak convincingly. Given that Athens was open to all kinds of religious perspectives, why should we believe that Paul was right and the rest were wrong? How does our understanding of special revelation, namely the Bible and God's work in history, give us confidence in the message we are called to proclaim?

**For Further Reading: Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Crossway, 2007)**

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